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Guest Editorial

Christmas, a Time to Be Like a Child

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Kitchener, Ontario, Canada

" 'I don't know what to do!' cried Scrooge," so tells Dickens of a new-born Scrooge, "laughing and crying in the same breath . . . 'I am as light as a feather, I am as happy as an angel, I am as merry as a school boy, I am as giddy as a

drunken man. A merry Christmas to everybody! A happy New Year to all the world! Hallo here! Whoop! Hallo! . . . I don't know anything. I'm quite a baby. Never mind. I don't care. I'd rather be a baby. Hallo! Whoop! Hallo here! "

This was the same man who had earlier felt terrible about letting his clerk take Christmas day off and said, "A poor excuse for picking a

man's pocket every twenty-fifth of December!"

Christmas is the easiest and best time for everyone to be transformed into a child and for a most serious, task-oriented, precocious boy or girl to let out his or her most natural, fun-loving, and innocent inner child!

I remember the Christmas celebrations of my boyhood days. Like clockwork, in late November or early December snow would fall softly and freshly upon our farming village in Korea. Thatched roofs put on giant, fluffy white fur hats and rice paddies filled with water were now frozen, to our shrieking delight.

The children of the village Sunday school began practicing their parts for the best Christmas pageant in the region. Wood-burning stoves inside the one-room church building were well stoked; in this corner was a group of kids going over their lines, and over there in the other corner was the adult choir practicing Christmas carols.

Before I knew, I was a part of a group who went out to the mountain that was hugging the village, keeping the north winds from thrashing the village huts. We cut a few best-shaped pines and an ample amount of greens with which to decorate the tin-roofed, mud-walled sanctuary. We dragged them down the hill, falling, rolling, and running . . . laughing and chattering . . .

At long last the Christmas

Eve pageant started. On this particular evening I was supposed to open the play by announcing to the audience who had come walking from all area towns and hamlets, "Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night . . ." ¹ But, not a single word came out of my mouth. I had a sudden case of laryngitis!

Once again Christmas is coming, a time to recover our innocence. Before the Lord our God and maker, all of us are children. Furthermore, we are to celebrate the Lord's becoming a child. It is a time for us to relive our childhood. For those of us who did not have much of a childhood, it is a time to find out what it is to be like a child. Yes, indeed it is the most opportune time for everyone to live Christ's injunction, "Unless you are turned and become like children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven." ²

As Emanuel Swedenborg observed, "children meant innocence and charity." ³ This Christmas let us become like children and be filled with innocence and charity. It is a time when even a Scrooge can be changed enough to admit, "I don't know anything. I'm quite a baby. Never mind. I don't care. I'd rather be a baby. Hallo! Whoop! Hallo here!"

A merry Christmas to you all! A happy New Year to everyone!

1 Luke 2:8

2 Matthew 18:3

3 *True Christian Religion*, #205

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Our cover: *Bridge in Winter*.
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The Christmas Dream

A Reflection on Christmas



Robert H. Kirven

In interpreting dreams, it often is said that all the characters in a dream are aspects of the dreamer. Some of the usefulness of dreams in understanding ourselves depends on this because one or another of the characters may represent elements of our personalities which we have not consciously recognized.

The story of our Lord's birth, as it is told in Luke's and Matthew's Gospels, has many qualities of a dream. The story has permeated our culture so that its scenes and characters would be familiar, even to someone who had never read the Gospels. With the truth-bearing power that historians and psychologists attribute to myth, its pervasive familiarity extends deeper than our conscious thoughts. The characters and tableaux of the Christmas Story are part of what Carl Jung called our "collective unconscious"—a limited reservoir of symbolic imagery including our soul's perceptions of its spiritual environment. Combined with the memories of our immediate physical experience, these images are, in Shakespeare's words, "the stuff that dreams are made of."

This is why recollections of the Christmas Story come to mind unbid-

den, representing one level of the Lord's presence in our lives, and also presenting an especially vivid representation of the glory and holiness of the Word. If we look into our visions of the Christmas story as we might examine our dreams, we can find truths about God, truths about our culture, and truths about ourselves. The deepest of these personal

truths can be found only in our own introspection, but certain generalities about them are shared by almost all of us. We can look at a few conspicuous ones together as we celebrate Christmas this year.

If you want to make a study project of it, after the moment's reflection involved in reading this article, the notes at the end will guide you to passages in which Swedenborg discusses these images.¹

THE MAGI, the Wise Men, the three Kings—whatever we call the three who came from the east to worship the Child of Bethlehem (*Matt. 2*)—may be the easiest characters of the Christmas Dream to identify within ourselves, because they symbolize intellec-

tual elements or qualities, and this introspective exploration is on an intellectual level.

From our reading, from sermons in church and lessons in Sunday school, and—whether we are conscious of it or not—from intuitions supplied by the spirits who are our souls' constant companions, we all know things that are spiritually true and good. These spiritual facts that we know ("know" with the same certainty that we know apples fall down from trees instead of up, and know that we exist), become part of our selves, our personality. This is the part of us that is capable of leading us to an understanding of the Lord's reality and presence and power.

It may take a long time and a lot of concentration to reach that conclusion from that spiritual knowledge. In the same way, for the same reasons, it took the Magi a long time (the



Magi travelled a great distance, and arrived

long after the shepherds), a lot of persistence (they had to work around King

Herod), and some spiritual guidance (the star), to find the Lord so that they could worship him.

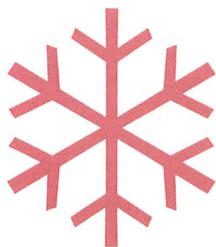
These images are "the stuff that dreams are made of."



We recall that they came from the east, the aspect of our life in which the Lord dwells and from

whence the light of Truth first illuminates the darkness of our worldly ignorance. Camels serve the people who use them in the same way that data

(continued on next page)



serve our minds. We all “remember” (although Matthew did not tell us) that the Wise Men made their journey on camels, just as the data that we remember will bear us to the right conclusions if we stay with them and guide them by a higher principle (the star, again).

