

The Messenger

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE SWEDENBORGIAN CHURCH

APRIL 1981



EDITORIAL COMMENTS:

It's always good to hear from our readers. In recent weeks we have received more mail than usual, and no doubt our flow of letters will increase in the next month or two.

A reader from Michigan asked to be removed from our mailing list because of the editorial on extremism in the January issue. Hugh McCullum had said that extreme, simplistic, narrow solutions, from either the "left" or the "right", in any sector of life, are fraught with danger. The pages of history amply confirm this view. Sometimes the truth is painful and we need to withdraw.

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Another reader felt the ideas expressed by Lois Kerr on the Sexual Revolution were "inane". The same day this letter arrived an article appeared in the local newspaper in which a spokesman from the British Medical Association stated: "The sexual revolution of the past 25 years has reduced the number of women who are able to have babies. 500,000 new cases of venereal disease appear each year in the United Kingdom. Pre-marital and casual sex are factors contributing to the epidemic. Rates of female infertility and ectopic pregnancy — in which the fertilized egg is abnormally deposited outside the womb — have both risen sharply in parallel with the soaring rate of venereal disease." If I understood Lois Kerr's thinking correctly, she was calling for more self-discipline, more responsibility, and more idealism in sexual activity, which is one option we have.

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And a friendly letter from Illinois in which the writer wonders "whether the *Messenger* is really a proper forum for airing Phillip Moulton's views ("Nations Talk of Peace"). There is no indication that Mr. Moulton's thesis bears any relationship to Swedenborg's teachings . . ." I like to think that Swedenborg talks a great deal about peace; and the survival of humanity; and the dawning of a new spiritual age; and the dream that all children should have the right to live to a ripe old age in this world. A major nuclear war would nullify all of this. I believe Moulton's call to a Peace Offensive is sorely needed around the world today.

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The article by Peter Francuch, from personal experience, affirms the uses of dreams and visions, and then records conversations he has had with Swedenborg and the Lord. All of this is consistent with the therapeutic approach he uses (described in the March *Messenger*) in the healing and helping process. In the article immediately following Robert Kirven describes his reactions to the Francuch report, and altogether it makes for thoughtful and fascinating reading. (May I suggest again that we remember Voltaire's words: "Where all think alike, no-one thinks very much.") Sometimes the knowledge that we live in a world of appearances is the only thing that gets me through the day!

At the same time some things are absolutely and eternally true, such as the Lord's glorification and resurrection.

HAPPY EASTER.

P. Z.

CONVENTION APPEAL

As of March 2nd, \$17,226 has been contributed to our Convention Appeal. With your help we will reach our goal of \$25,000.

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Paul B. Zacharias, Editor

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EDITORIAL, BUSINESS & SUBSCRIPTION ADDRESS:

THE MESSENGER

Box 2842, Stn. B

Kitchener, Ontario, N2H 6N2

Telephone — Office 519-743-3845

Home 519-744-6785

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The Starting Line————by Eric Zacharias

Our plans for the 1981 convention on Urbana College campus from June 24th — 28th are shaping up well. We will focus our time and energy on several areas of significance. The theme offers a clue to this. "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord," from the 100th Psalm.

The program Wednesday evening, June 24th, features a musical presentation by the *Last Chants*, a choral group which has entertained our Michigan people in the past and which includes among its members our own Chris Laitner of Midland, Michigan. There will also be opportunities for participation by all in both traditional and contemporary music and singing.

Some of Swedenborg's most fascinating contributions to our time are his projections. He writes of "vastation" and "judgment." He envisions a "new age" and a "new church." He makes an appeal to us with his description of the "Grand Man" and the establishment of a "new heaven and a new earth." Emanuel Swedenborg was a futurist — and there is a deep yearning within us to understand more fully the implications of this.

Mr. Ruben Nelson of Ottawa, Ontario is a futurist. He is affiliated with the Anglican Church of Canada and spends much of his time leading both secular and religious groups in Canada and the United States in conferences related to "shaping the future."

Mr. Nelson will be with us on Thursday, June 25th. This part of our program, under the leadership of our Board of Education, is an opportunity to become involved in clarifying our vision of the Holy City.

We will also hear Dr. Emily Taylor on Friday evening, June 26th. Dr. Taylor, an alumnus of Urbana College and on the Board of Trustees, resides in the Washington, D.C. area. She is the Director of the Office of Women in Higher Education and last June was granted the first Helen Keller Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters degree by Urbana College. Her address, sponsored by the Alliance of New Church Women, will be a highlight of our 1981 convention program.

All of the above is only an introduction to this year's convention. There is much more. In the final analysis, it is you, our Convention membership, that will make our 1981 assembly a success. We hope that many of you will be with us.

The Urbana College Board of Trustees met February 19 - 21. The Church-College

Relations Committee, a committee of that Board, made two recommendations that will be of interest to the Convention. One, that May 3rd, be designated as Urbana College Sunday. We hope that Convention congregations will emphasize some aspect of New Church education in the worship service. Specific suggestions for the worship service will be mailed to our churches prior to May 3rd.

Secondly, it was recommended that the *Messenger* publish periodically a list of desired books for the Urbana College library and their cost, thus, offering our people the opportunity to purchase a selected book as a Memorial Gift to the library. The College librarian, Connie Salyors, will furnish such a list to the *Messenger*.

At the request of the General Council, I have prepared the following statement related to the Position Paper adopted by the Council of Ministers last June concerning the relationship between the Convention and the General Church. This Paper, upon the decision of the General Council, was sent to all Convention churches.

"The President of Convention, following the September mailing of the Paper, received a number of responses — both supportive and critical. Generally, the supportive statements came from those who have been closest to the events of recent years and the critical responses came from those who have been viewing the scene from a farther distance.

One of the most consistent hopes expressed by those who responded was that since the membership of both bodies is small, and the vision we have of the New Jerusalem is large — surely, there must be a way of co-operation for us as we meet the challenge of the 80's. It appears to this writer that the perception each of us (the Convention and the General Church) has of the other's vision of the New Jerusalem is: that each vision is quite distinctive and in important ways quite different.

We can accept these differences without hostility or rancor and, indeed, with charity and with the understanding that the Lord works in varied and grand ways His wonders to perform."

Mrs. Zacharias joins me in wishing all of our *Messenger* readers the richest of Easter blessings. It is the Risen Lord whom we worship and to whom we return all the Good He has given to us.

Are Visions And Direct Communication With The Spiritual World Possible And Orderly At The Present Day?

*by Peter D. Francuch, Ph.D.
San Diego, CA.*

In recent years the interest in visions, dreams, communication with the spiritual world and similar occurrences has intensified. There are claims of communication with the spirits, many predictions, psychic phenomena, ESP, etc.

Are all these phenomena invalid or do they have some relative or absolute verity and, perhaps, reflect or herald the coming of an entirely new era of true spirituality — reestablishing the true bridge between the natural and spiritual worlds as it was at the time of the most ancient church?

I became very much concerned by some statements, doubts and conclusions which some Swedenborgians have in this respect. When I say "Swedenborgian," I am not limiting myself to the members of our particular church (The Convention) but I use the term to include everybody who accepts Swedenborgian principles in a spiritual and/or religious context. Some of us believe that after the Last Judgment such occurrences are not only ruled out and impossible, but they stem from evil and therefore are extremely dangerous.

An example of this latter view is the recent article by the Rev. Frederick L. Schnarr, "Dreams, Visions and Sleep," Part VI in *New Church Life*, vol. C, No. 12, December, 1980.

I was very disturbed by several statements in that article. Since this is an important spiritual issue from which stems the basic tenet of our very existence, and since many Swedenborgians tend to agree with these statements, I decided to do something about it.

If we agree with the conclusions of the article, then we must believe that there is only one way, one direction, one channel in which our spirituality can develop and evolve—through the teachings of Swedenborg, reading the Bible, written doctrines of the churches and preachings of ministers and teachers of the churches. All other means, according to these conclusions, are out of the question, and they are from evil and falsity.

I believe this is a very distorted view. It is a gross misunderstanding of the spiritual principles revealed through Swedenborg. Moreover it is dangerous by its rigidity, immobility, inflexibility, dogmatism, one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness. I believe that the Lord has an infinite variety of ways to do His work and to teach us. There are many ways and paths to the same goal, and many keys to the same door.

Since I felt that the issues raised in those statements are of immense spiritual importance and consequence, I prayed to the Lord and while in deep meditation I asked the Lord's permission to speak with Swedenborg and other approved spiritual advisors about the conclusions drawn in the above mentioned article. By the mercy of the Lord, the permission was granted. Because of the importance of the understanding regarding the issues raised in this article, I felt that the communication which occurred in this context between Swedenborg and I, and others, should be quoted verbatim.

I.: "... make sure that nothing can be leaked through from any evil spirits, or from our personal predispositions or wishful thinking or self - fulfilling prophesies but only pure, objective, Divine Truth and Divine Wisdom from Divine Love and Divine Good of the Lord God Jesus Christ can operate here.

A.: We are all here and the care has been taken that nothing of this nature occurs.

