

THE MESSENGER

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Discovering Life Beyond the Veil:

An Interview with Kenneth Ring

BETWEEN THE LINES

Swedenborg suggested that the New Age was linked with a communications revolution. It was important, he noted, that a full revelation regarding "the mysteries of faith" coincide with the ability to communicate it broadly and efficiently. Therefore, Gutenberg's invention of the printing press was a necessary prerequisite for his own work and mission.

The insights of a leading contemporary thinker, Peter Russell, author of *The Global Brain*, also pinpoints the beginning of "the new age" with Gutenberg's printing press. His discussion of the developing communications matrix sheds light on how our lives are taking on characteristics of the spiritual world. Russell's "global brain," very closely related to Swedenborg's "universal human" (nee "grand man"), is becoming increasingly present in the physical world, suggests Russell.

We are experiencing an astoundingly rapid rise of our interconnectivity launched by Gutenberg's press. Before that, nearly all information was shared face-to-face. Suddenly, information could be put in a book on a wide scale and shared both with people in faraway countries and in centuries yet to come. (Remember that Swedenborg describes space and time as highly relative and fluid in the spiritual realm.)

Now we have radio, television, satellite link-ups, computer link-ups, telephones, desk-top publishing, inexpensive copying machines, and a bombardment of printed communications in our mailboxes every day. The big unanswered question is whether this state of affairs actually

nurtures a more evolved and more mature human community. Is the communications revolution significant for human spiritual development? Most of the communications bombarding me are trivial. Even so-called religious and spiritual groups succumb to bumper-sticker pronouncements. Who reads the lengthy and considered tomes of our brightest people anymore? How can we when we don't even have time to process the information streaming in from TV, newspapers, magazines, commercials, billboards and junk mail?

It has often been asserted by spiritual leaders that it is healthy to escape most of the cacophonous products of our communications revolution. At the same time, I am profoundly aware of the advantages of word processing over my old typewriter — to say nothing of the ink pen — for clear communicating. The communications revolution allows me to improve my ability to express myself to others, while it does its best to clutter my mind. It seems that we are hanging profoundly in the balance as we enter into the powerful freedoms of an awesome new age.





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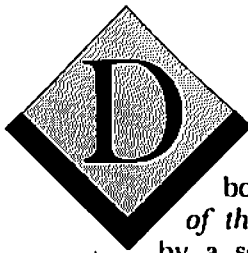
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Heading Toward Omega

An Interview with Kenneth Ring

James F. Lawrence



r. Kenneth Ring is today's foremost scholar researching the near-death experience. His first book in 1980, *Life At Death: A Scientific Investigation of the Near-Death Experience*, was a welcome offering by a serious scholar into an area that was increasingly flooded with sensationalistic and purely anecdotal material. After accumulating a veritable mountain of research, he began to note important broad parallels across most categories of people who had reported visionary experiences when close to death. And underneath it all he sensed an exciting thesis that became the subject of his recent book, *Heading Toward Omega: Near-Death Experiences and Human Evolution*. Known as an admirer of Swedenborg's discussion of the life discovered beyond physical death, Kenneth Ring was sponsored by the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church as a special lecturer to a public audience that nearly filled the church. Before giving the talk, he graciously agreed to the following interview with your editor. Dr. Kenneth Ring has been Professor of Psychology at the University of Connecticut for the past twenty five years, and he is the founder and former director of the now-defunct International Association for Near-Death Studies.

How did you come into an interest in near-death research?

There were many things that led to it, but the main thing was reading Raymond Moody's book, *Life After Life*, in 1975. I had heard about these experiences before that time and had started teaching about them in one of my graduate classes. It was essentially a latent interest of mine, just another topic I would teach about until I read Moody's book, and that really goaded me into wanting to do my own research to find out if these experiences were on the level.

I am interested in how you perceive that your work is received in the orthodox academic community. Is this considered a legitimate field of inquiry?

I would have to say that it has been mixed. If you say "orthodox academic community," it probably for the most part has not been received with great acclaim. But overall

there has been a grudging acceptance, not of my work necessarily, but of the fact that near-death experiences do exist, that they need to be reckoned with. Whatever they may be in terms of how we may be able to explain them, they are real in their effects. In the beginning when Moody was doing his work, it was at the level of anecdote, kind of impressionistic, and a lot of people were able to write it off. But now, in the years that have elapsed, so many different people have looked into it and provided evidence for the existence of this kind of phenomenon that it can't be dismissed any longer. So I think there is an acceptance of the fact that this particular experience exists, but not an acceptance of what people outside of academic life would consider its most significant ontological implications. In other words, I don't think it has really affected in a deep way people's view about the nature of consciousness or the importance of this kind of study, but it has resulted in at least a certain degree of acceptance of the phenomenon as a phenomenon. And I've been pleased that more and more people know the term "near-death experience" and are prepared to deal with it in academic work and even to talk about it in some of the courses. I do know that there are a number of textbooks in psychology where the near-death experience is talked about and not sneeringly. I would say on the whole, the reception, although mixed, has been encouraging, and I would expect it to continue in that direction.

Many orthodox — and I don't necessarily mean that in a pejorative sense — sceptics in the academic community, though accepting the reality and validity of the factual occurrence of the near-death experience, seem to keep offering explain-away theories. For instance, I heard Carl Sagan saying recently, "Well, it's very Freudian, the light at the end of the tunnel, it's like being born." How do these theories sound to you? Are some attractive and plausible, or do they all appear to be desperate attempts to avoid the obvious ontological content?



Dr. Kenneth Ring

Well, I don't know if they're attempts to avoid that, but they certainly do sidestep the issue. My view, and I think it's the view of most people who have spent some time studying this phenomenon, is that the more reductive explanations are at best partial explanations. At worst, they are simply ludicrous. Where we can provide factual information relevant to test those theories, they don't hold up very well, except as just partial explanations. I think at the same time it's true to say that even after a dozen years of research in this field, there's still no consensus as to how this experience is to be interpreted or even whether it can be interpreted in scientific terms. But I don't think that the critics and the sceptics who have tried to explain away the experience or

have tried to explain it in terms of natural phenomena only, have really done a terribly compelling job. If you look at their theories closely, they just don't stand up to the evidence. But one of the things you find is that people who don't know this particular phenomenon very well, who have never really studied it, are the ones who are the most cavalier about saying, well, it's nothing but a temporal lobe seizure or something of that sort. People who have looked into it are far more tentative about it.

Of all the books that deal with the subject of the near-death experience, it is the Moody book that most prominently mentions Swedenborg. I'm wondering to what degree you find Swedenborg insightful as corollary literature for near-death research.

Well, I can say that I teach a course at the university on the near-death experience and related phenomena, and in that course I spend two lectures talking about Swedenborg's life, so that I can introduce the students to him, because most people don't know much about his work, at least most of my students don't. I talk about the fit between Swedenborg's own teachings about what happens after death with the findings of the near-death experience. I find it quite

instructive. I don't know what category to put him in — sage, seer, or mystic. All of those, I think. He seems to have anticipated the findings of modern near-death experience research on the basis of his own personal experiences. It's really quite extraordinary that he could have said so much. A person who has had an NDE has essentially looked through a doorway. Swedenborg explored the whole house of death. Almost at his leisure he was able to record far more than the near-death experiencer can typically do. What near-death experiencers do tend to report is very consistent with what Swedenborg talks about. I make a point of emphasizing the connection between Swedenborg's writings and the near-death experience.

Pursuing that line of thought, I have heard of some research recently that indicates that a far



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greater percentage of near-death experiencers have somewhat negative, fearful experiences than the earlier surveys were indicating. Swedenborgians have always expected this to be true since Swedenborg said people basically carry their spiritual nature, their personality with them. Often, even though the light is there and all the good things are there, they are sort of unreceptive to it all. Can you comment at all on that aspect of the research?

Well, first I want to be clear about which research you are referring to. There's one

man, Charlie Garfield, who did some research in the seventies with terminally ill patients. He reported some negative experiences with that particular category of patients, even though that was minority response. The other person most associated with negative NDEs is a man named Maurice Rawlings, a cardiologist who works in Tennessee. Rawlings' findings have never been independently corroborated by any other research team, especially with regard to Rawlings' claim that perhaps as many as half of the NDEs which occur are negative. And in all of the research in the field of near-death studies, none has found negative experiences existing in the numbers that Rawlings claims. There certainly can be a way to reconcile the findings of NDE research with the teachings of Swedenborg. And also this would fit with the teachings of such traditions as the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*. What we see in the near-death experience is the beginning of what death may be, the first stages of death. The Tibetan tradition emphasizes that in the first bardo [state or realm in spiritual world] is the encounter with the primary white light — the light. That's what NDEers emphasize also. Now, following that, as you move into other bardos, you can get into negative kinds of experiences. I suspect that what one gets disproportionately in the near-death experiences is the aptitude, the encounter with the light of God. But whether or not you remain in that light probably depends on many factors, most significant of which, in the context of your question, would be the sorts of things that Swedenborg talks about. Essentially, what you come to somehow is a state which is equivalent of your own inner character. Basically, what is subjective in your life here becomes objective in your life there. So that if your character is not too wonderful you will find yourself in an environment that is somehow a fit with that particular kind of character. I don't think you're likely to be able to see that at the beginning of near-death experiences.