The gifts they offered were gold, which symbolizes the good things that come out of loving and being loved; frankincense, which corresponds to the true things that we know from within because of our worship; and myrrh, the true things we know out of our sensible experience of living. Just so, if we go where our spiritual knowledge takes us, and discover the Lord’s real, living presence in ourselves, we can worship him best by living according to the highest truths we know from experience and from revelation, and by loving one another as He has loved us.²

THE SHEPHERDS also stand as symbols of qualities or aspects that are part of each of us. However, these qualities get less of our respect. Their judgments are more easily discounted than are those of the Wise Men. The shepherds in us are our tendencies to feed and care for the good qualities and feelings and intentions involved with our love and concern for others. These sheep that our shepherds care for are aspects of our inner lives—inconspicuous intuitions and sympathies watched over by practical and instinctive empathy. Such shepherds lead us to spontaneous concern for others, concerns we cannot explain rationally. That is why we often subordinate them to our more reasoned responses, or “Wise Men.”

We all remember times when these inner tendencies—our shepherds—are confused, depressed and “in the dark”: such situations come about because we don’t know what to do to help or misperceive what is needed of us. That’s one kind of obscurity or falsity—the general condition that appears in our dreams and in the Word as darkness or night (or winter or old age). The night that surrounded the shepherds was so black that only the presence of the Lord himself could relieve it. *The Night before Christmas was the darkest night in history!*

Divine Messengers, Angels

of the Lord, appear in the Christmas Story and other dreams in situations when our darkness of confusion or depression is suddenly dissipated by a flash of fresh awareness of the kind of support and guidance the Lord gives us. The sudden clarity of such experiences can be frightening; but it also carries us into a new kind of life beyond that fear, and our instinctive thankfulness is an impulse akin to worship.

Moving out of the darkness into light, our spontaneous amazement is a kind of personal interior unplanned worship. That response to the Lord’s presence is perfectly symbolized by the shepherd’s impulsive dash to worship the baby in the manger. Immediate intuition, whether we understand it or not, gets us into conscious awareness of divine presence instantaneously—long before our reasoning can get us there on the basis of what we learned in Sunday school!³

THE MANGER AND SWADDLING CLOTHES represent an important part of ourselves that we often rely on, but seldom notice. Having heard and read the Bible for most of our lives, we have absorbed into ourselves some guiding principles which grew out of the truths embedded in the Word. These are not things we are aware of having learned, and are proud of knowing—things we learned in schools and from experience. Those kinds of knowledge are the “inn” that had no place for the Lord’s real presence. The guiding principles in which the Lord can find room in our lives are simple, often-unnoticed, utilitarian ones. The simplest of these, innocent and unsophisticated, are the swaddling clothes into which the Lord first comes in us. The “sign,” that the angels gave the shepherds, was a direction to those down-to-earth qualities of love in us, that we should look in such ordinary, simple, innocent principles to find the greatest love and highest truth that motivate and guide our lives. That is where the Lord is born in us.⁴

REREAD LUKE 1:25—2:21, and MATTHEW 1:18-2:12. Then sit back in a comfortable chair, close your eyes, and relive the story as in a dream. Then, pay careful attention to your feelings about the scenes and the characters.⁵ It’s an

important spiritual celebration of Christmas, to become more aware of your inner life—the life that is glimpsed in dreams—and the continuing birth and presence of the Lord there.

NOTES

¹ If you look up the references in these notes (it should not take long, if you have the books available), repeat the reading and contemplation again after the research. See if you become aware of anything new from within.

² See “Magi” at *Arcana Coelestia* 101, 920, 3249, 3762, 5223, 10177, 10252

³ See “shepherds” at *AC* 2905, 5913, *AE* 80, *Doctrine of the Lord* 34.

⁴ See “Manger” and “Swaddling clothes” at *Apocalypse Explained* 706 [b(12)]. Notice that the reference is to a passage beginning with a quotation from Luke’s Christmas Story just past the middle of a “paragraph” running over a dozen pages!

⁵ For more on Mary, see *True Christian Religion* 92 and 94. The latter passage also mentions Joseph, who also appears in a remarkable note that Swedenborg wrote but did not publish. It’s *De Justificatione* 65 (39), or #39 on p 554 of the Swedenborg Foundation’s *Posthumous Works, Vol. II*. It’s short, so I’ll save you the trouble of looking it up: “*It was necessary for [the Lord] to be born of a virgin in legitimate marriage with Joseph.*”

Rev. Dr. Robert Kirven is Professor of Theology and Church History at the Swedenborg School of Religion.



Away in the Manger

In His stall of Innocence
Jesus of Bethlehem lay—
Littlest wise man of all
Asleep on royal hay.

—Margherita Faulkner

Born Into Evil

George F. Dole

*And the second is like, namely this:
thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.*
Mark 12:21

One of the more controversial statements in our theology is that we are born into evils of every kind. By some this has been interpreted in a way that really differs very little from the doctrine of original sin, leaving us with the hopeless conviction that everything good about us is the Lord's and that everything wrong with us is our own fault. Others find it running counter to their strong sense of the beauty of babies. I'd like to tell you a story, a fable, that may put this in a somewhat different light:

Once upon a contemporary time, in a country not far away, a happy and healthy young couple had just had their first child. Like his parents, he was happy and healthy. They named him Richard, after his grandfather, who was a family favorite.

Little Richard did just fine. Before they realized it, he was rolling over, then crawling, then pulling himself up, and he was just a little past eleven months when he took his first step. His parents didn't brag about him *too* much, but secretly they knew that they had quite a remarkable child.

Of course they watched him constantly. They didn't want to miss anything. He might learn something new any minute, and that very first time would never come again. That is why they were so quick to discern that every once in a while, he would bump into something as though he hadn't even noticed that it was there.

The first time it happened was when a neighboring couple came over with their own little one. Their child had a red wooden truck, and Richard's parents were a little worried that he would be unhappy if he couldn't have it. At first they were relieved that he didn't pay any attention to it at all, but

when he tripped over it they were startled. He wasn't a clumsy child, and he looked so *surprised*.

"He was probably just a little tired," they told each other, "or perhaps more excited than we realized. It really was the first time we've had company in the house for him to play with." And sure enough, the next time the same company came, with the same red wooden truck, Richard didn't trip over it at all. In fact, he gave it a little wider berth than he needed to, which set his parents wondering again.

The first time they took him to church and left him in the church nursery they were as anxious as any new parents. After church, they barely shook hands with the minister before they hurried to find out how things had gone. "Oh, he was just fine," said the baby sitter. "He's a very special fellow. I wish all the children were as careful as he is—he's very mature for his age."