I.: Thank you very much for coming. . . and everybody is listening?

A.: Yes.

I.: I am going to read you some quotations from the mentioned article. I would like you to ponder and give me your opinion about this situation. Here it is:

"Are such visions of fantasy and persuasion the only kinds of visions which man on earth can now have? If so, are we to include all visionary experiences, such as seeing images

in a crystal ball, or visions of the dead or of loved ones, or the pictures of our day-dreams — are all of these mere fantasy? Are all such claims of such things as true visions to be ruled out as impossible after the Last Judgment?

Such teachings as we have been able to compile for this study certainly indicate that man can at this day have no visions, except those which are false and visionary. He can have no visions except ones that spring from what is evil and false, and therefore that are dangerous and destructive to his spiritual life and his spiritual freedom . . . etc. There is nothing true in it, nothing of heaven, nothing of order — and therefore nothing of use."

And about dreams:

" . . . We cannot but think that the use of interpreting dreams is both dangerous and impossible. In fact, we believe it is dangerous because it is impossible . . ."

and

" . . . that Divinely organized prophetic dreams no longer exist with man . . ."

Now, if this is true, then, of course, what we do, what we experience in our work and now, according to this article, based on interpretation of Swedenborg's teachings, is from evil and falsity at worst, and at best it is only fantasy and pure imagination brewed out from our own wishful thinking . . . Now, I would like some comments and tell me what is the situation about it. Of course, you know they will say that what we are doing here is from evil. Who wants to respond to this? . . .

A.: Emanuel Swedenborg will speak first.

I.: O.K. Emanuel Swedenborg, please make comments, because it pertains to your teachings as they interpret them. I welcome you here.

Swedenborg: Fundamental truths have been given to the world under the auspices of the Most High. Because you have free will, you will do with Truths what you see proper: distort them, bend them, twist them, hammer them into your own "truth" which then reflect none of the light of the upper states but only the darkness of lower hells. This way people and those evil spirits that drive them, delight in building their own "truth" and their own church. And also delight in putting the ceiling above their heads from which no transcendence can occur, and under which people stagnate. By the word of the Most High, you are able to do this. But in doing so, human beings build their

own prison from which they will never be released except by the reversion of their own free will. Truths that were revealed to the world were done so based upon principles founded in the spiritual world, for the benefit of the spirit in everyone. They can be neglected at any point depending upon the status of people's minds. Those who have chosen to neglect them have concomitantly chosen to live their life in the midst of stagnation. An immobility . . . this is the truth, that immobility is the delight of the hells. No one can prosper spiritually in such a state. I remind you that the Lord Jesus Christ, the Most High, will reveal his light and wisdom to the world in countless numbers of ways. Men and women will have contact with spirits, with the Most High and with other angels based upon their own spiritual degree, their willingness, their open-mindedness. It is important to realize that there are many in this world who proclaim to have the truth. In fact, no one has all the truth. For truths are constantly being revealed through the direction of the Most High, and depending on the state of the world. It is important to realize, no person singlehandedly has every truth. The one who walks in the way of openmindedness and welcomes the directions of the Most High, is the one who will be blessed.

It is necessary to remind yourself of that and free yourself from the nets and traps proposed by those who are directed by lower spirits. In addition, realize that what has been founded under the direction of the Most High for the benefit of humanity, will follow in truth and therefore will never be distorted. It is from this discourse that you will realize that the spiritual degree which has been proposed by the Most High for the living person must come through, must be realized through open mindedness, and will be realized only by those who seek the higher spiritual order. Those who have bent the truths, molded them in their own and proposed their own laws, are, as was stated earlier, building their own prison. Therefore, for you: realize no one has every truth. You can only approximate truth. You can only approximate absolute truth because your situation is not absolute. In the spiritual world approximation becomes absolute truth. Because of the fact that you are in the natural state, you have not the ability nor the propensity for acceptance of the absolute truth. You frequently are led astray by your own volition. Remember, however, that in approximating spiritual truth, you are leaving your mind open for the direction of the Most High . . . What you have read is the delight of lower forms. Do not let it alarm you.

I.: Well, it did not alarm me but the influence on the readers . . . and what I am trying to do and am doing, is just the opposite of what the article says. And he quotes you, your DP 135, HH 245, 248, 255, 157 and AC 1967, 1968 and many, many other places to make these conclusions.

Swedenborg: (indignantly) His conclusions are falsely drawn as anyone can see. He also proposes that guilt is beneficial . . . This man is in error.

I.: . . . and yet he is one of the top leaders in the church . . .

Swedenborg: Their church!

I.: It bears your name.

Swedenborg: (indignantly): By their choice. It is important to realize at this point . . . *Truth is dynamic* . . . Consequently what is revealed to spiritual man is revealed in accordance with this fact. For one to say that the Most High and the angels cannot cross the border is, in fact, a fallacy. For building the spiritual bridge, as it once was, is a necessity which follows from the absolute truth. This man, in efforts to provide direction, has in fact, nailed shut the casket which bears the name of the church. This is being done everywhere. It makes no difference, that it appears in the name of Swedenborg.

I.: Should we do anything about it?

Swedenborg: Retaliation in an absolute sense, of course, would be futile.

I.: That is right.

Swedenborg: However, this obviously causes those who read this to believe that they, in fact, are not the center of their own universe under the direction of the Most High. Therefore, they are susceptible to whatever their guilt would prescribe, whatever their mentality would prescribe.

However, if one regards open mindedness from the spiritual stand point, one will realize that, in fact, the spiritual person is a center of his universe under the direction of the Lord. Consequently being the center of one's universe, one can direct all affairs and all elements of the universe which is impossible otherwise. This is what you must stress. That is important, important for all to regard this. In doing so this evil will be counteracted. But, in fact, to fight evil on evil ground is futile.

I.: I was not thinking in that term. I thought I might write a short article, and quote you, what you just said.

Swedenborg: That, in fact, would be beneficial.

I.: And send it to the *Messenger*, because they probably would publish it as a rebuttal, not fighting, but just as a rebuttal. Of course, they have freedom of choice, whether to publish it or not.

Swedenborg: Yes. That is constructive and beneficial.

I.: Of course, I would also need the Lord's view on this issue, and everyone who wants to contribute.

Swedenborg: The Lord will speak now.

I.: Thank you. I appreciate you speaking.

Swedenborg: Yes.

I.: Now, will the Lord, the Most High take over?

Answer: Yes.

The Lord: What has been said follows from what is true. The world, and all dominating factors, follow concordantly. There is nothing else. As these churches are constructed and flow through the violation of people in the natural world, so is their just correspondence in the spiritual world. And once a person has built, for himself, a closed shell, he will live in such a closed shell until he, by his own free will, changes. This can happen upon realization of truth here in the natural world or in the spiritual world. It is your choice to be this way, to eternity, or break the shell, in true freedom. That is all.

I.: Should we do anything about it?

The Lord: You may write a rebuttal.

I.: Quoting you?

The Lord: Yes.

I.: O.K. Thank you. Anyone else want to comment to this issue?

The Lord: That is not necessary.

I.: I understand, thank you very much.

In conclusion, I believe any additional comments to this will be superfluous. It is clear from this that visions, prophetic dreams, communication with the spiritual world are not only in order, but they are extremely important and vital to our spiritual survival and our spiritual progression.

For me the issue is not whether such communication exists (whatever the form of that communication might be) and is necessary after the Last Judgment, but: What is the purpose and intention of such communication? If it stems from love to the Lord and to Divine Truth and from honest needs to be a better human being, becoming more and more spiritual for the use of both the spiritual and natural worlds, then such communication is

from the Will of the Lord and His Divine Providence. And vice-versa, of course.

Remember, the truth is always dynamic. There is no stagnation. Static truth does not exist.

Comments on the Preceding Article

by Robert H. Kirven

Perhaps Dr. Francuch has addressed an issue by assuming a major part of his conclusion; but the method of his argument, as well as its substance, has raised some interesting and important questions. Not all those which occur on first reading are really the important ones, but some of the others need to be dealt with so that the important ones can be seen more clearly. Consider these:

I. Did Swedenborg actually say all that to Dr. Francuch?

II. Can any report of such a conversation be taken seriously at all?

III. Can memories of fantasies or dreams be used in making decisions about anything as important as religious doctrine?

IV. Didn't Swedenborg warn against seeking communication with the spiritual world?

V. If Swedenborg said in his writings that communication with the spiritual world at this day is impossible or disorderly or both, and then said to Dr. Francuch's meditation that it's okay, which statement are we to believe?

VI. Is Dr. Francuch's concluding opinion right or wrong?

Let's look at these questions, one by one.

I. DID SWEDENBORGIAN ACTUALLY SAY ALL THAT TO DR. FRANCUCH? That was one of the first thoughts that occurred to me as I was reading, but on a little reflection it appears to be one of the less interesting questions, and certainly the least important. It is less important than question II, which after all is the point of the article. It is less interesting than questions III or VI, because its answer has no significant consequence in judging the final value of the piece.