In just fifteen minutes . . .

There's no time in the experience. And we know that this experience can take place very fast in terms of clock time, although we can't always say how long it is. So there may very well be a bias in terms of the kind of reports that people give, because they are experiencing only the beginning stages of death. Even though we can be very encouraged by what the beginning stages of death

seem to be, because at least it says that light is there, the light is a reality, that light does love us, it still doesn't necessarily imply that we always remain in that light. What we see in a NDE is in fact not the after-death stage, but only the beginnings of what happens at the moment of death. That's why we emphasize the term *near-death experience*.

To what extent has attention to near-death experiences impacted the overall public perception regarding the afterlife, in your opinion?

That's a good question. We had hoped to be able to do a Gallup poll on this question to see how many people were familiar with the NDE, whether it did affect their views. I would say, and I'm just guessing from my own impressions, that the effect of the publicity given to the NDE has probably, if not increased, then at least reinforced the conviction that most people in the United States have: that there is some form of life after death. I don't believe there comes from this any kind of proof. Nevertheless, there's the suggestion of life after death. We already know from surveys that have been taken by a number of different national poll agencies like the Gallup organization that roughly two-thirds of adult Americans already believe in life after death. So we wouldn't expect that there would necessarily be a big increase, because the base is already so high. But I would say that this study of these experiences and the publicity it has garnered certainly hasn't done anything to lower the possibility of life after death.

How have your own views changed, Ken, in these many years working with the subject, maybe beginning where you remember you were in 1976?

If I can take it back a little further than '76, I did not have any particular religious or spiritual training or orientation when I was growing up, and I guess you could say I remained an agnostic until I was about 35. But I had some experiences around that time that basically shattered that view. I wouldn't say that I've ever been a religious person, but I felt that I came to know that we were living in a divine order, even before I undertook research on the near-death experience. So I wouldn't say that the work I've done has changed my views in the sense that I was an atheist when I began and now I believe, etc. But this work has certainly deepened my sense of the spiritual world, and I have been deeply impacted and affected by many of the

people that I have met who have had this experience, who seem to me to be, not in the sense in which Moody uses the term, but with uncapitalized letters, little beams of light. They seem to radiate light. They transmit this light; it's palpable. In the cases of people who are the best examples of what the NDE is, they shine forth the radiant light. The chance to not only interview but come to know and to have as friends many of these people has affected my spiritual outlook. It hasn't changed its content, but has affected me on an interior level. I don't want to imply by saying this that I feel like I'm like these people, but I only want to say that I've been affected by them and affected by their views. In one part of my study I asked people to rate a series of concepts, how they felt about these concepts before the experience, and



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how they felt about these concepts afterwards. One of the concepts was the concept of God. I used a five-point scale from -2 to +2, zero being neutral. Every single person in my sample — without exception — gave the highest possible rating after their near-death experience. And this was a very diverse sample. Only 40% of that sample had felt so strongly before their experience, and all of them stayed the same. Everybody else shifted

the point of maximum belief. I mention this only to be able to say that you can't be with people on such close terms as I've come to know these individuals who feel strongly about this without being affected by them. William James has a quote to the effect of, "The religious person believes what the mystic knows." In like fashion, the religious person may believe in God, or may have a faith that there is a God, but the NDEer, rightly or wrongly, feels that he or she *knows* that God is a reality. There's something about being with people who manifest this certainty that permeates me in some sense.

The organization that you have served as the director of, the International Association for Near-Death Studies (IANDS), has recently gone through a transition or reorganization.



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Are you putting together another non-profit organization?

No. I had thought about doing that at one time, but that was when it looked like IANDS might go under. It seemed that it might be a useful thing to try to create an organization that would carry on its work, at least to some degree. It now looks as though that organization is going to survive. It has recently transferred its location to another campus in the University of Connecticut system. [For information, readers may write to: IANDS, Dept of Psychiatry, University of Connecticut Health Center, Farmington, Conn. 06032.]

You're not associated with IANDS officially anymore, and they're going to carry on in whatever fashion seems good to them. How about you? What fashion do you foresee this work carrying on in your career?

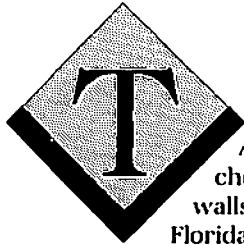
Well, I have tried to get beyond the study of the near-death experiences for some time, to move on to other areas. But I never seem quite able to leave it behind, so I hope I'll be able to build upon it. What I'm interested in now is something that I usually call the Omega Project. It represents an extension of some of the ideas in my last book, *Heading Toward Omega*. Briefly, I think that the NDE is a profoundly transforming experience for many of the people who have it. It brings about something like a chemical change, if I can put it that way. It brings about a psychophysical transformation; it changes the wiring of a person in a certain fashion, so that they have a kind of expanded awareness. What I would like to be able to do is to identify and describe the characteristics of this Omega prototype, because such a person may be a kind of evolutionary wave form for the kind of alteration of consciousness of the human species. I know this is grandiose and almost ludicrous-sounding, but in a way, I think these people may be forerunners of a higher type of humanity that's coming into manifestation now. In order to make a cogent case for this I can't simply assert this, but show there are objective biological or physiological properties of these persons that differ from persons who have not had these kinds of experiences. That work has never even been done, but I hope to interest some colleagues who have laboratory experience, a neuroscientist, for example, and some physicians, to be able to undertake studies of persons who have had these kinds of experiences to see whether or not in some biological way they may be different from individuals who have not had major spiritual inklings of the profundity that the NDEer has had. So, I'm still "heading toward omega" by carrying on this Omega project. That's what I'm going to do over the next several years.



A Woman Of Vision:

Alice Archer Sewall James And the Urbana Movement

Alice B. Skinner



Today portraits and paintings by Alice Archer Sewall James are cherished treasures, hanging on the walls of homes from New England to Florida, from California to Maryland. Her sphere of influence was modest in size, typical of that of many women, yet it reached to many people who regarded her as an inspiring teacher and a gifted artist. As often happens with creative people whose marching orders are given by their inner drummers, she was out of step with her times, creating religious murals at a time when accolades were going to expressionists and abstractionists, writing poetry and plays about mythic personages in an era of realism. She had a strong and unique sense of how things should be done and the ability to communicate her convictions to people of all ages. She believed that the Lord guided her life and she acted on His directives as she perceived them, with results sometimes misunderstood or berated by others.

In July 1931, a month before her sixty first birthday, Mrs. James wrote poem which begins,

Stay by me, roses;
For you too have eluded
The natural end of June,
Bloomed when you could, concluded,
And swelled with another boon;

Well might she be sensitive to late-blooming, for several years previously Mrs. James had begun again to sense her creative potential as an artist after a long period of dormancy. Until she was 35, Mrs. James showed promise of becoming a significant artist, entering paintings in exhibitions and competitions in Washington, Philadelphia, Chicago, St. Louis, and even Paris. Nor was she limited to graphic arts, for she designed stained glass windows (for the chancel of the Washington Church) and published several books of poetry and a volume of songs for which she wrote both words and music.

Mrs. James (1870-1955) was the eldest of

the five daughters of Rev. and Mrs. Frank Sewall. During her childhood her father was the president of Urbana University and minister to the Urbana, Ohio, society. As a young woman she lived in Washington, D.C. during the first ten years of her father's lengthy pastorate there. In Washington she studied with Howard Helmick, an American painter trained at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris.

Frank Sewall was a clergyman of many talents. In addition to administrative, teaching, and pastoral duties, he wrote hymns and played the piano, designed churches inspired by those seen on his travels in Europe, wrote books and translated Swedenborg, and founded the Swedenborg Scientific Association. His energies were dedicated to furthering the new about the New Church, and he raised daughters well-read in Swedenborg and prepared to lead distinctive New Church lives.

Alice Archer Sewall married John James of Urbana in 1899. The James family, active members of the Urbana Society, welcomed the newly married couple to the Virginia-style home built by John James' grandfather, and the younger Mrs. James settled in to continue her career as an artist as the newest member of a family consisting of her husband's mother and four unmarried sisters. John James set up a law practice in Urbana and, when that proved unsuccessful, turned to editing a local newspaper.