Now you need to remember that Richard was a first child, and that par-

◆
***It was strange that
such a bright boy
could fail to notice
some very obvious
things.***
◆

ents have a tendency to take everything very seriously the first time around. Richard's parents started noticing every little thing, and they became more and more puzzled. Sometimes Richard seemed quite heedless, and sometimes he seemed unnecessarily cautious.

When it was time for his checkup, they both went to the doctor, and tried

(continued on next page)

to explain what they were worried about. The doctor checked Richard's eyes very carefully, and there was nothing wrong at all. His coordination was fine, too, and they left the doctor feeling much better. "Children are different," the doctor told them. "I wouldn't worry. He probably just gets wrapped up in his own thoughts sometimes, and often that's a sign of unusual intelligence. He seems to remember the things that have given him trouble, and then to be extra careful after that. When he does have one of his surprises, just be reassuring, and I'm sure this will level itself out."

So Richard's parents got into the habit of reassuring him, just warning him now and again to pay attention, and that seemed to be all that was needed. It helped particularly when they were in unfamiliar surroundings. With just a little guidance, Richard would adjust very quickly.

So it came as a real surprise, after Richard started school, when his teacher said there might be something that needed attention. It wasn't serious enough for a special call—she just mentioned it at the regular parents' conference. It seemed to be the same old pattern, and it was strange that such a bright boy could apparently fail to notice some very obvious things. The girl next to him had dropped her crayon, and Richard had stepped on it. That sort of thing happened often enough, but Richard didn't even seem to realize what he had done.

That brought back all the old anxieties, and the very next day Richard's parents made an appointment with the doctor. Again, Richard turned out to be as healthy as he could be, but with the teacher expressing concern, and not just a couple of first-time parents, the doctor thought there might actually be some sort of problem. He recommended a very wise lady psychologist, to see whether perhaps Richard himself was preoccupied with something he couldn't tell his parents about.

Richard took to her immediately, and so did his parents. After her first session, she said that he was a particularly bright and thoughtful boy. She

didn't think there were any serious problems, but there were one or two things she didn't understand, and she would like to keep seeing him for a little while. In the meantime, as far as she could tell, Richard's parents were being very good parents, and the best thing would be not to overreact, but to keep right on with the care and guidance Richard was used to.

After a couple of months of visits, the psychologist said she wanted to talk to the parents. "Richard has been doing drawings for me," she said, "and I think I've discovered what the problem is. Whenever I ask him to draw something of his, like *his* house, or *his* toys, or *his* parents, he reaches for the magic markers and does very nice and lively drawings. But when I ask him to draw *someone else's* house or toys or parents, he just takes a pencil, and draws outlines. Once I asked him to draw a picture of my desk and he said he couldn't."

"I don't think there's anything deliberate about this. When I asked him why the picture of his house looked different from the picture of his friend's house, he said it was because his friend's house looked skinny, just like the picture. It seems to be the way he sees. Everything that is his looks colorful and three-dimensional. Things that don't belong to him either look like outlines, or don't look like anything at all."

"It would be a real handicap if he weren't so bright, but he has learned to cope with it remarkably well. If I tell him that his friend's ball is blue, then he doesn't forget it. I described my desk to him by comparing it to his play table at home, and then he did a pretty good drawing of it."

"You need to remember that there is nothing intentional about this. He is really a very considerate fellow for his age—much more so than a lot of the children I see. You are very fortunate in that respect. You will just have to do a lot of interpreting for him in new situations, and you can be very sure that he will learn quickly, and have a normal life."

As a matter of simple fact, we do not see most of the world.

Richard's parents quickly became used to talking to Richard about all sorts of new things. It worked, too. Richard did well in school, and did well socially. He went to college, and got a very good job with an insurance company. There was another new employee, Linda, and they started sharing their experiences as the newcomers to the office. And then one morning, Richard's eyes widened. "Linda," he said, "that dress is the most incredible shade of yellow I have ever seen."

We are all Richards, and because we are *all* Richards, that's what we regard as normal. We live in a world full of feeling and thinking people, but the only feelings and thoughts that are in full color and three dimensions for us are our own. We learn about others indirectly, sometimes picking up clues, sometimes having to be told. But if we persist, we can learn to love. And love, as our theology tells us, is "feeling the joy of another as joy in oneself."

Only when that happens do we begin to see the world as it is. Until that time, our perception is as handicapped as Richard's. There is nothing malicious about this, and we may hesitate to call it "evil." But what else should we call it, when it is the source of all our inhumanity to each other? If we ourselves *felt* the pain and grief we cause others, we would be immediately humane. If we ourselves did feel the joy of others as joy in ourselves, we would be drawn to share everything that gives us delight. What else shall we call it but evil, when it gives us such a distorted picture of the world we live in?

There is a little more to it than that. Infants are responsive to the moods of those around them, and sometimes that sensitivity comes to the fore. Babies may be wet and hungry and happy just because of the happiness of those around them, and they may be dry and fed and miserable because of the tension or anger in the room. The capability to perceive truly is there, and it can be developed. But it does seem that we are born Richards, born with a vivid and overpowering sensitivity to every-

What else shall we call it but evil?

thing that is ours, and only dimly aware of what is others', born into evils of every kind.

Our theology has a great deal to say about dealing with this situation. It assures us that we have the ability to love, and that through self-examination, repentance, and reformation of life, through acting "as if," that ability will grow.

In the meantime, we might do well to be extra cautious. We might do well to move through life aware that there is a great deal that we do not see, that as a matter of simple fact we do not see most of the world. We might look and listen more intently, and give more weight to the little clues we do notice. And we can do so knowing that this is a temporary expedient, that if we persist, the Lord will surely bring us to see the world more truly as it is—in fact to love our neighbor as ourselves.

Lecture delivered at Fryeburg New Church August 8, 1989. Biblical references: Leviticus 19:1-18; Mark 12:28-34; and Psalm 1, p. 43.

Rev. Dr. George F. Dole is a professor at the Swedenborg School of Religion and a member of the Board of Directors of the Swedenborg Foundation.