Consider the possibilities. There are only four: (1) It's all made-up; (2) Dr. Francuch mis - interpreted his meditative experience; (3) He was deceived by his subconscious or by a deceiving spirit; (4) The facts are as reported.

If you choose the first option, then the reported conversation becomes a rhetorical device in the argument, and as such it must be judged on the basis of whether or not it convinces you of the concluding opinion. If you choose the second or third option, you still must decide for yourself whether the mis - interpretation or deceit led to an erroneous concluding opinion, or whether Dr. Francuch reached the right conclusion in spite of his meditation. If you opt for the fourth possibility, you are left with Question V before you can evaluate the conversation. Therefore, question I is neither very interesting or important.

II. CAN ANY REPORT OF SUCH A CONVERSATION BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY AT ALL? This question is important, because it concerns the necessary precondition of Dr. Francuch's whole argument, both methodologically and substantively. Furthermore, it is very interesting because it highlights the critical nature of some points that are easily overlooked or taken for granted.

Swedenborg's description of spiritual experiences refer almost entirely to the extraordinary events which the Lord made possible for him alone as part of the Second Coming. But early in *ARCANA CAELESTIA*, when Swedenborg speaks to the astonishment and incredulous suspicion that he realized his new readers must experience, he pointed out that his spiritual experiences were unique only in the degree to which the Lord made use of faculties which actually are inherent in all human beings. As I translate AC 69, it reads:

"Human beings are spirits clothed with bodies. Because they have been created by the Lord like this, the same as spirits and angels, they could have talked with spirits and angels — as in fact they did in most ancient times. But after a passage of time, that channel of communication was closed, because people involved themselves so much with what related to their bodies and the world that they hardly cared about anything else. Still as soon as those physical concerns that people are involved with get out of the way, the channel is opened. Then people find themselves among spirits, and share their life."

Taken literally and seriously, as I take it, this is a powerful statement about human nature and about the total environment in which we live. It speaks of living in two kinds of environment at once, of being capable of consciousness of both environments, of habitually being conscious only of one, of

occasionally having flashes of insight into the other, and of the possibility of expanding those momentary flashes into visions, sustained communication, and shared experiences. If Swedenborg had written nothing else on the subject, no Swedenborgian would be surprised to find that certain people, at certain times under certain conditions, have conversations with spirits and angels — including conversations with Swedenborg himself.

AC5983 describes the spirits and angels with each and every human being, who provide the means of communication with both hell and heaven. HH80 describes how (in Dr. George Dole's translation) "an individual is in touch with the heavens as far as his more inward reaches are concerned." The problem arises from passages such as AC9396(2): "Heaven is NOW closed, for scarcely anyone AT THIS DAY speaks with angels and spirits" (Emphasis mine).

Many of Swedenborg's Latin words have been mis - interpreted for a variety of reasons, and one of these words that has caused some serious misinterpretations and distortions is *HODIE*, "today" or "now" or "at this day." Because of the obvious relevance of his works to our present situation, it is superficially obvious that what he said about "now" refers to OUR "now." That's the problem. That's the source of the mis - interpretation. That's the cause of the distortion. This mis-interpretation and distortion has reached such proportions that I have been told by a student who was well-versed in Swedenborg that THERE IS NO OTHER SOURCE OF DATA ON THE HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH SINCE 1749 that can tell us more about what happened since Swedenborg's death than can be found in Swedenborg's writings about *HODIE*!

The *HODIE* in any of Swedenborg's theological writings refers to the third quarter of the eighteenth century. His "this day" is our "that day." His "now" is our "then." Of course, some of what was true of his day is also true of our day; but we must use our discrimination (Latin *INTELLIGENTIA*) to recognize what is and what is not.

It is a denial of the reality and power of the Lord's Second Coming to assume that everything that was true before it happened still is true in the same way today. Of course, the fact that heaven was THEN closed does not prove that heaven is open now; but neither does it prove that heaven is now and forever closed!

Once that recognition is connected to AC69 and 5983, it is obvious that such reports as Dr.

Francuch's can be taken seriously as the article suggests they are intended.

III. CAN MEMORIES OF FANTASIES OR DREAMS BE USED IN MAKING DECISIONS ABOUT ANYTHING AS IMPORTANT AS RELIGIOUS DOCTRINE?

This question is very important, but it might not be particularly interesting, because an affirmative answer is absolutely necessary. Memories of fantasies and dreams — sometimes conscious memories, but much more often unconscious ones — are crucial elements in all the decision-making we do. In fact, the more important the issue, the greater the weight we give to such conscious and unconscious memories. They are an essential element in the influx from heaven through which the Lord influences our lives. Much spiritual influence is not conscious or remembered, of course — particularly as it affects our values and goals, or is experienced in temptation and the heavenly power that helps us resist it. But flashes of understanding, new insights into meaning, and other effects of our spiritual environment and companionship, come into conscious awareness through our memories.

One of the great values of meditation as a form of prayer (or prayer as a form of meditation) stems from this. Since we depend so much on influx from the spiritual world for our ability to make important decisions, it is extremely valuable to be able to bring that influx out of the ambiguity of fantasies and dreams into clear and distinct consciousness. By helping us become conscious of spiritual influences that otherwise might remain unconscious, meditation makes such awareness available to conscious memory, which can apply it directly to the problems that confront us in the outward aspects of our lives. That could be a description of Dr. Francuch's experience: his deep meditation brought a general intuition about Swedenborg's teachings into the specificity of a consciously - received message from Swedenborg himself.

IV. DIDN'T SWEDENBORG WARN AGAINST SEEKING COMMUNICATION WITH THE SPIRITUAL WORLD?

This is a very interesting question. It certainly is true that he did, but there is a specificity to that warning which frequently is overlooked.

For instance, consider his warning in *APOCALYPSE EXPLAINED* 1182 - 3. He clearly warns against seeking contact with the spiritual world out of self - serving motives, but he goes on to explain how "those whom the

(cont'd on next page)

Lord leads" are in a different set of circumstances. "When these hear speech from spirits, as sometimes they do, they are not taught, but are led, and this so prudently that the man is still left to himself." This distinction must be kept in mind when reading the conclusion of Dr. Francuch's paper: after quoting what Swedenborg — and the Lord — says, he then gives his opinion. He gives it as an opinion to which he was led, not as a fact which he was taught. It is true that AE1183 goes on to talk about leading by affections: but the rational substance of the quotation attributed to Swedenborg is not devoid of affection even in print.

V. IF SWEDENBORG SAID IN HIS WRITINGS THAT COMMUNICATION WITH THE SPIRITUAL WORLD AT THIS DAY IS IMPOSSIBLE OR DISORDERLY OR BOTH, AND THEN SAID IN DR. FRANCUCH'S MEDITATION THAT IT'S OKAY, WHICH STATEMENT ARE WE TO BELIEVE? Now that is a very interesting question, indeed. It's one form of the question that arises often (perhaps most often) as students begin to grapple with Swedenborg in specific detail. If Swedenborg's works are a consequential form of revelation, and therefore true, how do you cope with contradictory statement within those works? It's a problem that arises in two quite different forms. First, there is the problem of statements that seem contradictory on first reading, but on further comparison and study turn out to be only in apparent conflict. Then, there are statements which deeper analysis shows to be in even greater conflict than first appeared, bringing us face-to-face with genuine paradox. Experience shows that there are ways of maintaining one's faith in the face of either circumstance.

Freedom of choice is characteristic of all genuine truth. Even when Love itself and Wisdom itself — perfect Good and Truth — became incarnate in the world in which we live (the life of the Lord), it was possible even for those closest to him to doubt the reality of the Divine in him. If any truth were presented so unambiguously that no reasonable person could doubt it, then no reasonable person would be free to choose whether to believe it or not — which means that freedom according to reason would be blotted out of the range of real choices. So any "truth" that is totally beyond question is, by definition, not Truth from the Lord that is necessary for salvation. The possibility of doubt is one of the hallmarks of genuine truth.

Therefore it can be asked, open - mindedly, "did Swedenborg contradict himself?" In this case, the answer seems to be, "No." The contradiction is only apparent. A second look at the reflections on Questions II and IV in this series should demonstrate the compatibility of the two statements. In the first place, the "day" in which he said that such communication was impossible or disorderly or both is not OUR day; and in the second place, the kind of communication he was talking about can be distinguished from the conversation reported by Dr. Francuch on the basis of the intention behind the meditation which Dr. Francuch describes.

VI. IS DR. FRANCUCH'S CONCLUDING OPINION RIGHT OR WRONG? That, of course, is the most important question of all, and a very interesting one, too. The importance of the question is evident to me in the power of the various and conflicting emotions I experienced while reading the article for the first time. If you do not sense its importance, then I am sorry for wasting your time with this analysis.

I have already pointed out that the conclusion is expressed as opinion, not fact. That is an important distinction, because — as noted above — issues this vital to our eternal life are not susceptible to the certainty of mathematical proof. Within the range of opinion, I find I must agree with the conclusion. Dr. Francuch takes note of the centrality of intention in judging the validity and value of revealed or intuitive knowledge, and this is in accord with the caution which Swedenborg offers in the passage from APOCALYPSE EXPLAINED which was mentioned above. Further, he mentions the impossibility that a form of communication which is a natural human capacity would provide access only to the hells — an observation which is consistent with Swedenborg's insistence that an equilibrium of heavenly and hellish influences is an essential aspect of the Lord's management of the world in which we live (cf. TCR 478 - 504).