In 1905 Mrs. James succumbed to "nervous prostration." Overcome with lassitude, she was unable to lift a finger. Worse still, she became almost blind, condemned to wear heavy bifocals, unable to look from a subject to the painting on her easel. The promise she had shown as a young woman faded, and she experienced one of the "silences" which Tillie Olsen has described as afflicting gifted women, a period when creative energies are at a low ebb and the productivity which had seemed so bountiful could no longer be depended upon. Although



*An example of Mrs. James's refined New Romanticism,
Cupid's Temptation.*

married for five years, she had no home of her own and no child. The traditional occupations of homemaker and mother were as inaccessible as the artistic activity on which she depended for self-definition. As the artist in the family, she had been given a studio at the back of the house above the kitchen, but where was her place in the menage if she was no longer the artist?

Twenty years later, after a determined effort to regain her strength and improve her eyesight, Mrs. James, like the roses of her poem, burst into bloom again. She had discovered the Bates method of exercising eyes and undertook a regimen which freed her from the need for glasses. Once again she could look from subject to easel and took up portraiture, beginning to work in oils. She taught drawing at Urbana Junior College, successor to the Urbana University over which her father had presided. She published another volume of poetry, and wrote plays and pageants as well as several volumes of Biblical studies.

In the fall of 1933 Mrs. James gathered like-minded people, art students and Swedenborgians, to found the Urbana Movement, a group dedicated to fostering personal spiritual growth. Begun when the Urbana schools closed for lack of funds, the Movement combined religious principles with instruction in the arts. It was non-sectarian, broad enough in orientation to include Catholics, protestants of various denominations, and Amish in addition to Swedenborgians. The Urbana Movement operated a school which was open to anyone who wanted to learn, requiring only that the pupil not have a negative attitude toward the "work and spirit of the Movement."

The "Statement of the Urbana Movement" explains its origins "in an impulse to liberate the thoughts and feelings of youth from the insincerities of a worldly education by demonstrating the effectiveness of a continual remembrance of the Lord, as He is shown in the Writings of the New Church, and by providing a systematic and orderly freedom for giving and receiving of mental and technical instruction . . . The impulse moved, therefore, towards not only a definite experiment in the spiritual teaching of technical things, but in providing a large and radical base for the future working out of spiritual education."

The "Statement" proposes that the Movement proceed in a tentative fashion, feeling its way: "The curriculum, therefore, and the groups or classes, will form themselves from need outward, not as in other

institutions, from theories inward. What is wished to be learned will be wished to be taught, and, as both wishes are from the Lord, the teaching and the learning will cohere in groups or bodies of more or less order; a system, or curriculum, growing out of the innate activity of the idea . . ." The Movement was expected to take shape slowly and to represent "the Real, the Inner Urbana University." As a "corporate body it can retain Influx; can meet and answer questions and withstand disintegration, and can extend a certain kind of protection to other faint and spiritual beginnings of mind and heart wherever shown."

The Urbana Movement School offered courses in art, and also in literature, music, history, languages, dance and movement.



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depending upon the inclinations of students and teachers. The school year was organized into four terms, each running for six weeks. Classes met in rented quarters and homes of teachers and members. In its first semester, Fall 1933, Mrs. James taught Drawing, Painting, Composition, Modeling, Portraiture, the Interpretation of History, Construction of the Greek Drama, Appreciation of Art through the Greek Myths, and the Doctrine of the Discrete Degrees, all "taught from the interior reality of life to the exterior expression. . . . To teach in this way is the sole incentive of the Movement, be the subject what it may."

The Motto of the Urbana Movement School was, "Freely ye have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:8). The School was to operate without concern about money. A box was provided in the classroom for pupils to contribute toward the expense of the School "as they see the need and feel the desire." The

bylaws include an article on money which provides: "Members of the Movement are pledged not to allow money to become the motive for their work nor to allow the inception of any project to be dependent upon money in hand or money known to be procurable for the purpose, but that all works and projects be proceeded in with only trust in the Lord's Divine Providence, with or without money."

Mrs. James believed that one of the barriers to the use of inner sensitivities, or spiritual incentives, was a limited focus, attention to science or to religion, rather than to the source of the power of knowing in the "inmost chamber of the mind" where there is direct experience of the Lord. She advocated an active resting of the mind with the divine



One of the barriers to the use of inner sensitivities was a limited focus, attention to science or religion, rather than to the source of the power of knowing in the "innermost chamber of the mind" where there is direct experience of the Lord.



source of its wellsprings by constant repetition of the Lord's Prayer, thus keeping oneself "in the presence of Our Father:"

"The words can be said more or less constantly all the time . . . These words do not interfere with other thoughts; rather they prevent a wandering mind and induce ideas, and protect from waste emotions. Perhaps the Prayer has never been used in just this way before. Surely as things stand today, it is time to do something that has never been done before. The Lord's Prayer, we are told by Swedenborg, is the most powerful instrument on earth, connecting through all the heavens of thinking and the heavens of feeling with the bosom of the Lord Himself, the Divine Human Being who knows what we are after in the place where we are. It is so constructed that its immensity of help covers every minutest detail of intention of the asker. Good flows through it unavoidably, and because it has been so universally said,

and is still so said, it holds families, nations, humanity, the very fabric of the earth in some kind of shape against a constantly impending ruin. By the search-light of its short sentences we are kept in sight of ourselves as belonging to others, and by the heat of its imploring we are kept in the warm blood of the Inflowing Lord. We are constantly thus being re-created. We recognize those things we are provided to do, we think of those means and causes for things yet to be done, and we stop in fear and terror before the things we must not do. Provided for, hindered and enlightened we go tentatively, experimentally from act to act. And surely this is education, and creative education."

As president of the Urbana Movement Mrs. James undertook a regimen of constant prayer, with frequent visits to the church to pray in order to keep its members tuned to a Divine Purpose and, through them and their activities, to provide a channel for the Lord to be actively present in the world. She legitimized what she was doing and wanted to do, both as teacher and as artist, by dedicating it to a purpose larger than the personal. She envisioned both the source and the effect of her work as earth-shaking. No longer functioning from an individual or personal basis, her activities were rationalized in terms of requirements placed on her (and on those around her, those whose daily lives interfaced with hers) by an external and irrefutable source. What grounds could there be for anyone to question the propriety of her responding to the Lord's call? If they were to question, the importance of hewing to her course was dictated by her commitment as president of the Urbana Movement.

The Urbana Movement held an annual meeting of its members, an occasion on which each reported on the year's activities in the name of Movement. Those who lived at a distance sent reports which were read to the assembled group, and those in the classes brought completed work to show what they had accomplished. Mrs. James gave a president's address which expressed her concerns about the state of the Movement. The concluding paragraph of the First Annual Address as president of the Movement expresses her views of the pathway between the person and God: "Let us take note that this Movement is not from us to the Lord. It is from the Lord to us and back again to Him. It may pass by us. It is that broad 'pure river of life, clear as crystal proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.' If we cannot keep in it, it will flow farther away, receiving other efforts in its bright strong current . . .

And if we continue to be part of it rationally, understandingly, as is our peculiar right, the Lord who moves the Movement can do vastly more with that River to satisfy the parched, thirsting minds and hearts of those who cannot yet understand. For there is no fatalistic help from the Lord. Man can help, and man can retard. Let us help."

The Urbana Movement continued until the late 1940s, renting rooms in the center of Urbana for art studios and holding classes in the James home. Mrs. James was the principal instructor, aided by others who had specialties such as music or Spanish which its members wanted to learn. Under its auspices people in the Urbana area received classical training as artists; they helped with projects undertaken by Mrs. James, such as painting murals for two Black churches. The time

spiritual and natural planes and the flow of Love and Truth from the Lord to the individual human. Having learned to live these principles, and treasuring them as guides for rational planning of everyday affairs, Mrs. James reaffirmed their importance in her own life by creating an organization based upon them. And as she began to teach and found it necessary to rationalize her procedures in order to explain and communicate them to students, Mrs. James no doubt became increasingly aware of the roots of her own creativity in Swedenborgian concepts.

Mrs. James lived to be 85, continuing to write and paint, creating the "clustered works" foretold in the second and third verses of "Stay by me, roses:"



*Oil painting,
The
Sailmaker,
1898*

came when studio space was no longer available and Mrs. James, by then in her late seventies, needed to care for her husband during his last illness. The legacy of the Urbana Movement, of years of instruction and focus on spiritual growth continues in the lives of those who participated.