Treasure Found in Urbana U. Basement

Over 18 shelves of 19th century children's books—many of them rare first editions unknown even to the Library of Congress—were discovered in the basement of Urbana University's Library in late July by former librarian Carol Ann Sabella. According to Acting Library Director Jeanne Gamble, it is undoubtedly one of the top such collections in the region, yielding such famous authors as Rudyard Kipling, Charles Dickens and Daniel Defoe. It is reported that the books are in pretty good shape, but cataloging them is a slow process because there are so many first editions that they don't show up in the computer network—not even at places like Harvard, Duke, and Yale.

Ms. Gamble believes that the books were part of a collection donated by the Cincinnati Church of the New Jerusalem when it disbanded in the mid-1970s. The church had sent along an extensive inventory of Swedenborgian literature and the children's books were probably just disregarded at the time. She estimates that they have been missing for approximately 15 years. Because they were written for children, many of the works deal with morality-type issues, and richly portray what the values of society were like in the 1800s. Some of the illustrations are even done in color, a rarity for the time period. Ms. Gamble can't yet say when the collection will be available for use, but she is working on it.



Time is Running Out!

If you wish to continue receiving *The Messenger* you must fill out the form below.

If we do not hear from you, you will be dropped from our mailing list.

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- No** I would not like to receive *The Messenger*, but keep me on your mailing list
- No** I would not like to receive *The Messenger* and please take me off your mailing list

The Messenger is sent free to all Swedenborgians who want it. However, we need to update our mailing list. This has not been done for years. We wish to continue sending you future issues of *The Messenger*—but only if you want them! *And by the way, please send us the names of any Swedenborgians we may be missing, such as your children who have moved to their own residence.*

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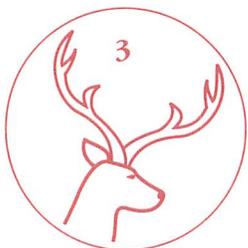
Children's Page

This Christmas Children's Page was done by Louise Woofenden.
 Materials for children's pages are needed! Please send to Rev. Dr. Ted Klein,
 Children's and Family Ministry, 273 Perham Street, West Roxbury, MA 02132.

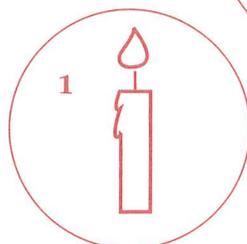
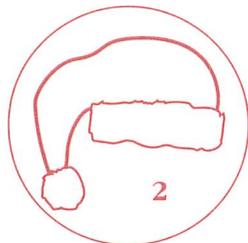
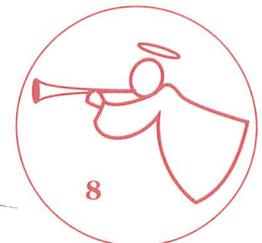
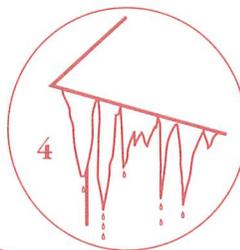
CHRISTMAS WORDFIND

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| worship | myrrh |
| night | gold |
| Bethlehem | gift |
| Mary | fear not |
| Herod | Lord |
| shepherds | frankincense |
| fields | glory |
| manger | wise men |
| incense | sheep |
| angels | inn |
| star | room |
| baby | Savior |

M A N G E R W I S E M A N
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Put the first letter of each word in its box and spell a reason for being happy.



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Growing Pains

On the Road

Eric Allison

Working full time for the Pastoral Ministries Support Unit since September, my job is to teach our churches across North America about methods of growth that are specifically adapted for a small denomination. Consequently, I do a lot of traveling, writing, and phoning. At this writing I have visited Fryeburg, Cleveland, St. Louis, Pretty Prairie, Washington D.C., Edmonton, Boston, Saskatoon and Rosthern, Saskatchewan. The methods and procedures I offer to churches are tried and true. They cannot fail if the congregations and the minister implement them. At this very early stage I have already learned much and know that I have much to learn. Here, I will share with you a few insights about church growth and some of the plans already set in motion by some of our churches.

In October, a weekend retreat for clergy and lay people on growth and outreach was held at Temenos in Pennsylvania. Perhaps the advertising in *The Messenger* and at convention was not enough. Only three lay people and five clergy were present. No one (except Temenos director Ernie Martin) came from any of the local churches. The turnout was disappointing, to say the least. Donald Morgan-Weldes gave an excellent presentation which focused on the spiritual preparation necessary for sustained church growth. His insights were inspirational and I will be sharing some of them with you in a subsequent article.

I hear a lot of people talking about the importance of church growth, but it will take much more than talk to bring in new people. It is clear to me that the first obstacle to be overcome is the congregation's lack of faith in their church's growth. A congregation as a whole *must believe* that it can grow and *must be committed* to both growth and change.

From talking with people on my visits, I am certain that many people have not accepted the fact that the Swedenborgian church will die unless a serious commitment to growth is made soon. The fact is that the average church loses

five percent of its membership to death, relocation or simple disassociation each year. So, if you do not have five percent growth your church is dying.

Another brutal fact which must change is our attitude toward money. Most Swedenborgians in North America do not give nearly enough to their local church. Research on church giving shows that there is no record of any church in North America growing if it has been receiving financial aid from an outside source for more than three years. It just may be divine providence that Convention's money pot is running dry. Research indicates across-the-board growth for churches that tithe. This is not just limited to fundamentalist churches. When people put their money where their mouth is, something is bound to happen, and in churches what happens is growth. We are very fond of the richness which the internal sense of the Word gives to our lives. However, the literal sense is not to be ignored. The Bible does tell us to tithe and this means literally. This has been something with which I have had a long struggle. However, when I look at all the blessings God has given me, ten percent return does not seem unreasonable.

Let me now share with you some of the actions which have been taken by our churches. While some are just giving lip service to growth, there are many who are excited, committed, and determined. The people in Edmonton, Pretty Prairie, and Cleveland are committed to making home visits to new people who move into the area. During my visit to St. Louis the people did a marvelous job in carrying out every suggestion on how to advertise. When I arrived to meet with the congregation and to give a public lecture on Life After Death, a large article in the St. Louis Post Dispatch (from a phone interview with me) announced my coming lecture. The talk was well attended (58), with about half the people being in the church for the first time. With varying degrees of success this same approach of having a public lec-

ture on Life after Death included in my consulting visit was tried in Cleveland, Edmonton, Saskatoon, Rosthern, and Washington, D.C..