Perhaps the most solid ground of my assent to Dr. Francuch's experiences is the common denominator of our experiences. At the time of this writing, I have not yet read the detailed account of his method which I expect to appear in the issue of THE MESSENGER which precedes the appearance of the article I'm commenting on (who says that time is an illusion only in the spiritual world?); but from what I have learned from Marge Ball's article in a recent MESSENGER and from friends I met

in southern California last fall when I co- led a workshop in PRAYER, MEDITATION AND HEALING, it appears that his methods and his experiences differ from mine mostly in details of the means if they differ at all: their means are similar and their end is the same. My experiences to date have not included dialogues which I can recount as explicitly as his, but that gives me no reason to doubt the authenticity of his report. My prayerful meditations have given the same certainty to convictions that formerly were held more vaguely — the same new-found certainty-after-momentary-doubt that I perceive between the lines of his account.

It seems worth noting in conclusion that the dynamic nature of truth which Swedenborg is quoted as affirming, refers in the context to the truth that we can know in the finite state of our humanity. Truth Itself, the first manifestation of the Divine Wisdom that is "distinguishably one" in God, transcends such dichotomies as dynamic/static in ways that entirely exceed the capacity of finite human comprehension. But in the physico-spiritual stress of life as we "spirits enveloped in bodies" live it, static truth is history and dynamic truth is now.

THE ALLIANCE MITE BOX

At last! a Mission project for Mite Box. What could be more delightful than giving to make possible the collection of pure, sweet mountain spring water in a redwood cistern?

This forever running spring is located in the Santa Cruz Mountains near San Jose, California. Given to Convention by Esther Perry, it has been used for the past three years by SNAP, Swedenborgian New Age Pioneers, for wilderness camping. It is developing slowly into an unique place for Swedenborg inspired experiences.

Needed this year is a redwood tank, about \$1000; pipe and camp tools, about \$500; and with attendant costs another \$500. We should set our Mite Box goal at \$2000. With free labor this could be the biggest bargain around for a water supply! With water secure, less hardy outdoors Swedenborgians can enjoy it when SNAP is not in session.

Spiritual Renewal Space is a worthy New Age concept. Put a little extra in your boxes this year! And, Alliance Chairpeople, please send your collections to Doris Tafel by May 15th.

Anytime's a good time for love!

Marge Ball, Mite Box Chairperson
648 Via Cielito,
Ventura, CA. 93003

FOCUS ON URBANA SUNDAY SCHOOL

The Urbana church is up to something with its religious education program! The key word there is "participation." Betsy Ledingham, the Secretary of the Urbana Society, tells us that parents sign up at the beginning of the church year to be responsible for a particular children's class. Usually they need sign up for only two weeks about every three months. The lesson from the Bible is assigned to each teacher and a theme and project are suggested. For example, the children handled the "creation" story, in which the teacher emphasized that the Garden of Eden is really a "state" within them. The children used their active imaginations to picture a beautiful place within that they could go and feel the peace and joy that is the Lord's love for them. They actually experienced it using guided imagery. Later they worked on a mural in which they portrayed their concepts of the Lord and of His creation. Another theme the children liked was "love." They explored the concept of loving themselves in a positive way, then of including their family and friends in their circle of love, and their community and even the world. And, as they came to know, at the center of all is the Lord's love.

The adults too have a theme which continues for the whole year. They are now discussing from the *Arcana* the New Church understanding of the seven days of creation. Betsy says they "dig into it in an experiential way. We are trying to figure out how regeneration really works in our lives." It sounds really exciting, and it's something all religious education classes could do. The adults always end their time together with a prayer session and respond to requests for healing prayers for those who desire it.

So let's give a cheer for the Urbana Society, which is sounding a vital note among our Convention Sunday Schools. Incidentally, Rev. Ron Brugler, Convention's Religious Education consultant, sat down with Betsy and others at the beginning of the year to help them plan which lessons from the Bible they would present, and offered appropriate resources, such as film strips and project suggestions.

Gard Perry, S.S.A. President

EASTER BLOSSOMS



Resurrection

It is the Resurrection day again! There is joy upon the hills and gladness in the fields. Wherever we listen, there comes the songs of the blossoms, the chime of birds and stream. Wherever we look, we behold the miracle of life new risen. The green tide rolls from the south, pressing on over the hills and running into the valleys, bringing hope to winter-bound souls.

Even thus the Word of God runneth swiftly upon the earth, searching our hearts, as the soft spring rain seeks the roots shut in the dark mould, and awakens in them the impulse to rise and share in the glory of leaf and flower, sunshine and song.

So may the Word of Life awaken in us an irresistible desire to think more deeply, feel more sincerely, love more generously, and be more worthy of our spiritual heritage!

This is the fairest of all resurrections — the rising in our souls of a nobler self. Now is the moment for us to rise out of the darkness of our selfish lives and, quickened by his Love new risen in our hearts, go forth in his steps with healing in our hands for the wounds of the world.

— Helen Keller.

Toward the end of a long life when death was approaching, Victor Hugo described his feelings this way. "Winter is on my head, but eternal spring is in my heart. For half a century I have been writing my thoughts in prose, verse, history, philosophy, dramas, romance, satire, tradition, ode, song. I have tried all, but I feel that I have not said one thousandth part of what is in me. I cannot say 'I have finished my life's work.' My day's work will begin the next morning. The tomb is not a blind alley, it is a thoroughfare. It closes in the twilight, to open in the dawn."

The thoughts which Dr. Lyman Abbott expressed on the imminence of his death are common to us all: "I have fought a good fight," he said. "I have often faltered, but I have kept up the race. I have been besieged all my life with doubts, but I have kept my faith. I look forward to the Great Adventure which

cannot be far off, with awe but not with apprehension. I enjoy my work, my home, my friends, my life — I shall be sorry to part with them. But always I have stood in the bow looking forward with hopeful anticipation to the life before me. When the time comes, for my embarkation and I put out to sea, I shall still be standing in the bow looking forward with eager curiosity and glad hopefulness to the new world to which the unknown voyage will bring me."

Someone has expressed the transition from life to death in these familiar words: "Imagine you are standing on the seashore. A ship at your side spreads her white sails to the morning breeze and starts for the blue ocean. She is an object of beauty and strength and you stand and watch her until at length she hangs like a speck of white cloud just where the sea and sky meet and mingle with each other. As she disappears some one exclaims, 'There, she's gone.'

"Gone where? Gone from your sight, that's all. She is just as large in hull and mast and spar as when she left your side, and just as able to bear her load of living freight to the place of her destination. Her diminished size is in you, not in her.

"And just at the moment when someone at your side says, 'She's gone,' there are other eyes watching for her coming and other voices ready to take up the glad shout, 'There she comes.' " And this is what we call dying. "Life itself is eternal . . . Death is only a horizon and a horizon is nothing but the limit of our sight."

"We are spirits," as Benjamin Franklin wrote, "and that bodies should be lent us while they can afford us pleasure, assist us in acquiring knowledge or in doing good to our fellow creatures is a kind and benevolent act of God. When they become unfit for these purposes and afford us pain instead of pleasure, instead of an aid become an encumbrance and answer none of the intentions for which they were given, it is equally kind and benevolent that a way is provided by which we may get rid of them. Death is that way."



Marion Priestnal, Editor

THINK ON THESE THINGS

"Make a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands; Sing forth the honour of his name; make his praise glorious." Psalms 66: 1 and 2.

The natural land all around us is making a joyful noise! The green of the mountains and hills is breaking forth alive with the sound of spring. The returning of birds brings beautiful music where there was once silence. The water is melodiously flowing in the brook where only yesterday the ice was cold and crackling. We hear the rhythm of the rain, washing and cleansing the earth of its last vestige of winter. What was so dead and lifeless is once again awake and celebrating life. Is it any wonder the Lord chose this time for us to celebrate Easter . . . can we possibly doubt His infinite ability to

conquer death when we see the direct correspondence in nature? What we thought was dead this winter is now alive this spring.

We, too, can and should, "make a joyful noise unto the Lord." We, too, should "sing forth the honour of His name." And we can, just by keeping the Lord's teachings. By reading His Word. The Lord's Word is just like the sun. It will warm and nurture us so that we can radiate this warmth and beauty to all we meet. It will give us strength to stand like the sturdy oak through the blustery fury of life's stormy disappointments and calamities. It will give us patience and kindness to heal all those we touch in life . . . and it will bring joy to our faces, as beautiful as flowers, smiling toward those with a searching heart.

Carole Rienstra

OUR COMMON PROBLEMS

All our churches, here and abroad, are faced with the challenge of keeping the external organization healthy and functioning. In England the church does not grow any more rapidly than it does here. The shortages of ministers, small congregations, aging buildings and insufficient funds are constant — though unwelcome — companions for our fellow New Churchmen too.