There can be no question of the sincerity of Mrs. James's dedication nor the reality of the call she experienced to create the Movement, but the requirement of the Movement also solved a personal problem for her. As a child and young woman she had lived within a spiritual discipline created by her parents. She was the daughter of a clergyman who was dedicated to identifying and carrying out the requirements of a new religious dispensation at home, in the family circle, and in his everyday life, as well as in his professional ministerial capacity. Frank Sewall tutored his daughter, who read Swedenborg daily with him for many years, in Swedenborgian concepts of the links between the celestial,

Stay by me, roses.
Something will come of this
That is not of earth's order.
You have long known, I wis
That spirit-garden's border
Where clustered works are monthly seen
Without such thirsty droughts between.
Leave me not, roses;
Into decay we go
Each for our proper blooming,
So well the way ye know
Accustomed to entombing
Trustful of resurrections, stay ye near!
And 'tis the dew that glitters; not a tear.

Alice Blackmer Skinner is a research psychologist (Ph.D., Harvard University) who specializes in the study of the lives of women. The preceding article is from "Stay By Me, Roses," a biography of Alice Archer Sewall James. In addition to her research, Mrs. Skinner is Vice President of the Swedenborg Foundation and publisher of its new journal, Chrysalis. ◇

He Is Risen!

(Then Why Are You Depressed?)

Ivan D. Franklin



What's wrong about being "down," having "blues"? Even the Lord on his way to Golgotha said: "Weep not for me. Weep for yourself."

OK. If you have to be depressed, then weep. Really, you may enjoy a good cry. At least for the beginning. At the end of this etude, Swedenborg will prescribe to us a medicine against all states of anxiety and depression.

Let us return to our weeping. Our tears may clear our eyes, and then we can see better our face in the mirror. Or you can have a distorted vision about everything — another possibility to prove to yourself how the world is ugly. Self-pity is better than the self-punishment. Feeling guilty can be destructive. So let us cry creatively. Or at least when we know that a comforter is nearby. (A little girl fell on the stairs and bruised her knees; she began to cry very loudly, but nobody heard her. She went — silently — to all the rooms in the house and found emptiness; she ran fast to the attic: nobody there. To the cellar: no comforter. So she ran and ran among the trees and bushes to the end of their vast garden, and there she saw her Mom sitting, reading a book. Now she found it meaningful to cry and cry . . .)

Here let us learn something useful about depression. It represents a reduction of break-down of self-esteem. Here we are: did we need this kind of self-esteem that can be so fragile? Among the factors affecting self-esteem are the following: 1. Self-image. 2. Super-ego (perhaps you want too much for yourself). 3. Ego-ideal. 4. Ego functions. Depressive disorder usually begins as a reaction to a loss or to a failure of some kind. The loss may be a death or a disappointment by a loved object. The depression may also be triggered by a failure to live up to one's standards or to achieve one's personal or vocational goals. Whatever the immediate cause, the depression is characterized by a

$40 \times 10 = 400$ (four hundred)

or

$40^{10} = 40,000,000,000$ (forty billion).

To put the number 10 in the higher place (exponentially) means to think spiritually. Remember the Ten Commandments: they are no prohibitions, they are the directions how to enhance your powers, your self esteem, your life to make not only long, but eternal. Look up . . . and you may try again and have a good cry that you missed so many beautiful days without sunshine by closing your windows and remaining in a dark and dirty room. . . . Start to think now what comes in three days after the Crucifixion! Don't miss it when it comes.

Here we are again. The question is: Why can such an esteem of yourself be lost? A warning: Depressive disorder generally produces perceptible alterations in critical judgment of self and others. Denial and distortion of various facets of reality are invariably found. It means that the depressed people are not evil, but they are always in falsity. (Therefore a cognitive therapy may be quite successful). What is therapy? Be a warrior, not a worrier. (Easy to say, but . . . So remove those "buts"). Think exponentially! — Look up! Learn to see the difference in what you lose or gain, but overall learn to read the equations:

And while you are wiping your illuminated eyes, take a pencil and write down your priorities. I want you to believe that most of them are like soap bubbles. Zero, zero and another zero. You may argue that your health, your home, your career, your service to your country, etc., are not zeroes. Then tell me what number would you like to give them? Do you know that if zero is a symbol of eternity, then you can do much with it? If you put zero exponentially (e.g. 3^0 or any possible number, even the imaginary number) you always get the same result: One (yes, positive 1). But our zeroes are not eternal by themselves; they need this positive

Whatever the immediate cause, depression is characterized by a loss of self-esteem.

One. It now depends where you are going to put it. Imagine: first comes my self-esteem, then my position, my rank, my being a son, a father, a husband; then perhaps country, my church. How many zeroes? Nine? And after that? Oh yes, you remembered: *now* you put Him, our Lord. It looks like this: 0.000000001. So this is your value. How can you have great self-esteem? You don't deserve it! But place the Lord on the first place and you will see who you are! 1,000,000,000 (one billion)! Let me see how you are smiling!

How to get this beauty? Read Swedenborg's *Arcana Celestia* 1618! Especially about the state of holiness which you get while participating in the worship service here on earth, in your city, in your village, in your home; while you are still a human, a spirit clothed with body. I want you to memorize (as a prescription against all kinds of "blues" and sorrows) these lines: "But the person while in the world ought not to be otherwise than in external worship also; for by external worship external things are kept in holiness, so that internal things can flow in. Besides, the human being is thus imbued with cognitions, and is prepared for receiving things celestial as also he is gifted with states of holiness that he himself is unaware of!"

Please, don't expect always to feel great, to be elated all the time. Worshipping the Lord in His Holy Temple can bring you deeper happiness than you can just feel or imagine. Your unawareness is a special blessing — and the holiness flowing into your subconscious mind, celebrating the joy with your internal self, your interior self will make your external self immune against all the depressions of the world. Now you can cry and weep and sob — with joy and gratitude! In my country people were not seen being depressed, no suicide occurred during my youth in Carpathia, where I lived. I dare to speculate that it was because we greeted each other with "Glory be to Jesus Christ!" "Glory for ever!" was the answer. But at Easter time until the Pentecost we met each other with the words of greeting as follows: "Christ is Risen!" And answered: "He is risen indeed!" How can you afford to be depressed after knowing this terrific News?!

... And of course we kissed each other three times.

The Rev. Dr. Ivan Franklin is pastor at the Riverside, California Swedenborgian Church.



SWEDENBORG FOUNDATION

139 East 23rd Street
New York, NY 10010

The Swedenborg Foundation announces two openings for professionals to interact with the public, gain support for the work of the Foundation, and communicate information about Swedenborg and Swedenborgian thought.

Executive Director. Candidates must demonstrate expertise in administration, fund raising, and effective interpersonal relationships. Experience in publishing and marketing information materials is desirable.

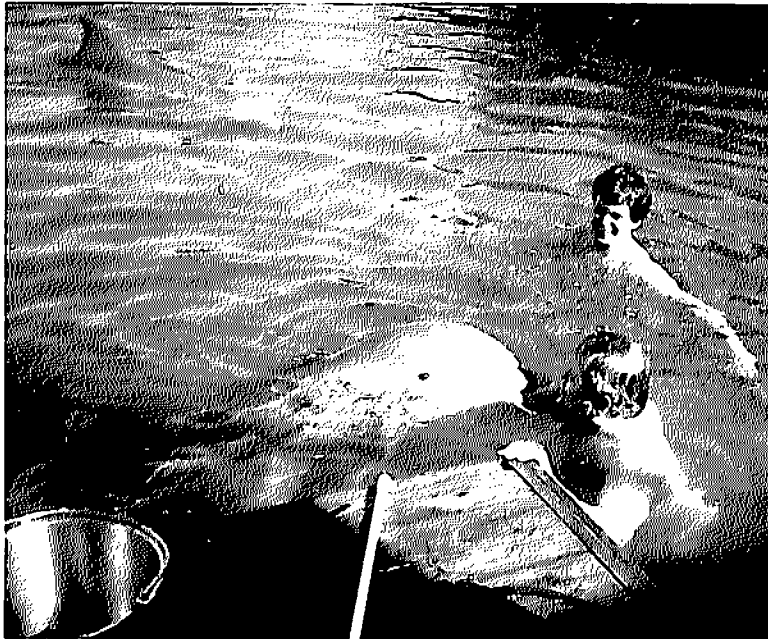
Bookstore Supervisor. Candidates must have experience in ordering, inventory control, display, and promotion of books and films. Background in philosophy, arts, and humanities is desirable in addition to knowledge of Swedenborg's writings.

Interested individuals should send a resume to the president:
Mr. John Seekamp
109 Bay Avenue
Huntington, NY 11743.