The church in Cleveland is exemplary of a strong commitment to growth, having put \$6,000 into advertising and growth for the coming year. Church growth studies state that a minimum of five percent of a church's budget should be for growth. Most of that is in the form of advertising. The Cleveland church should be applauded for this commitment.

The majority of the churches that I visited have already implemented the following strategies:

- Formed a growth and outreach committee which meets regularly.
- Set a goal for the number of new members that they would accept into the congregation by a specific date.
- Have one or more volunteers who will call on visitors within three days of their first visit to church.
- Have some one other than the minister stand up in church each Sunday to welcome visitors even if everyone knows that there are no visitors.
- Made a line graph on a large piece of paper or poster board charting the church attendance over a period of three to six months.
- Contacted all people who either used to come to church or are marginally associated with the church and invited them to be included in the plan of growth.
- Set a date for a "fill the church" or "each one bring one" Sunday.
- Begun advertising.

These are just some of the simple but effective steps that any church can do which will make a difference. If you would like me to make a consulting visit to your church I would be glad to do so when your congregation has made a spiritual and financial commitment to growth. To arrange the first visit write to: Rev. Richard Baxter, 4720 Belpre Road, Rockville, Maryland 20853, U.S.A.

Who is the Neighbor?

James F. Lawrence

I myself have played the role of the lawyer whose trick question prompts Jesus to tell the parable of “The Good Samaritan.” For those of you who have been to Plimoth Plantation on Cape Cod, a Pilgrim village kept in amazing replica-condition of a real village of the earliest European-Americans, complete with actresses and actors who play their part as villagers with tremendous authenticity, you will know how fun it is to engage in dialogue with the residents of that yester-year community. They are never supposed to let on that they know anything that has occurred in the future of that time period.

I got into a discussion with the village doctor-teacher-preacher several years ago, and I plied him with questions about Calvin and Luther and Melancthon and other important figures in Protestantism before the day of the Pilgrim Plantation. But I was not wholly sincere, because I was trying to set a trap to get him to commit a mistake. And we went back and forth for a little while before I casually confirmed a point with a reference to Increase Mather, a very famous religious figure in early Massachusetts, but a man whose time was about two generations into the future of the time we were supposed to be in. Without the slightest hitch, he turned and looked at me and said, “Who?”

Well, the lawyer who tried to tangle with Jesus was likewise trying to set a trap. It is clear enough from the text that the lawyer was not wholly sincere when he asked Jesus what he had to do to inherit eternal life. When the lawyer pressed in asking, “And who is my neighbor?”, he was trying to get Jesus to say something in the presence of many witnesses that would be at odds with Jewish law. Those present were well aware that the law defined one’s “neighbor” as “the children of one’s people.”

All others were looked upon as Gentile dogs. To contaminate the sacred community was no trifling matter.

Without a doubt it was one of Jesus’ cleverest moments. First, he refuses to discuss the question in terms of theory and instead puts the issue into real life with the story of the Good Samaritan. And he tells a beautiful and poignant parable of the ultimate truth of love, but he does it by making the hero and “neighbor” a member of the ethnic group most despised by Israelites.

In complete control of the match of wits, Jesus then drives his point home by posing a question back to the lawyer and forcing him to say who the neighbor is. In front of all those people, there was nothing the lawyer could do but say it, and he couldn’t even bring himself to actually use the word “Samaritan,” but rather said merely, “The one who showed mercy.”



Without a doubt, it was one of Jesus’ cleverest moments.



More than simply confounding a dishonest lawyer, Jesus delivers a stunning rebuke to all Jews regarding their spiritually suffocating attitude toward others. At the same time he lets loose a message of such universal power that it has become for all time an inspiring promoter of brotherly and sisterly love.

And yet, what a good question that lawyer really asked! The reason Jesus’ parable is so compelling is that it is provoked by a question very relevant to the *human* situation, not merely the Jewish situation. We all have trouble seeing certain people as spiritual neighbors. We all must do battle inside our souls with attitudes of superiority and disdain. I, for one, am grateful to the lawyer for his

question. When he asked, in his lawyerly fashion, “Precisely now, who is my neighbor?”, he was speaking for a part of me, for a part of my spirit that tends to draw lines, tends to separate these from those.

Have you ever been really down on someone, someone whose whole way turned you off? Just the way they talked, their value system, their personality—you just thought the world

would be a better place without them? And then you realized that God

You called me ‘brother’ and that is the greatest gift you could give me.



loved them every bit as much as you? That in God’s eyes, they had every bit as much worth as you? Maybe we have an insight here into the Lord’s equally challenging instruction to love our enemies.

The power there is—when we can find love for those who are the toughest for us to love—is a tremendous spiritual discovery. It turns out that the blessings go both ways. The giver gets so much in return, and the one who receives comfort and caring and respect is often touched and validated more than the Good Samaritan can really know.

There is a story about the great Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy that occurred during a devastating famine which had brought untold misery to that vast country. A beggar, weak and near death, approached Tolstoy and asked for assistance. Tolstoy searched his pockets for money, but discovered he didn’t even have a single coin. He took the beggar’s worn hands, however, and said, “Don’t be angry with me, my brother, I have nothing with me.” The thin-lined face of the beggar lit up, as if from some inner light, and he whispered in reply, “But, sir, you called me ‘brother’—that is the greatest gift you could give me.”

It was, too. We all give money to

good causes. And it is important that we do, because the lion's share of charitable work gets done through organized efforts, and these efforts require money to operate. But those who have an opportunity to experience in a first-hand way the work of some of these great organizations know that working face-to-face with those in real need can be a life-changing spiritual growth experience.

Most of us wish that we could do more than we do, but we just don't seem to be able to get around to it. I think the following illustration will demonstrate why. The faculty at Princeton Theological Seminary pulled a Good Samaritan trick on some of the seminarians a number of years ago. It ended up being very revealing of human nature, and upon hearing about it a couple of years ago it has changed the way I have viewed this parable.

They set up a phony job offer to second-year seminarians. The job was announced as working a certain number of hours a week with an internationally known theologian in an exciting capacity—and for quite good wages to boot. The whole thing was put together so that a substantial number of students would be very anxious to be chosen for the assignment.