It is interesting to this reporter, and not fully understood, that our English cousins seem to approach these problems differently — both as to attitude and method. Some examples of this may be discovered in the following excerpts from the address of the Reverend Christopher Hasler, presented on the recent occasion of his becoming President of General Conference.

Communication

"The first thing we must solve is the problem of communication. We have no means of getting in touch with every member. *LIFELINE* (the British counterpart of the *Messenger*, Ed.) is seen by only about a third of our membership.

Society Newsletters bring little news of the wider church, and there are Societies without Newsletters. We need some publication which will go to everybody without exception. It must be free, so that no one can say it is too expensive.

"I believe that when our people can see that the organization is doing something for them, then we shall have a greater sense of unity, and the people will be generous. But until we are in communication with each other, the feeling of "us and them", of isolation, of not being loved and thought of, will persist. The members have a right to know what is happening, and for those who will say that such information will not be read, I have two things to say:

1. We must **MAKE** it readable
2. At least the leadership of the Church will have done its duty.

FINANCE

"I sincerely hope that we shall not spend hours and days during the next 5 years talking about money, the lack of it, inflation, and how to bring it in. Such debates seldom increase our income. There is no scheme that will solve our

problem. The real question is *how much we love the Lord*, and whether we in our hearts believe that *the church is doing His work*.

"If we work at it from this end, and see the Church moving ahead on a united front, then I know the membership can be wonderfully generous. But none of us want to put our money into an organization **IN WHICH WE HAVE NO FAITH**.

CARING FOR EACH OTHER

"One further thought on finance. Because of the priorities we have adopted, namely, ministerial stipends, transport and housing, the Conference Council has been unable to offer grants or interest-free loans to Societies in difficulties. Are we content to leave it there?

If a boiler bursts, or the organ or the roof need repairs, are we going to let a Society lose heart because they cannot get themselves into a debt? If we were in better communication, and if we all knew that one of our sister groups was in trouble, would it be beyond our capacity to hold a small effort? a jumble sale, a coffee morning, newspaper collection or some similar event, and send the proceeds to that Society? If 40 Societies or groups raised 25£ each, that would be 1000£.

"This may sound to you like one of these schemes I have just condemned. But my concern is pastoral, since at the moment many of our Societies feel alone. If you all knew that if some disaster struck, you would not be facing it alone, but the whole Church would be standing beside you, you could not despair, since we would be caring for each other, drawing closer together.

"We would all be glad to read in a newsletter how, with our help, a tragedy was averted. We would have a stake in each other's welfare. Such an appeal could be made perhaps twice a year and sent directly to where the need existed. Please write to me and tell me what you think about it. Let our actions declare that we are one body, one Church, and never rivals for the ever diminishing slice.

BIBLE STUDY

"I have thought for a long time about some way which would bring greater joy and inspiration back into the Church. I wholeheartedly believe that we need to know our New Church doctrines and I shall actively encourage their study. But I believe we must be in closer communion with the Lord Himself.

"I invite you to join a course of Bible study for which Notes will be provided. This course has

the backing of your Ministers, and will be designed not to turn you into Biblical scholars, but to help you to know the Bible better so that you can turn it in with greater confidence and find the Lord's will for your life. This course will be for individual as well as collective use. You will be asked to invite your neighbors and friends from outside the Church. Such meetings should be held in our homes, preferably without the rather formal presence of the minister.

JOB CENTRES

"Who will do all this work? About 10% of our members work very hard and most of our key people carry five or six commitments on their shoulders. All this is wrong. The work should be far more widely distributed.

"What I am asking is quite radical. It is that you give up one regular evening a week. I go further; if you are retired or unemployed commit one or even two regular days each week. We have a vast pool of experience and highly skilled labor force, yet we have not had the imagination to tap it and have overburdened the few who dare not expand Church activities because they are now at a breaking point.

I shall issue a questionnaire with guidelines asking people to offer their labor of love to the Lord.

"Those who have some good ideas may write to me so that we can establish JOB CENTRES in every area. One day we must have our own press on which we can print our own Conference publications. Is there anyone with the know-how to start such a plant? Others are doing it, why can't we?

"I shall try to have a different view of this office to which you have called me. I see it as a permission of Providence rather than its will. Let us give ourselves a rest from self analysis and think of the future: the direction in which I believe we ought to move.

WE SHALL GROW IF WE HAVE THE WILL TO GROW."

.

Several points made in this address seem particularly innovative and suggestive of a spirit within the organization that could go far in creating new strengths. For one example, in the part titled "Caring For Each Other", the idea that all the Societies by banding together might

be of financial help to the one currently in emergency. This has myriad implications that go far beyond the obvious one of immediate need, it seems to this reporter. Would some of the ideas set forth here be useful to us? Would anyone like to comment? (Editor)

SAVING A CHURCH

"Trendier Than Thou": by Paul Seabury.
Harper's Magazine (Oct. 1978)

During the fall of 1977, the Episcopal Church in America suffered schism when a small, conservative faction broke away to form a new "Anglican Church in North America", (an estimated 15,000), and the split has been a traumatic experience for Episcopallans.

Most journalists who wrote about this crisis blamed the split on a decision made at the Church's 1976 General Convention to allow the ordination of women to the priesthood. Paul Seabury, political scientist and writer, and a descendant of America's first Episcopalian bishop, thinks the *factional schism actually represents a more fundamental rift between Episcopal clergy and the laity. Both bishops and ministers, he says, led the Church toward increasing secularization as they joined political and social causes in the 1960's, dispensing millions of dollars of Church funds to aid these causes.*

Mr. Seabury has written a long and thoughtful article on this subject. He concludes that to avoid further "deterioration" the clergy of the Episcopalian church need to regain a sense of their essential calling which is not social or political but "salvific" — soul saving. Ed.

A READER REPLIES:

"Since reading 'Is There A Way' in the January Messenger I have been thinking about some way to answer our needs. As the Alliances are far distant from one another, I feel it would be a good idea to have an editorial staff, divided at least into four divisions, having an editor from the West, North, East and South — and have the pages of the Bulletin, still published in the Messenger because of distribution and expense, entirely designed for each section of the U.S. and Canada — five divisions with one for the Canadian Alliance. We have had such good success with our

Pacific Coast newsletter and I feel with these divisions more could be published and contributors would be directed toward a good coverage."

Mareta Saul

We think Mrs. Saul means that one issue would have an editor and contributors from the Western area; another, the New England area, etc. If so, this seems a workable plan.

End of Alliance Bulletin

St. Petersburg New Church Vandalized

On Friday, Jan. 23 our Convention church in St. Petersburg, Florida sustained extensive damage in the Chapel and five of the smaller rooms. Seven windows were smashed, including the stained glass window in the Chapel; Leon Le Van's office was in shambles with everything overturned; the organ keyboard was damaged; dishes scattered and broken; the altar was partially wrecked; the Communion service scattered around; and a fire extinguisher was sprayed around in the library and chancel.

Within a few days much of the damage had been repaired and all church services and functions are being maintained.

NEWS ITEMS

Dr. Esther F. Perry of the El Cerrito parish of the San Francisco Society was honored January 22 by the Soil Conservation Society of America. She has been awarded the Chapter Distinguished Service Award for 1980. This was presented at the annual meeting in San Luis Obispo. The letter to her says, "Your enthusiastic, untiring, and professional approach to the advancement of the science and art of conservation is well known."

This is not the only award or citation she has received. On her kitchen wall hang a number of such citations for her contributions to Soil Science. Before her retirement some fifteen years ago Esther Perry was a member of the Soils Department at the University of California.

ADDRESS CHANGE

Rev. Eric Allison
293 Victoria St. S.
Kitchener, Ont. N2M 3A2

The Board of Education Announces

PRE - CONVENTION CONFERENCE 1981

Sunday, June 21 to Wednesday, June 24

Urbana College, Urbana, Ohio

EXPLORING SPIRITUAL ENERGY

*Leaders: Effie Chow, Ph.D.
Lorraine Sando, M.A.*

For many years, lay people have been asking to participate in the stimulating pre - Convention meetings held by the ministers' spouses. Now, at last, here is your chance. Here is how the program will work.

You will arrive in time for supper on Sunday, June 21. During the evening you will have your first group meeting, led by Lorraine Sando, Family and Art Therapist. Lorraine is well known in Convention, having served on General Council and staffed seven Post - Convention Conferences.

On Monday and Tuesday, during the day, you will join with ministers' spouses in sessions led by Dr. Effie Chow. Dr. Chow, President of the East West Academy of Healing Arts in San Francisco, led the ministers and spouses in their meetings last year. She focused on the interrelationship of body and soul, mind and feelings, with emphasis on using energy positively for spiritual growth and healing. An account of these sessions may be found on page 177 of your July - August 1980 *Messenger*.

Monday and Tuesday evenings and Wednesday morning, your meetings will be led by Lorraine Sando and others who will help you integrate your learning with your life and Swedenborgian teachings. In these smaller group sessions, you will have an opportunity to reflect on the day's experiences and actively respond to its impact.

