

Urban Security George F. Dole

"It had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates.... And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there." Revelation 21:12, 25

The question is an obvious one: what's the use of a great high wall if you're going to leave all the gates open all the time? It is a question that has no easy answer on the literal level, but that should not surprise us. Hohn's description of the Holy City is hardly suited for earthly realization. Gold is not a practical material for surfacing urban streets, pearls do not make good gates, and precious stones are not cost-effective for large-scale building.

If, however, we take the description as it is intended—as evocative of the peace and blessedness

the Lord has in mind for us—then it makes compelling sense, and that is the theme I want to explore here. In its simplest form, it is this: genuine security and total openness are inseparable.

There is truth to this even on the national scale. The most secure

border our country enjoys is our border with Canada, which is almost the most open. It is more open by far than the ports of Florida and the Gulf, despite the fact that those borders are formed by miles of ocean. It is more open than the ports of the Atlantic and Pacific coasts, where the borders are thousands of miles wide.

The reason is simple. Canada and the United States have a relationship that is predominantly constructive. They agree on both the location and the meaning of the border.

We have a lamentable tendency to think strictly in military terms when we hear the phrase "national security," overlooking the fact that we will never be secure as long as we are feared or envied or hated. Military force is one factor in security, and will be as long as others desire our downfall; but it is one factor only. I find it profoundly depressing when our military defines "peace" as "permanent pre-191 hostility," apparently assuming that hostility is a fundamental and ineradicable human characteristic. 192

The vision of our church denies this. Peace, as a whole and seamless fabric of loving relationships, is the only truly human state. The Lord, the Prince of Peace, is the only true human. We are

human to the

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The Holy City is a particular way of describing that image and likeness. On one level, it applies to the New Church as the spiritual state of a community; but as a single individual is the church in least form, it also applies to each one of us.

On this level, I think we are all aware that a sense of security goes hand-in-hand with openness, and that insecurity and defensiveness also go hand-in-hand. If we are unsure of ourselves, if we feel that our walls are weak, then we close and guard our gates. It may not make much sense, but it's all we can do. It takes a long time to build a wall, to build a clear understanding and acceptance of ourselves, so meanwhile we concentrate on the obvious weak spots and try to conceal them.

Hopefully, we work on the wall in the meantime, But that work is not the obvious task of actual construction. As with the house, it must be built by the Lord; and our part is to provide the materials. By self-examination, change of heart, and change of CONTENTS life, we unearth the stones. The Lord removes them to the circumference where they belong, Articles where their use is good. Self-love is a neces-**Urban Security** sary part of our being, evil only when it George F. Dole rules.

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Of course, we don't always restrict ourselves to our part of the task. We try to build our own walls. They may be effective for a while, but in the long run they prove inadequate. And all the Chaldean army....broke down the walls of Jerusalem round about." People see though our defensiveness to

our insecurity

Con artists manipulate their victims by appealing to the very self-concern that their victims are trying to deny or conceal, whether it is wanting to get rich quick or wanting to be thought kind and generous.

The Old Testament passage, II Kings 24:18-25:10, which vividly tells of the sacking of Jerusalem at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, describes one of life's most painful passages: the total collapse of our pretensions to goodness. It has to happen. We accept the Lord's help only as we admit that we need it. The Lord spent so much time with "sinners" because nothing excludes Him as effectively as pretensions to righteousness.

So in the larger sweep of the biblical story, the fall of Jerusalem in II Kings is the demolition that makes way for new construction. Now the Lord can be the architect and builder. And in the Lord's design, the walls function only to define, not to exclude.

Let me offer an example. If I were asked to go over this sermon and identify which elements are mine and which are borrowed from the Bible, from Swedenborg, from parents, teachers, friends, books, and the like, it would be an impossible task. Yet at the same time, I know that this is in some sense "my" sermon, that no one else would or could construct it in exactly this way. What is "mine"—what is within the walls—is not the right of ownership, but the responsibility of use.

The gates of heavenly character are to be wide open at all times. We are to listen to others in order to learn. We are not to shut out any message the Lord is trying to send us.