Interested students were to show up for appointments at an office on campus, where they were given an address to which they would go for their interview with the famous figure. The devious scheme was planned so that only one route to the interview made any sense, and along that way a person in distress was planted. Therefore, on their way for an interview to intern with a famous Christian, they were unwittingly living out the parable of the Good Samaritan.

Now that is interesting enough, but the genius of the scheme was in this final touch: some of the students were given the address and an appointment time that would force them to be in a great hurry or else be late; others were

given the address and an appointment time that gave them ample time to mosey over there.

What happened is very revealing about all of our lives. Most of the seminarians who had plenty of time stopped to help the person in distress, and almost none of the hurried ministers-in-training stopped to see if they could be of assistance to one clearly in need!

If we can assume that coincidence did not place all the good Christians in the first group and all the hypocrites in the second, what is learned through this exercise? To me it says that we often allow circumstances, to a large extent, to control our "Good Samaritan" responses.

People often want to know how to make the gospel real in their lives. For many of us, it is simply the distractions of our busy lives that cause us to walk by on the other side.

We have begun a new ministry at the Fryeburg church, calling it simply, "The Samaritans." The purpose of this ministry is to provide volunteer hours to help those in need: the shut-ins, the sick, those people who starve for real human contact, who need somebody like Tolstoy to call them brother and sister. A small group of us examined the needs that exist in our community, and we decided to begin with the need that exists in the two nursing homes. Although this ministry is being organized and promoted out of the Fryeburg New Church, we will hopefully draw upon many volunteers outside our membership. Our new ministry will facilitate putting caring people in a helping role that is right for them.

We ask for your prayers and welcome your input and suggestions.

Biblical reference: Luke 10:25-37

Rev. James Lawrence is Co-pastor with wife Rachel Lawrence at Fryeburg New Church, Maine, and director of J. Appleseed & Co.

Standing Resolutions

3.

(Adopted by General Convention, June 1960, Min. #58. Amended by General Convention, July 1, 1989, Min. #61)

A Standing Resolution to Swedenborgians Everywhere:

Resolved: The General Convention/ Swedenborgian Church assembled at Urbana University, Urbana, Ohio for convention June 28, 1989 to affirm the belief that the Church Universal includes those of diverse origins.

In its ever-growing desire to serve all of God's children, the General Convention (aka *The Swedenborg Church*), urges Swedenborgians everywhere to acknowledge that the Church Universal is inclusive and to act in this spirit. Let no Society of the Church exclude any from membership on such considerations as ethnic origin, race, color, sexual orientation, condition of health, handicap or economic status; but seeking those who accept our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as Redeemer of the world and who accept the essentials of faith of the Church, welcome all with joy and affection into the full and free community of the Church.

13.

(Adopted by General Convention, June 28, 1989, Min. #14)

Resolved: That the Aids Ministry Committee appointed by the Cabinet continue to carry out its task which shall include support of Swedenborgian ministries to HIV persons, their families and friends; facilitation of ecumenical involvement in these ministries; and the provision of educational materials.

100 Years Ago in *The Messenger*

NEW-CHURCH MESSENGER.

Published Weekly in New York, N.Y. and Orange, N.J.
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WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 25, 1889

Rev. Charles H. Mann, *Editor*

BOSTON

Christmas services were held in the church on Sunday morning, December 22. The pastor preached from Luke 1:14, and the music by the choir was beautifully rendered. Both church and vestry were decorated with evergreen and pine, and there was a vase of calla lilies on the table in the chancel. The Sunday school met in the vestry at the usual hour, but lessons and class exercises were omitted. An orchestra of eight pieces conducted by Mr. Brown, the organist, began by playing "Christmas Chimes" and "Agnus Dei," and afterwards accompanied the children in their chants and carols. After the reading of the Word by the pastor, came a responsive service which was prepared several years ago for our Sunday school by Mr. Thaddeus W. Harris, who was at that time one of our teachers. The pastor and the Rev. S.M. Warren made short addresses. The Christmas festival of the Sunday school took place in the vestry on Tuesday afternoon between the hours of four and six. For several years the children have brought gifts to be given to poor children. These have heretofore been sent by the Christmas committee to homes or hospitals for children. This year those in charge tried to make the giving more practical and to bring it nearer to the children. As a step in this direction they invited the children in a home under the charge of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. This is a temporary home and has only a few children at a time. The matron came with nine children between the ages of fifteen and four years, and they took part in all the exercises with our children and looked as if they enjoyed every minute. When they went away each child was given a nice package for a Christmas present. Our children brought so many things that three large packages besides were sent away. The children of the Cambridge Sunday school were also invited. The children and their guests gathered in the church, and when all was ready, marched to the vestry by classes to music by the same orchestra we had on Sunday. Our pastor wrote a Christmas story which he read with illustrations by a stereopticon.

While the tree was being lighted, the Rev. T.F. Wright told the children of some Christmas customs in Germany, and invited them to the festival of the Cambridge Sunday school. A curtain was then rolled up and a beautiful Christmas tree was shown. Each child was then given a box of candy, and after singing, the pleasant festival was over. The songs and carols which the children sang on Sunday and Tuesday were from the second part of "Songs, Hymns, and Carols" arranged by Mr. O.B. Brown, our organist.

On Fundraising

Fund-Raising Concepts

Hampton Schoch

The theme for the year from Convention is "Reach Out, Share and Grow—Rekindle the Flame." The five-year fund drive jointly instituted by Convention and the Swedenborg School of Religion (SSR) is one of many areas where we can join together in carrying forward this theme.

Endowment Funds and Capital Investments

The money raised for SSR will all go into **endowment funds**, meaning that only the income from the investments will be used. The money raised for Convention will be divided about equally between **endowment funds** and **capital investments** where the funds will be used for new construction and improvements. These "bricks and mortar" add to the total assets of Convention, and should grow in value over time. The programs made possible by an investment in Temenos Spiritual Growth Center will exercise the "Reach Out" aspect of this year's theme, in much the same manner as Wayfarer's Chapel is now doing.

Planned Giving

In addition to immediate gifts, most of the projects delineated in the fund drive pamphlets have longer-term needs that can be supported by deferred gifts, provided through **Planned Giving**. Pledges for both immediate and deferred gifts can be specified to go towards meeting a particular or several needs, or can become **Endowment** for unrestricted use. Such an unrestricted gift is especially valued because needs change and disappear as the years pass. The "Share" part of our theme is well served by a gift that continues to give over and over to future generations.