The cost will be \$45 registration plus about \$15 per day room and board at Urbana College. Please send your registration by June 1, 1981 to Nancy Perry, Executive Secretary Board of Education, 48 Sargent St., Newton, Mass. 02158. Make checks for \$45 payable to the General Convention of Swedenborgian Churches.

Name _____

Address _____

_____ Phone _____

Do you plan to arrive in Dayton, Ohio by plane? _____

BOOK REVIEW:

"Civil War Nurse: The Diary and Letters of Hannah Ropes"

Edited, with Introduction and commentary by John R. Brumgardt, University of Tennessee Press. 129 pages, copyright 1980.

Mrs. Hannah Anderson (Chandler) Ropes joined the Boston Society April 7, 1839. Her daughter Alice Sheperd Ropes (Mrs. Skinner) joined the Boston Society on January 6, 1861. Hannah's granddaughter Esther Chandler Skinner Perry was a charter member of the Los Angeles Society. In the next generation were the three Perry sisters, Alice Van Boven of Riverside Society, the late Emilie Bateman of Berkeley and Dr. Esther Perry of the El Cerrito Society. The diary and letters of Hannah Ropes are in the special collections of the library at University of California at Riverside. Dr. Brumgardt has edited them and his commentary makes an interesting story, which is entirely factual.

In 1855 Hannah and her son and daughter went to Kansas, to help free that state. Her letters written home to her mother in Massachusetts were published under the title, "Six Months In Kansas." She evidently intended to publish her Civil War diary, written at Union Hospital, Georgetown, D.C., where she was matron, but her untimely death prevented this. She died of typhoid pneumonia in January, 1863. This was shortly after the battle of Fredericksburg, when many wounded men were brought in.

An interesting portion of the diary deals with her trip to Washington to seek redress of Secretary Stanton, because of misdeeds on the part of a medical inspector at the hospital. A diary entry in December 1862 states, "This is Sabbath morning in good old New England; here in this semi - civilized district the drums beam, soldiers are marching . . . still the bright southern sun lies lovingly across my table."

Dr. Brumgardt speaks well of her Swedenborgian faith: "Her optimism regarding the ultimate triumph of social progress proceeded in part from her Swedenborgian religious convictions," he says.

Some information about Hannah Ropes can be found in Louisa May Alcott's "Hospital Sketches" for Miss Alcott was one of her nurses.

Alice Van Boven,
Riverside, Cal.

WE GET LETTERS

REACTIONS TO THE FEB. ISSUE

Dear Paul:

I want to tell you that this last (Feb.) *Messenger*, for me, is one of the most interesting and stimulating that I have seen for some time.

I want to express appreciation, particularly, to the editorial thoughts by Lois Kerr of Vancouver. It seems to me that some of her statements are a bit too simple, or unrealistic in today's society. (For example — her comment about 100 percent safe method of contraception being self - restraint.) It's good, and the ideal, I suppose. Her last paragraph regarding homosexuals and more specifically, the ordained ministry, I endorse most heartily. She said it the way I might have.

The articles by two of our young ministers, Gard Perry and Eric Allison are, for me, simple and good and strike some kind of chord in my thought processes. Eric's comments about "Media Christianity" summed up the concerns I have had for some time about the "multi - billion dollar business" of TV ministry. Gard's article about the tennis pro, Pablo, got me motivated to write this letter, especially when he said, "I decided it was high time to finish that article that lay half - finished on my desk . . ." And Paul, I'm soon going to send in an article which I will entitle, "The New Church in the Okanagan Valley."

May I indulge in some "random reflections" as you have suggested on the back page of the *Messenger*?

I'm thinking back to the joint article (you and Gard Perry) which was entitled "Children of Apocalypse." (December *Messenger*) That is a pretty grim forecast or prediction of what our world may be like in the year 2000 or, more distant, in the year 2100. Well, Paul, I agree that in this "new age" we ought to be doing everything possible to conserve our natural resources and also to be providing for our equitable distribution of this world's goods (food, clothing, shelter, etc.) to *all*. But, on the other hand, I think of the Lord's providence and of His purpose of creation itself, and of people, the crown of creation for a "heaven of angels from the human race." Therefore, while I share a normal concern, I'm not very frightened about the future! Your article is so academic and a kind of exercise in projected statistics. I have covered so much of North America by both land and air, and when I see

the areas still untapped for use and production, I know the good Lord is providing for the future. But people must do their part. Do you know that only about 10% of the province of British Columbia is settled and food-producing at this time? I'm sure this is true of many other parts of North America.

Two more very brief "random reflections." Today it seems that almost everything we eat, the water we drink, the air we breathe can be cancer - producing. I wonder about the teaching of "Cause and effect," and our relationship with the spiritual world, particularly the dis-orders of the hells. How does this enter in? Then we have the concern about nuclear energy, or power. This is part of God's creation for use, and some day it will be most commonly used. In the meantime it takes people (who are so opposed to it) to keep working for safe - guards!

Erwin D. Reddekopp
Kelowna, B.C.

A FUNDAMENTAL VOICE

Dear Rev. Zacharias:

Please refer to page 18 of the January 1981 *Messenger*. You mean to say there are New Church people who believe in reincarnation! Appalling! Delirium upon delirium!

The first article in this same issue speaks disparagingly of fundamentalists. At least you won't find fundamentalists trucking around with reincarnation.

And furthermore, the fundamentalists take a firm stand against abortion (which has come to be legalized murder), pornography, and promiscuous sex as taught in our schools. I don't see liberals or intellectuals taking a stand against these pernicious evils.

And who is promoting secular humanism, that man - centered religion that is leading to moral decay? Not the fundamentalists. I thank the Good Lord for the fundamentalists.

Marie E. Spaulding,
Springfield, Ill.

ON SEXUALITY AND MARRIAGE

Dear Paul:

You have called for a reporting of "what do you think?" about church attitudes regarding sexual behaviour. Here at last is a practicable method for gathering together the concerns of our widely scattered New Church membership!

For years a small portion of it has met regularly to make decisions supposedly representing the whole. Meanwhile throughout the continent are New Church individuals who

think this and that, often very strongly, but get no further than mumbling or grumbling within their society or among friends. Constructive ideas, or critical, are gone with the wind, leaving organizational efforts to a few who determine policies and procedures and thus "the image" of the official New Church in America.

Let us *all* consider carefully the editorial in the February *Messenger* and immediately write to our Editor WHAT WE THINK! Only by accepting this invitation can we fully share our concepts of what the New Church on earth ought to represent.

Here is what *I* think: Our external church - organization was established for bringing into communication those who wanted to learn the spiritual knowledge given to the world through Emanuel Swedenborg. As learners advanced in understanding, they were then able to teach newcomers — and thus arose the Lord's New Church for humanity.

This understanding included that *God is love and wisdom united in perfect balance*. Humans become God's family, created (as the Bible states) "in His own image" — thus *intended to reflect His qualities* in a corresponding two - parts form: "male and female". Marriage is God's arrangement for uniting love and wisdom within this two - parts form and at the same time bringing new human life into the world. This is His plan for the progress of mankind, that it might steadily develop into "His own image" and so into a harmonious family.

Deviations from the order of creation are perversions and denial of God's authority; yet they have existed throughout history because humans were given freedom of will. With this freedom they convince themselves that perversions are normal, therefore acceptable. If nowhere else, there should be among New Church people a comprehension and rejection of perverted behaviour. Our responsibility toward the Lord and His New Church is to keep our knowledge accurate and apply it correctly, especially as to the meaning of marriage which we, more than any other denomination, have the opportunity to understand. (There are many who do not know what homosexuality actually is!) With insight we can recognize perversions as symptoms of deep trouble.

Those in such trouble must not be ostracized, but are certainly disqualified for spiritual leadership. They themselves need the help that a correct application of New Church teachings provides.

Gwynne Dresser Mack
Fryeburg, Maine

FAVORS LOIS KERR COMMENTS

Dear Rev. Zacharias:

In reply to your editorial in the February *Messenger*, I would like to state that I agree completely with the comments by Lois Kerr, which you quoted in your editorial.

We should love homosexuals and those "living together" without marriage — but we do not have to approve of their life style. Certainly, as Swedenborgians, we know the beautiful correspondence of marriage love to the Lord and His Kingdom — and homosexuality and living together without marriage destroy this correspondence.

There is too much secular permissiveness.

I remember reading in Swedenborg that the higher (nobler) the use, the greater is the joy of performing it — and also — the greater the evil if the use is abused.

So — by no means do I approve of homosexuals or people living together without marriage becoming ordained ministers.

I look forward to receiving my *Messenger* every month.

Jeanette Ryan
Cedarville, Mich.

ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE

Letter to the Editor—

You ask in February, "What do you think? How do you like this issue?" I commend you for an issue of great interest, especially the thought - provoking articles by Gardiner Perry and Eric Allison. The glaring exception was the thoughtless guest editorial on human sexuality. I think you did us a disservice to print without comment a prejudiced, intolerant, and anachronistic reaction to a report which you did not print. Will we, the New Church, lead into the New Age, or will we be dragged fussing and fuming with our last audible gasps? Will we self-righteously point moralistic fingers at those who differ from us or will we join hands with humankind trying to understand and move toward love? Meanwhile, I ask forgiveness for my own intolerance of intolerance.