The walls of heavenly character are to be great and high. We are to hold ourselves completely accountable for our choices. We are not to blame others, or "circumstances," for our own decisions.

Then and only then will we be at peace, because we will have no enemies. We may still meet hostility or fear or anger or envy, but we will no longer feed it with our own. And whether it fades or not, it will not threaten anything we possess, because the most covetous person on earth will not be eager for our responsibility, and we have no right of ownership.

The Rev. Dr. George F. Dole is a regular lecturer at the annual summer sessions at the Fryeburg New Church Assembly, a Swedenborgian family camp on the Saco River near Fryeburg, Maine. This sermon was given at the Fryeburg New Church on August 7, 1988.

Good-bye to a Messenger Colleague

During my nearly-five-year tenure as your editor, I have been assisted in invaluable ways by several people. But one person stands out above all others. With the completion of the August convention issue, an unmistakable era in *The Messenger* came to a close. Paul Maring, who has been the invisible man behind the scenes creating issue after issue of beautiful and often grabbing layout designs, retired. He has recently become the sole owner of his St. Louis advertising firm, The Maring Group, and so his already-squeezed time is even more in demand. Therefore, he took the opportunity of my resignation from *The Messenger* to bring his commitment to the magazine to a close.

What began as a friendly offer to advise me regarding design improvements for *The Messenger* back in the fall of 1984 led to his entanglement with the magazine's design and layout for the next few years! I have known few working relationships as stimulating and smooth as our teamwork month after month. For nearly two years in St. Louis, we were able to have frequent in-person meetings, usually in his office at what was then called Neiman, Maring and Kanefield, one of the city's leading advertising firms. Sometimes we were able to collaborate after the worship service at church, where Paul has been an active member for nineteen years.

When I moved to San Francisco, we had to subsist on phone calls, but by that time our patterns were well enough established that we didn't find the distance to be much of a hindrance. In fact, the magazine's appearance kept getting better and better—a development attributable only to Paul's dedication to high standards.

Luckily for us, Paul is not signing off completely from COMSU's various projects. He has agreed to remain on board for some of the upcoming projects of the Communications Support Unit. We wish him well in his new goals with The Maring Group, and we especially render our sincere gratitude for the tremendous effort he gave The Messenger for the past three and a

half years.

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Rev. James F. Lawrence, Editor Ethelwyn Worden, Advisor Andrea Peterson, Design and Typesetting

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Martin Scorsese's The Last Temptation of Christ Bill Etue

Usually standing in line for a movie ticket is as dull an experience as waiting for your floor in an elevator, but not this day. This day is the premier of Martin Scorsese's new movie The Last Temptation of Christ. The movie line this day, (August 12), is being protected by helmeted Washington D.C. police, in a show of force usually used only for Washington's political demonstrations. There are in fact two groups of demonstrators. The first group is objecting to the movie, and the second group which carries anticensorship signs, is objecting to the first. Similar demonstrations are occurring at some of the other eight cities around the country where the movie is making its debut.

The anti-movie demonstrators are better organized; they distribute a high-gloss color brochure which quotes newspapers and periodicals from only a few days earlier. Many carry large signs saying "blasphemy," some preach with bullhorns while still others push along a bloody, life-sized Christ-mannequin on wheels, complete with crown of thorns.

Inside the theatre the contents of purses are checked, and no one is allowed to sit in the front rows, which are chained off. Uniformed D.C. police guard the screen. A Jewish friend, who has joined my wife and me for the movie, comments about the irony of the large ceiling painting overhead of cherubs holding reels of film.

The film begins with Willem Dafoe (Jesus) doing carpentry work for the Romans. He is making crosses for crucifixions. Judas arrives and tells Jesus how much he and every other Jew despise him for being the only one to accept such work. From this strange beginning until the ending scene of the crucifixion, two and a half hours later, I find myself asking the same few questions over and over: Is this scenario likely?—Is it possible?—Is it blasphemous?