Ministers and Spouses Work and Frolic at Institute

Every two years Swedenborgian ministers and spouses from all over Canada and the United States gather in a warm clime to work, play and deepen their professional solidarity as colleagues. Viewed as both professional development and a mini-vacation simultaneously. Convention funds the transportation and the ministers and spouses fund their own lodging, meals and miscellaneous.

This year we took our week (Feb. 9-15) in



President of Convention, Rev. Randall Laakko (foreground) deep in communication with a dolphin, while Rev. Eric Allison looks on.

Marathon, Florida, the key halfway to Key West. The Rev. Dick Tafel and his wife Linda of Cincinnati made all the arrangements, including meal planning, room assignments and all air and ground transportation, for which the group was deeply appreciative. Our mornings and evenings were scheduled with a potpourri of presentations, workshops, and small group work, while the afternoons were free.

We also had the entire day of Thursday free. A number of excursions were available. A few people went snorkeling; others went to swim with dolphins (see photo); quite a few went sea fishing (our group caught 53 "keepers" in one afternoon, which were parlayed into a marvelous fish fry, courtesy of Gretchen Tafel, on Saturday night); there was a postcard-perfect beach nearby; nearly everybody at one point or another took in Key West. The accommodations were so suitable and affordable that the group voted to hold the next Institute (in 1989) in Marathon again!

The Rev. David Johnson of Seattle was one of the more successful fishermen, and he also participated in an evening workshop on proprioceptive writing. The following is a result of the combination of those two adventures. —Editor

The Sea And I

David P. Johnson

I am tired. It is a warm, relaxed tiredness. It comes from confrontation with the sea. Exhausting! Exciting! Thrilling! Massive, it encounters my small, limited humanity. Massive in its productiveness — fish of every description, eels, crabs, lobsters. Beautiful beyond any possibilities of imagination. What's this one? I've never seen it before. It makes sounds. "It's a croaker," says one bait boy. "It's a grunt," says another.

A sharp tug! A taut line for an instant. The line goes slack. Another strike and the line is taut again. Frantically I reel in the line. Aha! A sea perch. Re bait. Back goes the line. Almost instantly a sharp pull on the line. Then nothing. Nothing still! In comes my line. No bait! That one outsmarted me.

New bait. Again I pay out the line 'till it touches bottom and quickly I reel in two or

three turns. I wait. That's one! I jerk the rod to set the hook and there is still a struggle down there. I fight to reel in the line. There it is, squirming, thrusting, trying to shake itself off. An eel! A moray eel — sharp teeth in a tiny pointed mouth, yet beautiful with yellow, green and white markings. "Anybody seen a moray eel," the bait boy says, showing it around. With pliers, holding the eel over the water, he snips the line and my eel is gone.

Time to move on. In come the lines. In comes the anchor. The engines throb and we move on out into the deep, green undulating sea. It does not receive us easily. SLAP! It strikes our bow. A fresh shower of sea water sends passengers scurrying for shelter. Not I. I love the sea, its power, its freshness, its saltiness, its deep unknown being. Greater it is than I, than all men and women who are or ever have been. It helps me know my place and says, "Lay down your arrogance and see that I am the greater even beyond your comprehension."

I know that in this vast physical presence, God has spoken — that He helps me look at my finiteness. And yet, so generously He gives me of Himself in the beautiful life in the depth of the sea. A tiny reminder of my dependence on His creation — exhaustive beyond my capacity to understand.

The sea rolls, swells, rocks the vessel and

I walk like a drunken man to get more bait, wash my hands or to talk to my fellow fishermen. Excitedly Rachel says, "Did you catch another one?" Gretchen comes from around the starboard side, "Isn't this great? Let's do it again Saturday afternoon."

"Pull in your lines!" Engines rumble. The anchor comes in and we are off again, challenging the sea with the sturdiness of our ship. Again the lovely swells strike us saying,



"BEWARE! I am here!"

Why does the sea call me to it? I really don't know. Something very basic. Something deep in the being of creativeness, of oneness with the world, my home. ◇

Most of the group that gathered for Institute '87.



Phyllis Bosley, Editor

Peter: Part I

Jennifer Clements

Jennifer Clements, a member of the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church, recently went through a training program for volunteer hospice work. She kept a journal of her experiences with her first "patient," and was persuaded to edit a two part series of entries that provides a special window into one avenue of lay ministry.

Tuesday, January 7, 1987

Peter is still alive. Each day, when I arrive at the house, I expect to find that he died in the night but again today, I'm greeted by a very tired mother who says Peter is pretty much as he was yesterday.

The bedroom focuses on Peter who lies utterly motionless in the bed. I take his arm and it is sticky with sweat. No response at all. I brush the long hair back from his wet forehead but his eyes stare at the ceiling. He breathes more gently today, not the harsh gasping of yesterday. A few breaths and then none for a long, long time.

I talk to him and tell him how much I admire him. He is so very peaceful. That once big body is almost withered away to nothing. He doesn't eat or drink. He is too busy dying. I feel a deep affection for him though I have known him for less than a couple of months and have no idea of what his loves are in this world. What sports, what favorite foods? We never talked about those things. We only talked about how nice it felt to have his arms rubbed or how scared he was.

It is not alarming to visit Peter. Holding that dying body is somehow very comforting, not scary. It is a passage not an end. And I'm not afraid. I wonder why.

Peter has AIDS and he is my first client as a volunteer in the San Francisco AIDS Hospice program.

Wednesday, November 5, 1986

After the orientation meeting, Bob, the volunteer coordinator asks, "Are you ready for a client?" My heart gives a little leap knowing that this is the beginning of a very big adventure.

Peter is 36, was diagnosed with Pneumocystis in February and is currently in bed with neuropathy at home. Peter has had other volunteers and has rejected them.

"Diagnosed." Somebody you know is "diagnosed," then the guy downstairs, then your lover and how long will it be before you have it too? I can only guess what that kind of fear must feel like. It is a plague and a crap game.

Sunday, November 16

I'm sitting in the car before ringing the doorbell. Will Peter reject me too?

No big deal. They are ordinary people. Peter is very quiet. Most of the time neither he nor I have anything to say but the visit makes me feel good.

Thursday, November 20

I am worried as I drive to Peter's house today. I'm not at all sure he wants me there. What on earth will we talk about? As a volunteer I have no excuse for being there. No medicine to give, no forms to fill out.

Peter is alert. We talk about nothing. I move him around in bed, get water, Kleenex, pull him up. He bumps himself by accident and becomes enraged. I'm exhausted after 3 hours of reaching out to him. No drama. No talk about dying or reincarnation or even about feelings.

Peter's friends are many and wonderful. Maybe this kind of circumstance reduces one's circle of friends to only the very best. The fearful and the selfish are long gone. The ones I meet are all gay and all different and I am flattered that they speak honestly with me.

Friday, November 21

Peter is in the hospital. He has an eye infection which may cause blindness.

The only thing certain about this disease is that every case is different. How difficult and frustrating it must be for the doctors who know they are fighting a losing battle with every case. Much easier for us who are in a position to work toward death rather than struggle against it.

Sunday, November 23

I spend an hour and a half rubbing

Peter's back and arms today. Touch seems to be the way to reach him, not words. I feel waves of gratitude from him. He's hurting and wanting to be held. I finally feel comfortable with him.

Monday, November 24

Dr. Fischer told Peter today that the paralysis is permanent. He will never walk again. Peter cried when he heard the news. Privately, the doctor tells us that Peter probably won't see Christmas.

Monday, December 8

I sit on the edge of Peter's bed. He holds out his hand to me and says, "I want a little warmth," so I rub his hands and arms. I ask him whether he is afraid. He says, "I just want to get it over with. I don't want to watch my body deteriorate." It is the first he has spoken of death.

He makes long sad animal noises. Groans from his very soul. I ask him if he hears them. "Yes, I hear them," he says. "You know what I'm saying? I'm saying Mama, Mommy, come fix it."

I am amazed that I can take up such an intimate role. The nearness of death seems to drop all barriers. I am asked whether seeing Peter makes me sad or depressed. No. I come away feeling in the presence of some quite remarkable process. Peter is living his life at a million miles an hour so he can finish in time to die. All of us are assembled to be a part of it.

Make Someone Happy

Carole Rienstra

Do you have (tucked away somewhere under the kitchen sink, perhaps) an empty can of Hershey's Cocoa, Nestle's Quik, or Coffee International? I always hate to throw those cans away because I think there must be *something* I could do with them. Well . . . here's an idea: MAKE A MITE BOX.

Find a scrap piece of fabric that you really love. You might find something to match your kitchen or pretty enough to set on your dresser in the bedroom, or come to think of it, you might like to cover it to match your laundry room to keep it handy to collect change from pockets before they go in the wash. The object is to have it handy, to have it visible where you (and others) can drop loose coins. A place where you change purses

might be another idea . . .