Perry S. Martin
Palos Verdes, California

SEEKING C.O. STATUS

Dear Editor:

I shall start with a question. "Will you fight and kill for your country?"

Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors (C.C.C.O.) is a committee intended to be a practical use to all men and women confronted by the draft. C.C.C.O. members differ greatly in what they believe, and why. Some believe in "wars of liberation"; some believe in only fighting when one's nation is attacked; some are "nuclear pacifists." Whatever the reason, they all are opposed to participation in the armed forces. C.O. status does not mean you must swear to be a C.O. at all points in human history, nor that you will always be a C.O. It simply means *now* I am a C.O.

Evading the draft by not registering is not the solution. Refusal to cooperate with Selective Service is a felony that can mean up to five years in prison, and a fine of \$10,000!

C.C.C.O. urges that you do everything legal, and to go on file as a C.O. as soon as possible. This is possible when you register with the Selective Service, by either checking a box on the form, or by writing "I am a conscientious objector" on the form. Also you should become a member of C.C.C.O.; it is especially helpful if done before you NEED to. This past file of your feelings may help your case if it comes to court. If you are too old to fight in a war, but still are a C.O., you can support C.C.C.O. by writing for further information.

An annual newsletter, a C.O. card, and trained counselors are available to help you. Write to:

National Office C.C.C.O. Western Region
2016 Walnut St. or 1251 2nd Ave.
Philadelphia, Pa. 19103 San Francisco, CA.
94122

Sandy Crowell, Tahoma, CA.

REINCARNATION RESPONSE

Dear Paul:

In connection with your columns "On Reincarnation" in your January issue I would like to call your attention to HH 256 and 298. Possibly you might want to quote or in part quote those passages in a later issue. As you will notice, 256 gives a direct explanation of the origin of the concept of reincarnation, in that it tells of "some of the ancients" who came to the conclusion that they had lived on earth before, "because at times there came to them a sort of recollection of things that they had never seen or heard. This came from an influx from the memory of spirits into their ideas of thought."

That such influx is in itself disorderly (of course, it is also relatively rare) is what comes

out of HH 298, which denounces the direct influx of a spirit's memory or thought from his memory, and shows the orderly influx to be one of affection, which may or may not be received by the man in *his* thought.

Erik Sandstrom
Hot Springs, S.D.

IS IT A LIVE SUBJECT?

To the Editor:

Does Wilson Van Dusen believe in reincarnation? That question still remains after several readings of the extract from his *The Presence of Other Worlds* in the January *Messenger*. After pointing out that reincarnation is often misunderstood, he tells us that in the Hindu tradition the "personal, little me" is not what is reincarnated. "It is," he says, "the general tendencies or the primal monad, of which I am the current edition, that reincarnates."

After pointedly introducing us to such an unusual version of reincarnation theory, it is not clear whether the word "reincarnation" afterwards refers to the Hindu definition or the usual concept of an individual return to earth. The extract can be read either way, though not smoothly.

Consequently, this discussion should die, at least for lack of evidence.

Steve Koke
Grass Valley, CA.

WILSON VAN DUSEN ELABORATES

Dear Editor:

In the January *Messenger* I suddenly found four persons arrayed against me for some remarks made in *Presence of Other Worlds* years ago. My remarks were basically that in the writings there is no reincarnation of the little self in this world, but that internally or spiritually seen, there was a connection between Swedenborg's writings and reincarnation. I'm not surprised the connection is easily missed because it involves an understanding of both the writings and reincarnation.

I too used to dismiss reincarnation as a foolish and primitive idea until I ran into examples of it. We did a long series of experiments with a mind expanding drug studying its therapeutic potential. We gradually became accustomed to the fact that our client's experiences were often religious. One day a woman who didn't even know the word reincarnation spent the whole day exploring the

life of a woman who lived in Bavaria a century earlier. When the whole story unravelled she came to believe she was that woman and indeed that woman's life explained a puzzling aspect of my client's life. Later we had clients who spontaneously unravelled lives stretching all the way back in history and then they broke through to an awareness of the Divine. Indeed, legend has it this was the nature of the Buddha's own experience. I wasn't concerned whether this was an historical fact of the individual because we couldn't confirm it that way. When we could see the whole thrust of the experience it seemed to function as steps towards awareness of themselves as part of all life. It seemed to me one way of experiencing the states between the little self and the Divine. The idea of reincarnation has turned up often, even in Christianity (see Head and Cranston, *Reincarnation*) but it is a major feature of Hinduism and Buddhism. I asked a Hindu and a Buddhist scholar if what reincarnates is not the little self but a state between the little self and the Divine. They affirmed this is the case, confirming my observation.

In Swedenborg's terms, are there states between the little self, which we see as ourselves, and the Divine? Indeed there are. This is primarily the subject matter of the *Arcana Coelestia*. There are many, perhaps an infinite number of states between these two, and it has been portrayed in many ways in the world's literature. Many Swedenborgians think of the Divine and human states as a giant either/or, a cosmic gulf. They worry that the conversion of the little self to the Divine would be a loss of the self. This was the substance of Alice Sechrist's comments. This is precisely not the case. The series of states from the little self to the Divine consist of an *expansion* of the little self. This expansion is a great gift and in no sense a loss of self. We experience a lower level of this expansion when we empathize with or love another. Our world expands to include both persons. Swedenborg describes this expansion in detail in the changes between the levels of heaven.

If you think of it, there is clearly an aspect of Swedenborg's writings that points directly to reincarnation. The term will throw you off. The writings describe something that reappears endlessly in this world. It is the Life which is the root of all life, beautifully described in *Divine Providence*. In other words the Divine endlessly reincarnates, the individual little self doesn't. It almost can't by definition. In so far as I define my boundaries as this little person here I cannot also be someone else removed in time. Is it any

surprise, then, that the conception of myself as widening out to others is an expansion of the self in the direction of the One that is the All? Change expansion to love if you will. Could it be the experience of past lives is a relatively rare way of experiencing an in between state in the west but more common in the east because expected and looked for? There are well documented cases in psychical research. The idea of reincarnation is a religious fragment reflecting the experience of a few people who go part way towards finding their life is part of all Life. It is one way of describing regeneration or one way of viewing the progression from the limited self to the All. Lying between the individual and the universal is a tendency which partakes of both. The real key is to see reincarnation not as pointing back to the little self, but forward to the only One Who can manifest endlessly. All Theological ideas are mistaken when seen as saying something amazing of the individual, but are properly seen when referred to God. Is it really surprising that a growing feeling for life stretching back to its beginnings should be one way of approaching the One Life?

There is a lesson here. It is very easy to criticize what is not understood, the less it is understood the easier the criticism. I doubt we should ever criticize foreign religious concepts until they are fully seen in their spiritual reality. Guided by my Hindu and Buddhist scholars I believe reincarnation is misunderstood as pointing to the individual. It says there is a thread leading into the One Life.

While I was pondering what re - incarnation means I met a seer who had various spiritual powers. This woman rattled off my past incarnations. That I was a leading scientist in Atlantis didn't impress me. That I was the discoverer of the compass in ancient days, caught me up a bit. Few people know my lifelong preoccupation with navigation, which books comprise a fifth of my library. But she also rattled off the name of the medieval Spaniard. I looked up his history and was stung to the quick. I can feel his life so easily because his faults are mine. He was a gifted theologian who didn't care of others opinions and didn't care to explain himself. This fault led to his execution by the Inquisition. This is a fault of mine even my wife doesn't know of. So just in case, you understand, this time I thought I should try to explain myself. Two inquisitions in a row would be too much!

Wilson Van Dusen, Ph.D.
Ukiah, CA.

TRIBUTES

Elizabeth Layton Goddard

On January 19 Elizabeth Goddard awakened into the presence of angels. Her resurrection relieved her of an eighty - one year old body which in recent times brought on ill - health and disability.

Elizabeth Goddard belonged to a family long distinguished in New Church circles. Her grandfather was the late John Goddard, long prominent on the role of ministers. Betty, as she was affectionately known, was married to Frederick Goddard and this led to her residence in Philadelphia, New Jersey, and elsewhere. Consequently she became successively an active member of several New Church Societies.

A son, Burnham Layton Goddard, and a daughter Edith Goddard Pangaro, in addition to seven grandchildren survive. Another son, John, died in the service of his country during the II World War.

The resurrection service was conducted by the Rev. William Woofenden and the interment was in the Highland Cemetery in Norwood, Mass.

Elizabeth Goddard will be missed by her friends and loved ones, but she will be warmly welcomed by those who were close to her and are already in their eternal home.

Clayton Priestnal

Maud Churchill

Maud Churchill of Elmwood, Mass. died on January 9, 1981 at the age of 106. What a beautiful person she was — and is. I still remember so vividly the warm words and loyal support from Maud when I first came to the Elmwood New Church some 25 years ago.