I'd rate most scenes as unlikely, but also possible. So very many moments in the life of Jesus and of the Apostles are unrecorded. Surely if Christ were both human and divine, he had to experience some of the shortcomings of being human. Didn't he lose his temper with the moneychangers in the temple? Didn't he curse the fig tree? As for the film being blasphemous, I would say it was not; although it certainly was a film about contempt for God, or in this case contempt by Jesus for the Father. (The Trinity questions further complicate the issue.) But telling a story about contempt is not contemptuous in itself.

"Blaspherny" has become the buzzword de rigueur of the film's harshest critics, and its common usage has become a surrogate for the more legitimate term "offensive." It is easy to see where many would be offended by one scene or another. There is nudity, sex and violence (though no more than in films like Ben Hur or Spartacus) and to be sure many will find it offensive to see a Jesus with those annoying human traits of indecisiveness, confusion, and vacillation, let alone the "S" word—sexuality. Offensive fiction it may well be—blasphemous it is not.

It is an interesting tale, well told, but it is the type of film that will seldom be evaluated strictly on its merits. Instead of being rated with three popcorns or four, it will be rated by how sincere its director is about personally seeking God, or how stable the original author was in his spiritual quest. The frenzy whipped up by the film is certainly out of proportion to its content. More than one in the departing crowd was heard to murmur, "What's the big deal?"

Our traditional coffee-anddessert discussion after the film helped me clarify one reason that so many hate the film so much. You may have had the experience of meeting in person some radio personality that you've listened to for years. When you see the face that goes with the voice you're shocked. This can't be the guy! You just know he doesn't look anything like this! Each of us has an image of Jesus and his life that fills in the gaps left by the Gospels. For some of us that image is more fixed than others. Those who feel hurt the most by this film have those fixed images. The film is a threat, a personal threat to themselves, hardly a threat to the almighty God.

Sympathy is due to those who feel injured by this film. Many are sincere in their anguish and frustration. But it is a pain born out of a theological immaturity. It is the pain that a child feels when spoken to harshly. If Kazantzakis and Scorsese are to be believed, they have had a lion's share of anguish in their own search for paths to truth and understanding of the Lord.

There is also a flip side to the personal effects this film will have on people. It is a provoking story full of what-ifs and just-supposes. Many will leave this film and find Grandma's dusty Bible in the attic and read it extensively; perhaps for the first time.

I have two nominations for "favorite dialog" in this film. The first occurs when Judas, looking at their followers, complains, "You see these people, the poor, the blind, the crippled—we're going to need better men than this." To which Jesus replies, "God will give them to us, and with them we will build a New Jerusalem."

The second also has Judas complaining to Jesus about the fact that Jesus cannot seem to determine if God wants Him to be vengeful against the Romans or forgiving to them. Jesus replies, "God only talks to me a little at a time, and He only tells me what I need to know."

Bill Etue is a member of the National Swedenborgian Church in Washington D.C.

Why I Chose to Devote my Life to the Cause of the New Church Paul B. Zacharias

In my case, it was a rather easy and obvious decision to make. My father was the New Church missionary minister in Western Canada for many years—from about 1919 to the late 50's. Most of that time was spent in Herbert, Saskatchewan, where he served all the groups in that province (visiting groups in Rosthern, Meadow Lake, Saskatoon and elsewhere,) and also, he would make a trip by train out to B.C. at least once, and sometimes twice a year—there visiting groups in the Fraser Valley and Vancouver area, etc.

In any event, I grew up in Herbert and was active in the life of the New Church there. It was quite an active church at that time, with a large Sunday School and some youth activities, and many of my fondest childhood memories are centered in and around the church life. I would attend church services twice every Sunday, one in German and one in English and I really didn't understand much at either service. But I did absorb a great deal of positive spiritual influences at those times. Just looking around and seeing the faces of the worshippers made a lasting impression upon me.