Take the measurements of the can and cut a piece of fabric (or contact paper) to size. Glue it on with a bit of Elmer's and cover the raw edges with rick-rack, braid or trim. Next, take a hammer and screwdriver and make a slit in the top large enough for a fifty cent piece or silver dollar. In Fryeburg we made them at a Women's Alliance meeting. That way we could share fabric scraps and help one another. It was fun!

Most important is to have a Mite Box and use it. Hopefully, every woman in Convention will make one (or use a cup or bank) and save their "mites" (loose change). Then, let's bring it all to Convention '87 in Tacoma (in the form of a check made payable to Women's Alliance). With this money, some women, who would otherwise not be able, will attend Convention '88 in Boston for Swedenborg's 300th Birthday celebration. Now that will really make someone happy! ♦



Swedenborg Symposium '88

Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania
Sunday through Tuesday
February 7-9 1988

A celebration of Emanuel Swedenborg's Tricentennial examining his wide-ranging thought, in relationship to his culture and ours, in such fields of inquiry as:

Theoretical science, theology, history, applied science, philosophy, psychology, social science, literature, the arts.

Call for Papers. Original contributions tracing Swedenborg's influence in any of these areas are invited for oral presentation at the Symposium. Deadline for abstracts is May 15, 1987. Accepted presenters will receive an honorarium plus travel expenses to Bryn Athyn.

For further information and registration forms, contact:

Dr. Jane Kintner Williams-Hogan
The Academy of the New Church College
P O Box 278
Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania 19009
215-947-4200 ext. 301

Sanctity of All Life

Dear Editor,

While I didn't have the opportunity to see the October *Messenger's* editorial regarding when "human life" begins, I've read with keen interest the letters of response in the December issue. This question has been close to my heart for many years. My husband and I have a retarded son, the eldest of five children. Be assured I'm not lacking in sympathy for people who have severe problems to face. But I am also the daughter, sister and wife to three physicians. All three have spent their many years in medicine with "primum non nocere (first do no harm)" as the basic guide for their profession. All three took the Hippocratic Oath when they graduated from medical school — an oath which specifically mentions not giving a woman the means to induce an abortion (Many schools no longer use the oath.).

It may seem that these are but outdated pagan laws. However an examination of our Judeo-Christian heritage will reveal a number of similar prohibitions. For example, while the Jews were held captive in Egypt, they apparently refrained from trying to abort their infants. To this day, one may read the praise for their courage in the Talmud.

Further, *Exodus* contains a law concerning the striking of a pregnant woman. If she came to no harm, there was no penalty. But if "any lasting harm follows, then you shall give life for life." (*Exodus* 21:23) Since the days of the early Christian Church, until the last half of this century, it was generally accepted that the life of the unborn child was to be protected. The exception was made for cases in which the mother's very life was in danger. This was considered a "battlefield situation" and only then was the life of the unborn child usually ended.

Since the 1973 Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion, our country has had abortion virtually on demand. I wonder about the effect this had on our society. I do not agree that Swedenborg offers next to nothing on this matter. I find a great many relevant teachings.

1). Angels are present with infants in the womb, and the Lord works through the angels to care for the unborn child (*Arcana*

Celestia 5052).

2). There are two universal spheres from the Lord for the preservation of the universe — the sphere of procreating and the sphere of protecting what is procreated (*Conjugal Love* 386)

3). When the heart and lungs cease to correspond, separation and death occur. Death does not occur only when breathing stops, but when the heart no longer beats. So long as the heart moves, love remains with its vital heat and preserves life, as is evident in cases of swoon, suffocation and in the condition of fetal life in the womb. (*Divine Love and Wisdom* 390).

These are only a few examples. Several of the broader themes seem also to underscore the sanctity of the life in the womb. All those teachings point to one thing: that the unborn child should be protected and defended.

Julie de Maine Pendleton
Bryn Athyn, Penn.

Soul, Breath and Life

Dear Editor,

Re: "Definition of Life," (*Jan. Messenger*): The writings clearly state: the soul is from the father and the vesture from the mother" (*C.L.*260). As a consequence, for life to begin with the first breath of the body the element of oxygen would have to contain the soul. Oxygen is a natural substance to which the lungs are physiologically receptive and spiritually perceptive; however, no amount of breath can resuscitate a receptacle which is totally devitalized and without a living soul also present within that body. I believe that this devitalized receptacle remains in a state of limbo, until "the initial triggering of oxygen," by which it sets in motion both the unification and co-existence of body and soul.

The above concept may to some degree touch on this principle in the following scripture: "And the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground [natural elements, which are themselves devoid of life; and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, [signifying perception] and man became a living soul." (*Gen* 2:7) God had given man the life of faith and love, which

corresponds to the activation of the heart and lungs [see AC94].

John Powerly
St. Petersburg

Problem with Reincarnation, but not with Swedenborg's Vision

Dear Editor,

I'm afraid that Carothers Witt (February *Opinion*) has a point: The doctrine of reincarnation allows everyone to go through the development process provided by life in the world. If one dies early, he or she will come back and begin again. The Christian viewpoint, in which there is only one life, has no way to replace this process if it is cut off by early death.

It has been suggested that the Lord would nevertheless have ways of compensating for the loss. But if the compensation is just as good as a life in the world, then the physical world becomes superfluous. We might as well be born in the spiritual world and just go through that compensatory process. It should be pretty clear that the physical world was created for a purpose which it alone can satisfy; otherwise we can't justify its existence.

Still, reincarnation lacks clear evidence and has internal problems. The classic Swedenborgian response to claims that one can remember a past life is not that mischievous spirits plant false memories in people, but that memories can be shared (*Heaven and Hell*, n.256). Memories of a past life are from the earthly lives of nearby spirits. In the spiritual world, those who are nearby are similar to oneself in character and quality, so their memories are likely to be verifiable and to depict lives that one could have lived.

Contrary to reports, one-life theory doesn't assume that the circumstances into which one is born are determined by chance. Swedenborg points out that there is no such thing as chance; Providence is involved in everything. A child is at least connected to his parents by shared characteristics. He is by temperament and disposition a branch of the old family tree. That brings him into a personal world created by people essentially like himself, and the ongoing drama of their lives will be emotionally and spiritually significant to him.

How can an infant's body house an adult soul which has lived before? This is a central

problem in reincarnation theory, and it's difficult to imagine a more awkward and strange combination. Mr. Witt says that according to reincarnationists, only the spiritual and ethical consequences of one's previous life, "the psychic pattern," carry over. All "talents, knowledges and basic familiarity with the world" are dropped.

The problem with this answer is that what is carried over is the most serious and adult part of the personality. Nothing creates and embodies adulthood more intensely than its spiritual and ethical conflicts. The personality that comes out of them would seem very strange in a child. Yet the spiritual journey must survive or reincarnation has no point. To avoid postulating an incongruous maturity in a child's behavior, some reincarnationists have said that only a psychic structure, not personality, is carried over. But then reincarnation is no longer a theory of personal survival. Something is reborn, but not a person.

Dr. Friedemann Horn's article on Swedenborg's "calling vision" (February) was interesting but not very clear. To be sure, there are discrepancies between various accounts of Swedenborg's experience, but they don't appear to be critical. One would expect different accounts to differ over details, as long as the same basic story emerged. Nevertheless, Dr. Horn says that an attack on Swedenborg's credibility is waiting in ambush:

. . . Robsahm's account has abetted criticism of Swedenborg's credibility — a criticism which appears to be constantly lying in ambush, as will be shown in a particularly striking example. (p. 24)

But it doesn't become clear what the striking example is, or just what the criticism is. At the very end, Dr. Horn quotes Carl Jung, but does Jung make the criticism? Probably so, but one would rather know for sure, and we need to see a personal reaction like Jung's reduced to philosophical issues.

Could we have a further statement from Dr. Horn?

Steve Koke
Penn Valley, Calif.

Where Shall We Inquire?

Dear Editor,

In the February issue of the *Messenger*, my good friend the Editor makes repeated pleas on behalf of a "spirit of inquiry" by the

New Church. He supports that spirit particularly in the following sentences:

"The spirit of inquiry is the freshest breath of air that can ever grace a religious movement." "Swedenborg gives us a treasure trove of insights and revelations with which to carry forth into our own inquiries." "To the degree that we actually engage in spiritual inquiry with intensity we will to the very same degree be ready to serve the needs of those searching for higher ground."

But questions at once arise. Let us adopt the definition that the "spirit of inquiry is the freshest breath of air that can ever grace a religious movement." Where shall we inquire? Into physics? astronomy? history? biology? sociology? computer sciences? religion? Shall we inquire on how to add or take away from our teachings?