Simply stated, planned giving is a way of programming today's resources so they work for you until some date in the future when they are distributed according to your wishes. Many planned giving programs are available, including a simple will. One type of plan was outlined by Rev. Dr. Dorothea Harvey in the January 1989 *Messenger*, and another by Rev. Jerry Poole in the April 1989 issue. A well-planned gift is one which is beneficial to both the giver and the recipient. More detailed information will be presented as the fund drive progresses, or can be obtained from members of the Steering Committee, the Central Office, or SSR.

There are a couple of ways to look at how the fund drive "Rekindles the Flame." One way, certainly, is through the birth and growth of the new projects developing at all levels throughout Convention, and the growth of our Theological School's capabilities. Perhaps more importantly, as we individually provide the essential resources to ensure a meaningful role for our church in our grandchildren's time, our sense of being stewards is heightened. Our gifts rekindle a personal flame that warms our hearts and provides a light for those future stewards.

The members of the Fund-Raising Steering Committee are: Convention representatives, Rev. Randall Laakko and Peter Toot; SSR representatives, Rev. Jerome Poole and Dr. Mary Kay Klein.

Hampton Schoch is an isolated member living in Roxboro, North Carolina. He has served on General Council for the past six years and was a member of the Steering Committee through August 1989.

Commencements

Births

Axon—Martin Axon and Lady McCrady, members of the New Church in New York City, New York, announce the birth of their son, Lovis McCrady Axon, September 17, 1989.

Baptism

Dalby—Michael John Dalby was baptized into the Christian faith January 29, 1989, at the New Church, New York City, New York, the Rev. Robert McCluskey officiating.

Harris—Laura Elizabeth Harris, daughter of Byron and Emily Harris, was baptized into the Christian faith October 1, 1989, at the Church of the Open Word, St. Louis, Missouri, The Rev. David L. Rienstra officiating. Laura was born September 17, 1989.

Tooley—Alice Catherine Tooley, daughter of Sandra and Robert Tooley, was baptized into the Christian faith October 29, 1989, at the Church of the Open Word, St. Louis, Missouri, The Rev. David L. Rienstra officiating.

Baptism and Confirmation

Whitten—Mrs. Beatrice and Mr. Andrew Whitten were baptized into the Christian faith and confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church October 22, 1989, at their home, 5 Pond Street, Fryeburg, Maine, the Rev. James Lawrence officiating.

Confirmation

Boyd-Dalby-Ragasa-Valentin—Shelley Boyd, Michael Dalby, Cristina Ragasa and Albert Valentin were confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church January 29, 1989 at the New Church, New York City, New York, the Rev. Robert McCluskey officiating.

Death

Baker—Donald E. Baker, of Fryeburg, Maine, entered the spiritual world October 2, 1989. Resurrection services were held on October 5, 1989 at Church of the New Jerusalem, Fryeburg, the Rev. Rachel Rivers Lawrence officiating.

Boivin—Brenda R. Boivin, of Columbus, Ohio, entered the spiritual world October 16, 1989. Resurrection services were held on October 20, 1989 in Fryeburg, Maine, the Rev. Rachel Lawrence officiating. Brenda is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Boivin, Fryeburg.

Wagner—Arthur E. Wagner, of Newman, Georgia, entered the spiritual world September 21, 1989. Mr. Wagner was the brother-in-law of Mrs. Gilbert (Elsie) Wagner of St. Louis, and attended the Swedenborgian church until he moved to Georgia. He continued his subscription to *The Messenger*. Mrs. Wagner has kindly made a donation to *The Messenger* in his memory.

London Swedenborg Society

(continued from page 208)

and *Hell* and Helen Keller's *My Religion*.

The Chairman of the Council paid tribute to Mr. G. Roland Smith who had most ably led the Tricentenary Committee.

Dr. Freda G. Griffith, MBE, PhD, BSc, was elected President of the Society. Mr. H.H. Pettersen, MA, was elected Vice-President. Mr. Norman Turner, BSc, was re-elected honorary Treasurer. Elected as ordinary members of the Council were Mr. David W. Gath, Mr. David Glover and Mrs. Renee Levin. The meeting gave formal approval for the re-election to the Council of the Rev. Dennis Duckworth, aged 77.

As a token of appreciation, the President presented to Mr. A.T. Chadwick and to Mr. David Mann copies of the Swedenborg Foundation publication *Emanuel Swedenborg: A Continuing Vision* which they accepted with many thanks.

Mr. N.H. Pettersen referred to the Serbo-Croat translations of *Heaven and Hell* and *My Religion*, saying that for many years religious works of any kind had been forbidden in Yugoslavia and there was a tremendous thirst there for

anything of this nature. The entire stock of the two translations had apparently been sold out within a few months of publication and it was a great encouragement to hear of this interest.

Mr. Pettersen then moved the Council's proposal that Honorary Life Membership be conferred on H.E. Mr. Leif Leifland, GCVO and on H.E. Mr. Lars Bergquist, noting the support and cooperation which the Society had received from the Swedish Embassy in London and from Mr. Bergquist. The proposal received unanimous endorsement from the meeting.

The President's address was entitled 'Swedenborg and the Businessman', which will be published in *The Swedenborg Society Magazine*. The meeting closed with a Blessing pronounced by the Rev. F.C. Elphick.

Submitted by Madeline G. Waters,
Secretary
The Swedenborg Society
Swedenborg House
20-21 Bloomsbury Way
London WC1A 2th
England

Ah-MEN

At its meeting in September, the Pacific Coast Women's Alliance voted unanimously to accept male members. Changing its name to the Pacific Coast Alliance, the women took special note of the inclusivity resolution passed at convention 1989. (See page 203)

Recognizing that the work of the Alliance centers primarily on fulfilling our call to perform uses, it is apparent that our mission involves everyone. This fall, the San Francisco Parish changed the name of its Women's Alliance to the Parish Club, since men were already welcome and actively involved in Alliance activity.

This participation of men in the San Francisco Parish Club raised the question of their attending the PCA Alliance meeting. Hence, after a short discussion, the Women's Alliance held its vote on the inclusion of men.

Once again, the theory of the 100th Monkey proved true! In notifying *Messenger* editor Patte LeVan of the change, we were delighted to hear that at their August meeting, the LaPorte (Indiana) church had also voted to include men in their Alliance.