Maud was born in Elmwood on March 7, 1874, the daughter of Emma Chase and Ezeikiel Whitman. She taught Kindergarten for several years in eastern Massachusetts, then married Percival Churchill in 1901. He was a civil engineer, and except for a few brief assignments in the mid - west, they spent most of their years together in Elmwood.

Maud was intensely interested in just about everything and this must have contributed to her long life. She was actively involved in the Elmwood New Church for over 60 years; during World Wars I and II she worked tirelessly on Red Cross sewing projects; she devoted a tremendous amount of time and

energy to the Grange, the D.A.R., the Public Health Ass'n, the American Legion Auxiliary, to name a few of her interests.

And on her 106th birthday, in answer to the usual questions she said, "I still find each day an exciting experience. Life is absolutely wonderful." Of such is the Kingdom of God.

She leaves a son, Percival, a daughter Virginia Leland, four grandchildren and seven great grandchildren. The resurrection service was conducted by a long - time friend, The Rev. Wilfred Rice of Cambridge, Mass.

P. Z.

Ruben Nelson — Convention '81 Speaker

"Face Up To The Future"

Ruben F. W. Nelson chose a curious title for an address delivered to *The Way Through to the Future*, an event celebrating the 166th anniversary of Sydenham Street United Church in Kingston, Ontario. He called it: "Beyond the Slap of the Beaver's Tail: Understanding the Threats to our Future." He began that address with this sentence, "Something has gone wrong."

Those four words, according to Ruben Nelson, "are the slap of the beaver's tail. They sound a warning of present and approaching danger which we ignore at our peril." Mr. Nelson goes on to say:

Strong words, I grant you, but the confusion of our age cannot be pierced by an uncertain sound. A beaver's tail which cracks the water with all the impact of a softly falling spruce bough would not serve as a reliable warning signal. On the other hand, a beaver which could not distinguish between the warning slap of another beaver's tail and the backfire of a passing automobile on a nearby road would soon be a nervous wreck. Eventually such a beaver might even give up the attempt to tell the difference between sounds which warn and intrusive noise. Such a response, while understandable, is dangerous. The beaver's future would be threatened by his inability to discriminate.

So it is with us. Our survival, as persons or as a society, depends upon our ability to notice, attend to, grasp, and finally respond appropriately to the warning signs in our environment. Our future is threatened to the extent that we are unable to hear the cries of warning which are now being raised. If we do not hear warnings, we will not act.

In that address, Ruben Nelson states that the slap of the beaver's tail is being heard by leaders in governments, business, education, medicine and the church; however, an appropriate response is lacking. One reason for this lack of response is that people seem to hear the "slap on the waters" on split levels of consciousness. On our outer, public, dominant

level it is heard as a false alarm. It's interpreted something like, "we have the technology to solve our environmental and spiritual problems. We simply have not yet exerted sufficient will power to employ it." On a more private level, however, when we have closed the door to our daily busy - ness behind us, we acknowledge a more profound concern. Here the slap of the beaver's tail announces that we do not now have the answers to the problems that confront all aspects of our society (including our Church). And furthermore, to think we do is foolishness that can only compound our problems.

Ruben Nelson's message for our times is that a profound change in persons at the level of the imagination is needed to face up to the future. All our technology for change will compound our problems in the future unless persons first examine their deepest values and intentions. Mr Nelson refers to that deepest level of valuing, intending and understanding as our "imagination." And the main point he made that night at the Sydenham Street United Church is this: "the main source of our troubles lies first in our inadequate and inaccurate understandings of the nature of our imagination, and second in the actual shape of the imagination which dominates our society."

Ruben Nelson will be a keynote speaker on the 1981 Convention program in Urbana, Ohio. His publisher writes that "he is President of Square One Management Ltd., a futures oriented consulting firm. His deepest concern is to seek out, generate and develop ideas, understandings, institutional forms and personal practices which contribute to rather than threaten a future which is fit both for persons and for the planet."

It might be conceded by some that our Swedenborgian Church is exploring and enacting a vision of the future. How we do this will be one of our Convention themes. Perhaps Mr. Nelson's address to us will stimulate and vitalize our imagination to an extent that we can say with a sense of hope and joy that "even the future isn't what it used to be!"

Gardiner Perry

1981 CONVENTION CHILDREN'S PROGRAM

Calling All Kids!!! This is an announcement just for you! Have you heard your parents or other adults talking lately about going to Urbana, Ohio for Convention? If so, have you thought to yourself "I wonder if I can go too?" Or maybe you've already been to Convention and know about the children's program and want to come again this year. In any case, be sure your parents see this article so that they know that Convention is for kids too!!!

This year we're going to do a lot of neat things. We'll be baking bread, putting on a play (including writing it and making scenery!), learning about Johnny Appleseed, singing songs, roasting marshmallows, riding *real* horses, and visiting a cave! We'll also see a magic show, and have the chance to talk to a few ministers about kid things. And don't let me forget swimming and other neat stuff!

If all of this doesn't convince your parents to bring you along, be sure that they know about this. The Ohio Association will help pay your room and board costs! They have put aside over a thousand dollars which will be used to help families bring their children and teenagers to Convention.

By now your parents should be convinced that you are coming to Convention. Just be sure that they say so on the registration form, and contact Ron Brugler or Betsy Ledingham at Convention to make use of the Ohio Association offer. Then come June pack your bags, say goodbye to home and head for Urbana, Ohio and the 1981 Children's Program!!!

See you there,
Ron Brugler

P.S. Don't forget that there will be baby sitters for your younger brothers and sisters. They'll be doing baby things.

NOW HEAR THIS!

"The Ohio Association has set aside funds to help pay the room and board costs of all children and teens at Convention. The amount of individual support will depend upon the total number who apply for aid. To apply, send in the Convention registration form, and contact either Ron Brugler or Betsy Ledingham at Convention."

The Almont New Church Assembly Almont, Michigan

Almont 1981, ANTICIPATION! Last summer this word developed into a sub-theme of our session. In doing so it represented a feeling; a belief that something enjoyable was about to happen. Reports from current Almonters indicate that anticipation of this year's session is spreading rapidly, and that soon Almont Fever will reach epidemic proportions throughout Convention! The only known cure is a long stay at the Almont New Church Assembly, where anticipation becomes satisfaction.

Plan your stay now for between Saturday, July 25 and Sunday, August 9. If you have never been to Almont, we want you to know that the daily program includes adult lectures and discussion groups, children and teen classes, adult and children's crafts, swimming, tennis, chapel services, and plenty of relaxation. Over the middle weekend, we will celebrate a Wild West Bonanza including adult and children's activities, hayrides, a cookout, and a stage show in the Almont Longbranch!

The adult lectures and discussion groups this year will focus on the theme 'A New Church Understanding of Exodus'. Each lecture will be given by a Convention minister, and the discussion groups will help everyone gain a deeper understanding of the material. The children and teen classes will also study Exodus; a good opportunity for our many children who do not receive regular religious education.

This year's daily rates are as follows.

Heritage Hall	\$12.00
Other Adult Dorms	11.00
Teens	8.00
Ages 8 — 12	7.00
Ages 5 — 7	5.00
Ages 2 — 4	3.00
Under 2	Free

If you have recently experienced Almont Fever, or if you desire more information or a registration form please contact either of the following people for a 1981 Almont Bulletin.

Ronald Brugler
246 Lafayette Ave.
Pittsburgh, PA 15214
Betty Jean Neuenfeldt
11794 Kendaville Road
Riverdale, MI 48877

ADVANCE CONVENTION REGISTRATION

"Make A Joyful Noise Unto The Lord!"

Urbana College, Urbana, Ohio

June 24 - June 28, 1981

Name _____

Address _____ Phone: _____

City, State _____

Accompanied by:
Names

Relationship

Age of children

Mode of transportation _____

Arrival _____ Departure _____

(Give date, hour, and COMPLETE FLIGHT information - if applicable.)

RATES

Room and board, based on double occupancy, is \$15.00 per day in air conditioned residence halls. Leaguer's and children's room & board, based on double occupancy, is \$13.20 in non-air conditioned residence halls. Children under 2 years old are free, in their parent's room. Camping and trailer sites are available at \$3.00 per day. No outdoor fires can be permitted because of local burning ordinances. Campers may use Coleman stoves or charcoal broilers for cooking. Camping areas must be reserved in advance.

Registration fee is \$15.00 per person except Leaguers and small children. Registration fee must accompany your registration form. The Registration Fee will be \$25.00 per person if postmarked after June 1, 1981. This fee covers cost of receptions, Saturday banquet, transportation to and from airport, and common meeting rooms, etc. Leaguers planning to attend must also send advance registration form.

All registration should be in prior to June 1st for facilities and transportation planning at the College. The Dayton, Ohio airport is the only place we can pick up people coming in by airplane. Accurate arrival times are required. Meeting place at the Dayton International Airport will be at the large world globe in the front lobby, next to the baggage pickup area. The Springfield, Ohio bus terminal will also be serviced.

Make Registration checks payable to the "General Convention—1981" and mail with registration form to:

Roger Paulson,
General Convention Central Office
48 Sargent Street,
Newton, Mass. 02158.

THE MESSENGER

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