Swedenborg declares in *Apocalypse Revealed*: "By not adding to or taking away anything from what is written in the Apocalypse means in Heaven that nothing is to be added or taken away from the truths of doctrine concerning the Lord or concerning faith in Him."

The Lord says: "I, Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches" . . . "which signifies a testification by the Lord before the whole Christian world to the truth that the Lord alone manifested the things that are written in this book, and which are now laid open." (A.R. 959)

Meantime the question remains: Where shall we look? Where shall we direct our "spirit of inquiry?" Who will tell us where?

Leon C. Le Van
St. Petersburg

New Zealand, Anyone?

Dear Editor,

We would like to issue the following:

"AN INVITATION from New Zealand to attend a Family Camp to be held at Willow Park Christian Camp Centre, Eastern Beach, Auckland, from 2 January 1988 to 9 January 1988.

Bookings to be received by 1 October 1987 to Brian Akrigg, 1/10 Mountain Road, Panmure, Auckland 6, New Zealand.

Camp charges approximately:

NZ \$16 per day Adults

NZ \$13 per day Children 10 -15 and Students

NZ \$12 per day Children 3 - 9 years

Concessions for families.

Brian Akrigg
Auckland

Symbols and the Parish

Kathleen Easton

How many times do you use the phrase, "it's like," or "it's as if"? As Swedenborgians, perhaps we are more conscious of a deeper meaning to these phrases. Perhaps because of Swedenborg's concept of correspondences, we emphasize these phrases more; i.e., they are symbolic phrases.

Recently, Dr. Dorothea Harvey visited with us here at the Swedenborg School of Religion, and we spent an enlightening day learning from her and discussing the subject of symbols, both in general and as they can relate to the parish.

One of our roles as future ministers will be to set an atmosphere which allows and assists others to come to God in worship, and symbols can assist with that task. By and large, white, western Protestantism has lost or given up the goodness and gifts. This can be traced historically to the time of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation in Europe. Sad to say, the benefits of the richness of the meaning of symbols were lost, sometimes for no other reason than to discard Popery. In short, the baby was thrown out with the bathwater. Even in 1986, I can feel a resistance to symbolism in our church, which to me contradicts the Swedenborgian teaching on correspondences. Drawing from the Roman Catholic tradition, which is my background, I can see and have felt how symbolism can enrich what are otherwise flat liturgies.

We can enjoy and experience diverse expressions of our spirituality, but its focus comes back to the Word. The presence of God is in the Word, heavy in symbolism and inner meaning, translated for us, so to speak, by Swedenborg. This does not preclude our own individual imagery, visualization and meaning. Indeed, some suggest the psyche, as well as the body, has instinctive needs and that correct understanding of symbolism is necessary for a full life of harmony. This would make sense in a holistic model of the "person." Jung says in *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*:

"Do we ever understand what we think? We only understand that thinking which is a mere equation, and

from which nothing comes out but what we have put in. That is the working of the intellect. But beyond that there is a thinking in primordial images — in symbols which are older than historical man; which have been ingrained in him from earliest times, and, eternally living, outlasting all generations, still make up the groundwork of the human psyche. It is only possible to live the fullest life when we are in harmony with these symbols; wisdom is a return to them."

What is a symbol? A couple of definitions we worked with during the day were: representation of what is beyond; or, halfway between the verbal and non-verbal; or, a correspondence. Through a correct appreciation of the power of symbols, we can be in touch with the other dimension, which exists, and is there, whether or not we care to "connect."

Dr. Harvey outlined for us the entire liturgical year beginning with Halloween, which we discussed in detail. Halloween occurs in Autumn, the time of falling leaves, the time of more darkness than light. So a process of dying is what we are dealing with. In Urbana, they share a Halloween liturgy, focusing on the parts of the self which need to die and the parts which need to live and be nurtured in the light. This is symbolized by experiencing total darkness in the church for a short time followed by the lighting of candles to feel the beauty of the light. It is also a time of remembering those who have passed through the darkness of death into the light of the spiritual world. They conduct this service sitting around a table cloth which has been spread out on the floor of the chancel, and the prayer experience is centered around darkness/light, those who have passed to life in the spiritual world through physical death (represented by the eating of soul cakes). Prayers of thanks are offered for those whose lives have touched ours in special ways. Following right after Halloween in early Christian festivals (and still part of Roman Catholic tradition) are the feasts of All Souls and All Saints. So it is an appropriate time, the time of the "death" of things in Nature, to be thinking and meditating on the death/life aspects of the spirit.

All the other main events in the Church year are equally rich in inner meaning — Advent, Christmas, The Epiphany, Lent, Palm Sunday, Easter, Passover, Pentecost and ending with the spiritual fulfillment of New Church Day. Of this last one, Dr. Harvey would like to see the development of some

special symbolism for this significant event in the Swedenborgian Church.

We also discussed some Chinese and Native American symbols as well as the abstract concepts of introspection, illumination, innocence and wisdom. We diagrammed where they all fitted in Swedenborg's correspondential concept from Divine Love and Wisdom of the spiritual world's major regions, North, South, East and West, the same as those of the natural world. Of these, the East is the region where the Lord appears as the Sun and it is the East which determines all the rest.

Granting that the East determines all the major religions in the spiritual world, and that in the highest sense 'the East' means the Lord, and also means divine love, we can see that it is the Lord and love to Him that is the source of everything. We can also see that to the extent that a person is not involved in that love, they are moved away from the Lord, and live in the West or the South or the North, the distance depending on the acceptance of love.

(Divine Love and Wisdom, #122)



Rev. Dr. Dorothea Harvey,

These types of symbols can help us understand both the cyclical and polar natures of things, e.g., darkness/light; love of God/love of self, etc.

The symbolism we choose in dream processing, healing or liturgy is important. It expresses our idea, our concept of what is beyond. Working with these symbols, understanding and interpreting them is important to process, change and growth. Some of them, after years of use, become rote and automatic. This was my personal experience. Our day with Dr. Harvey helped me take a new look at the benefits and richness to be derived from symbols.

Think on it, reflect upon it. Discuss it in your parishes. Can you enrich your spiritual life individually and in your community? Go to the literature, find out the pagan and early Christian "connections" not only to the historical past, but to the rich, inner depths which are our spiritual inheritance.

Kathleen Easton, pursuing ministry as a "second career," is a first year student at the Swedenborg School of Religion near Boston. ♦



Start Your Visit to the Northwest with an Exploration Of the Region's Natural Beauty!

This walking tour of Mt. Rainier on
Tuesday, June 30, will be led by:

*Anne Perry —
a naturalist familiar with local fauna and flora*

*John Perry —
Convention's treasurer and an experienced mountaineer,
who has climbed the mountain before*

Registration deposit to reserve your place is \$20, with \$10 more to be paid at the time you leave for the trip. This includes a picnic lunch. Transportation and housing at the University will be extra, since you will need to arrive by Monday evening June 29, to be able to start early on Tuesday morning.

Please register before June 1 by checking the appropriate blank on the back of the Convention registration form in *The Messenger*. For more information please call or write the **Central Office, 48 Sargent Street, Newton, MA 02158. (617) 969-4240.**

***Don't miss this opportunity to experience the
scenic beauty of this year's Convention locale!***

Embracing And Reflecting God's Image

A post-Convention conference from
the evening of July 5 through July 7.

Location:

Camp Burton, on Vashon Island in Puget Sound

Leaders:

*Rev. Dr. Dorothea Harvey, Dr. Horand Gutfeldt,
Elizabeth Gutfeldt, Dr. Barbara Mackey*

This conference will be a chance to relax, meditate, share and play following the fast-paced activities of Convention. It will consist of a structured morning and evening program with free afternoons to enjoy the natural island beach or to journey to nearby scenic spots. *Content for the conference will include creative experiences, meditation, healing, inspiration from Swedenborg, music, fun and games, and an opportunity to make new and renew old friendships.* Vashon Island is a short ferry ride from the mainland, and transportation will be provided for those who need it. There are gorgeous views and woodland trails, and the cooking is said to be excellent, with fresh breads and produce at every meal.

Registration for this conference is \$40 (\$35 if received before May 15th). The cost of the conference itself will be \$70, including room and board. All accommodations are dormitory style. Please register by June 1, using the appropriate check mark on the back of the Convention registration form, and make your checks payable to: General Convention. Please write to the Central Office for more information on children's rates.