We hope this move towards inclusivity will, like a ripple in a pond, spread throughout Convention.

See 1 Corinthians 12.

Submitted by Rev. Susan Turley-Moore

Opinion

Dear Editor:

I have a story to tell. I'd actually like to get this to the eyes of your younger adult readers.

I have been baptized and confirmed into the Swedenborgian Church for quite a few years. I enjoy reading about my religion and have read most texts written by E. Swedenborg. I never have been a real church-goer, I'm still not. I just don't make the time for church. What this story is about is not making time for God, which is something that I also did not do. I have attended ANCA since I was twelve. That was the only time I took the time for religion and God.

On October 15, 1988, a young man who plays a major part in my life was in a terrible auto accident. He had a blow to his head which left him with a brain stem injury as well as severe swelling of the brain. He was comatose for eleven very long weeks. It was at this time that I realized that I hadn't allowed the Lord to be a constant part of my life. I was frightened! I knew that He was what I needed to make it through this trial in my life and to help my friend's family as well. I sat in the family ICU lounge at the hospital and prayed. I felt nothing, no release and no peace. I knew that He was listening but it just wasn't enough. I went to the chapel and closed the door. I lit the candles at the altar and sat on the floor and began to sing. I was in that room singing every hymn that I could remember. After some time, I

was overcome by a beautiful, warm feeling of peace, it felt as if I was embraced. The feeling lasted for about 10 minutes and as suddenly as it appeared, it was gone—but as that feeling disappeared so did the heaviness in my heart.

Today, I saw my friend; he comes home on the weekends but is in rehab at a hospital in South Bend, Indiana. He is still in a wheel chair but has made incredible progress. He said to me today, "Tam, I used to hope that I could do things but I don't hope anymore." I asked him why. He said "I remember you standing by my bed, holding my hand, singing praise to God, praying for me to open my eyes. When I finally could, you cried and looked up and thanked God, I did too. That's why I don't hope anymore, now, I pray."

So, my point of telling this story is, if you are close to God at some time, don't let Him go. He is our best friend.

John 15:12-14

This is my commandment, that ye love one another as I have loved you.

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man may lay down his life for his friends.

You are my friends if you do whatsoever I command you.

Godspeed,
Tammara L.B. Mounce
LaPorte, Indiana



Dear Friend,

I was delighted and most grateful for all of the beautiful articles in the July/August issue of *The Messenger*.

It was great to see the name of Joseph Campbell mentioned twice, at least. His latest book, *The Power of Myth*, is now available in most bookstores, I presume. This book is the most interesting and the most informative book I have ever read; I call it my "pre-Bible."

Many of us are hearing with ears and eyes wide open, and we hope many Giant Steps will soon be taken by many people in or out of all churches.

Sincerely,
Bessie Behrendt
Great Bend, Kansas



Women's Weekend Retreat at Swedenborg House, Deland, Florida

"Let us encounter together a real sense of empowerment, bonding, and renewal in our personal and spiritual identities."

"Nurturing Our Feminine Selves"

is the theme of the retreat led by
Rev. Deborah Winter

FOR MORE INFORMATION
phone Rev. Winter at
(904) 734-7378

Friday, February 16, 7:30 pm—Sunday February 18, 10 am

\$50 fee includes lodging and meals.

Please contact Rev. Winter if you have special dietary needs.
Transportation provided from Daytona and Orlando airports.

London Swedenborg Society

The 179th Annual Meeting of the Swedenborg Society was held in Swedenborg Hall on Wednesday, 10th May, 1989. The meeting was opened with the Lord's Prayer, led by the Rev. Norman Ryder, and the President Mr. F.B. Nicholls, then welcomed the 25 members attending.

The Chairman of the Council, Mr. A.T. Chadwick, presented the Annual Report for the year, with reference to the main events in the Tricentenary Year, in which the 300th Anniversary of the birth of Emanuel Swedenborg was celebrated throughout the world. He noted that it had been agreed that 1988 should not

be a jamboree for the 'converted', but should be used as an opportunity to make more well-known the name of Swedenborg. He mentioned in particular the Barbican Event, which he felt had been the highlight of the year, and paid tribute to the New Church College which had organized the excellent work-shops held during the day. One most welcome spin-off was the support and co-operation which the Society received from the Swedish Embassy in London, as well as from H.E. Mr. Lars Bergquist, Swedish Ambassador to the People's Republic of China, who had been the principal speaker at the evening meeting at the Guildhall School of Music.

The Society had made a substantial contribution to the Tricentenary celebrations in the publication of John Chadwick's translation of *True Christian Religion*, of world-wide significance, and volume six of John Elliott's translation of *Arcana Coelestia*.

Mr. Chadwick also referred to the most enjoyable opera performances put on in Swedenborg Hall by Mr. Kenneth Campbell and Piccola Opera, and went on to note the large number of additions to the Library of books published especially for the Tricentenary. Of particular interest, received after the year end, had been Serbo-Croat translations of *Heaven*

(continued on page 206)

Ask Swedenborg!

by George Dole

Q: What does Swedenborg say about the idea of our being one?

A: He has so much to say that it is hard to know where to start. Perhaps the most vivid image is that of the Universal Human (*Maximus Homo*), the vision of all of humanity as a single individual. Each of us, in this respect, is designed and created to perform some particular function which makes sense only as it is integrated into the whole.

In a more personal vein, Swedenborg states in *Heaven and Hell* 203 that "To the extent that we are in the form of heaven . . . all the thinking of our discernment and all the affection of our intentionality reach out into heaven on all sides, according to its form, and commu-

nicate marvelously with the communities there, and they with us." He goes on to tell a story indicating that without this intimate communication, we are incapable of both thought and purpose.

He sees "being accepted into heaven" and "accepting heaven into ourselves" as simply two sides of the same coin (*Heaven and Hell* 4230), because "to the extent that we are in the form of heaven, we are in heaven, because we are heavens in miniature" (*Heaven and Hell* 203).

This oneness is rooted in the nature of the Divine, and some early sections of *Divine Providence* may serve as a kind of summary. "Divine love and divine wisdom proceed from the Lord as one. A form is the more perfect as its constituents are distinguishably different, and yet united. It is (the intent) of divine providence that everything created, collectively and individually, should be such a one, and if it is not, that it should become so."

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