Central Office, 48 Sargent Street, Newton, MA 02158 (617) 969-4240



ADVANCE CONVENTION REGISTRATION

(We hope you'll join us in a wonderful week. The theme is "In God's Image")

Convention, 1987, Tacoma, Washington

University of Puget Sound

June 27 - July 5, 1987

(Convention Sessions: July 1-5, 1987)

NAME _____ PHONE: _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE/PROV _____ ZIP _____

ACCOMPANIED BY: _____

CHILDREN: NAME AND AGE:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

NCYL MEMBERS BETWEEN AGES 13 AND 18 PLEASE FILL THIS IN:

_____ My parent/s will be at Convention. They are _____

_____ My guardian at Convention (if no parents present) is _____



REGISTRATION FEE

_____ I have enclosed a check for \$25.00 (\$20.00 if BEFORE May 15, 1987) made out to GENERAL CONVENTION '87, to cover registration. Everyone 12 years of age and over must pay this fee. Registration is PER PERSON and covers some Convention costs and special events. **Mail this form and your fee to Central Office, 48 Sargent St., Newton, MA 02158.**



TRANSPORT

_____ I will arrive at **Sea-Tac** (Seattle/Tacoma) Airport on: Date & time: _____

Airline & Flight: _____

_____ I am driving to Convention on: Date: _____

My first meal will be _____ breakfast _____ lunch _____ dinner on: _____

_____ I am a passenger in the car of: _____

Arriving at Convention on: date: _____ time: _____

_____ I need directions to Tacoma from: _____

_____ OTHER MODE OF TRANSPORT _____

Arrival date & time: _____



HOUSING

_____ I would like a single room.

_____ I would like a double room, sharing with _____

(If you don't have a roommate yet, be sure to answer the following!)

_____ I would like to have a roommate assigned to share my room.

_____ (We would like (if possible) to have a room near _____

Please also complete the reverse side!

▼
SPECIAL NEEDS

- ☐ I am a vegetarian, with no other restrictions.
☐ I have these dietary restrictions: _____
☐ I am not able to climb stairs or hills
☐ I need wheelchair access
☐ I am not able to walk very far without discomfort
☐ I have these medical requirements: _____
☐ I am _____ diabetic; _____ a heart patient; _____ other: _____
☐ Other physical/special/dietary needs: _____

(If you don't let us know, we may not be aware of your needs!)

▼
SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS FOR CHILDREN

(Children's programs will run during Pre-Convention days beginning Sunday and continuing through the week until after worship on July 5)

- ☐ My child/children will be participating in the Children's Program for ages 6 to 12 beginning on: date _____
☐ My child/children will need the Child Care program for age 2 and under beginning on: date _____

☐ My child/children will need the Children's Program for ages 3 to 5 beginning on: date _____
☐ My child's/children's special needs are: _____
☐ My child has _____, has not _____ attended a pre-school program

▼
OTHER PROGRAMS

I wish to co-register for the following programs:

- ☐ *Music and Movement Workshop (June 28-July 1: open to all)
☐ New Church Youth League Officers (June 28-July 1: officers only)
☐ Council of Ministers (June 27-July 1: ministers & SSR students)
☐ Ministers' Spouses (June 27-July 1: ministers' spouses only)

☐ *Picnic and Hike to Mt. Rainier on June 30

☐ Women's Alliance Luncheon on Friday, July 3.

☐ *Post. Convention Conference July 5-7 at Vashon Island

NOTE: ASTERISK (*) DENOTES ADDITIONAL FEE REQUIRED.
(We will be in touch with you to give you more information on your choice.)

▼
**Rates for 1987 Convention
Room and Board**

Dormitory

Adult Single: \$30. — daily; \$240. — 8 days; \$120. — 4 days.
Double: \$25. — daily; \$200. — 8 days; \$100. — 4 days.

Teen (11 - 19 years): Single: \$25. — daily; \$200. — 8 days; \$100. — 4 days.
Double: \$20. — daily; \$160. — 8 days; \$80. — 4 days.

Youth (4 - 10 years): Double: \$15. — daily; \$120. — 8 days; \$60. — 4 days.

Child (3 and under): No charge if occupying same room as parents, and no charge for food when fed from parent's plate.

For financial assistance for Convention attendance for young people and children please write to: Susan Weiss,
178 Bala Ave., Somers Point, NJ. 08244

▼
MESSAGES TO CENTRAL OFFICE? IDEAS? HERE'S SOME SPACE!

Central Office Memo

Ethelwyn Worden, director

Convention time is coming up fast — perhaps faster for this office, which is already in the throes of planning, scheduling and otherwise preparing for our week in Tacoma in June.

Particularly of interest to many of you will be the registration form, enclosed in this issue. It has a lot of small print and asks for a lot of information from you — but we really do need it all in order to plan adequately for you. Please also note that the registration fee is a few dollars less if you register early (which helps us!). Your questions about room rates will be answered on the back of the form.

On the back of the registration form are appropriate spaces in which to register for various pre- and post-convention activities including the Music and Movement Workshop, a pre-convention walking tour of the Mt. Rainier area, the post-convention conference, the Women's Alliance Luncheon, and so on. Please make sure you have marked the ones in which you will take part, and that you have enclosed the proper registration fees for each, as noted.

Convention's theme this year is "In God's Image," and this will be expounded on in a variety of ways on the program. Minicourses will again be held, including a continuation of the one on Church and Social Concerns. The film, "The Global Brain," will be shown to all of us, with room for discussion, on Thursday, July 2. And Local Committee chairman Lon Elmer is trying to gather together a dance-band's worth of musicians — the Swedenborg Swingers — to provide music for one or two evening receptions. His request for musicians appeared without headline in the March *Messenger*, which may have caused some wonderment.

By the time this *Messenger* reaches you, I will have returned from a 10-day trip to the West Coast to firm up some details and space decisions at the University of Puget Sound, and to visit church folks in Portland, Seattle, Vancouver, El Cerrito and San Francisco, all of whom are looking forward to a convention nearer home than usual — especially those in the Pacific Northwest, for whom this is a First. I love my visits to the West Coast, to the new vistas, fauna and flora, and especially to the misty headlands over the Pacific. As I have become more familiar with the Puget

Sound scenery in the past year, that too has me waiting with bated breath for the first moments I can go exploring amid the islands and on the Olympic Peninsula (AFTER Convention, Muff, they say! — Guess I'll have to wait till then, sigh). I know all of you will fall in love with the area too, and I do suggest you plan some vacation time there, if at all possible. Just don't forget the raingear!

One last request this time — please help us plan adequately by sending in your Convention registrations as early as possible. If transport is a question, you may send that information in later but not too much later, please. The registration form will appear again in the May *Messenger*, and we are happy if you photocopy it as needed.

A point of information — the proposed Healing Conference has had to be cancelled for this summer due to not enough lead time for preparations. We hope to present it soon, however, so please stay tuned.

COMMENCEMENTS

Baptisms

Steiger — Zacharias Michael Steiger, born March 9, 1982, son of Robert and Sheila Steiger, was baptized into the Christian faith on February 22, 1987 in the Riverside, California Swedenborgian Church, the Rev. Dr. Ivan Franklin officiating.

Whitaker — Kristen Leigh Whitaker, daughter of Alan and Corinne Whitaker, was baptized into the Christian faith on January 25, 1987, at the Church of the New Jerusalem, Fryeburg, Maine, the Rev. David L. Rienstra officiating.

Confirmations

Wayne Horney, Mark Roser, John Roser, Janet Sullivan, and Nancy Wood were confirmed into the life of the General Convention of Swedenborgian Churches on January 4, 1987, in the New Church, La Porte, Ind., the Rev. Ted Le Van officiating.

Deaths

Bommer — George E. Bommer, longtime member of the Gulfport Society and one of the builders of the Gulfport Church, passed into the spiritual world December 2, 1986 at age 79. A memorial service was held on December 4, 1986 the Rev. Harry Tapp, longtime friend of the family, officiating, with our New Church service. Burial was in the Evergreen Gardens, Gulfport, Mississippi.

General Convention of the New Jerusalem
The Messenger
48 Sargent Street
Newton, MA 02158

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CONVENTION '87: *Getting There Is Half The Fun*

Flying: Land at Sea-Tac International Airport where our courteous drivers will pick you up and deliver you to Tacoma.

Train: If you've never taken the train cross-country, consider it now. 3½ days from Grand Central Station in New York, to Union Station in Tacoma. The "Pioneer" out of Chicago is our favorite. It takes a breath-taking route through the heart of the Rockies, and later, down the Columbia River Gorge. You could return by the "Empire Builder" and see the Northern Plains. You'll see more than you can by driving, and you'll arrive without jet-lag.

Walking: You'd better start tomorrow.

CONVENTION '87, (CONVENTION SESSIONS JULY 1 — 5)
JUNE 27 — JULY 5

University of Puget Sound
Tacoma, Washington

(Look for more travel tips in the June Messenger)