And so I grew up, very much surrounded by religious influences. We read the Bible and church teachings nightly before going to bed; we always said grace before meals; we attended church services without argument; and there was quite a bit of discussion of religious topics in the home. But never once, as far as I can recall, did my father urge, or even suggest, that I enter the ministry. In many ways my parents were quite remarkable, in that they gave us a great deal of freedom; they imposed very few restrictions upon us; they let us do our own thing, in an era when this was not fashionable. And so, in my

late teens. I was still uncertain as to how I should invest my life. I tried a number of things—worked on a mink ranch near Prince George, B.C.; in a print shop in Vancouver: etc., but none of these activities really satisfied me. And all of those years I read a great deal—I always have been an avid reader. I read a lot of philosophy and of Far Eastern religions, but I always came back to Swedenborg. Nothing else came close to what he had to offer. And so when I was 22 or 23 I decided to go to the Theological School in Cambridge for the Lay Ministry, and while there Franklin Blackmer urged me to continue on for the full ministry—a decision which I have never regretted.

The Rev. Paul Zacharias, recently retired from active parish ministry, is currently serving as the Chair of the Council of Ministers.

Should Only Women Be Allowed as Members of the Church?

Brian Kingslake

People often ask me whether I would approve of having women in the ministry. I say, "Of course not! Nor would I approve of having men in the ministry, if this means that any man would make a satisfactory minister simply because of his maleness. I know several very masculine men who would be entirely unsuitable for the sacred office: and I know several women who would fill the position admirably. A minister must perform many functions: conduct services, preach sermons, teach the doctrines, counsel the members, lead by truth to the good of life. and so on-not least of which is to set an example of holy living! A man or woman could perform these functions equally well, or equally badly. Gender is irrelevant; it is the personality and competence of the man or woman that is important.

Someone explained to me: "The minister must be male, because he represents the Lord, who is male." If this is so, then by the same

reasoning the members of the congregation must be female, to represent the Bride, the Lamb's wife. To have a man, or even a boy, in the congregation would be "against the doctrines of the Church." The Church is our Spiritual Mother (female). How can a man represent a Mother?

Such an argument is, of course, nonsense (a reductio ad absurdum). but it would seem to be as valid as the assumption that a minister must be male to represent God—who in fact created human beings male and female "in his own image and likeness'' (Genesis 1:27). It shows what a tangle you can get into, if you take a spiritual concept and try to follow it through literally. Just as you cannot argue from the group to the individual, or from the individual to the group. Each application must be considered on its merits.

The Rev. Brian Kingslake is a retired minister living in Bath, England. He was ordained by the General Conference of Swedenborgian Churches, headquartered in London, which does not ordain women into the Christian ministry.

Mite Box Presents SSR Archives With Over \$1,200

Thanks to the diligent Mite Box Savings of the ladies in our Women's Alliance across the country, over \$900 dollars was collected for the Mite Box Project for 1988, which was to save the endangered books at the Swedenborg School of Religion Library. During a Convention session a large Mite Box was passed and \$300 more was collected. This money will help preserve many of the books and periodicals that are in danger. Last year it was learned that the paper used after the Civil War contained a substance that when exposed to air eventually dries up and crinkles away. Thanks to research and this money we can do something to record the valuable information they contain.

Swedenborg Featured in Time-Life Book

In a volume entitled *Psychic Powers* in the famed Time-Life series of topical books, the following account of Swedenborg's vision of the Stockholm fire was deemed compelling enough by the editors to introduce the book. The book was released last spring.

A Fire that Raged in a Mind's Eye

On the evening of July 19, 1759, a pleasant party was just beginning at the home of a prominent citizen of Göteborg, Sweden. Suddenly, unaccountably, the most eminent of the sixteen guests—the famed scientist and mystic Emanuel Swedenborg—left and walked outside without explanation. When he returned a short time later, he was pale and shaken. A fire was raging, he said. It had already destroyed a friend's house and now threatened his own.

The guests exchanged startled glances. As they all knew, Swedenborg did not live in Goteborg, but in Stockholm. And Stockholm was almost three hundred miles away.

The party proceeded, but Swedenborg left the house several more times and returned to report the blaze was still spreading. Finally, at 8:00 P.M., he announced that it had been extinguished—only three houses from his own.

By the next morning, a Sunday, Swedenborg's vision was the talk of Göteborg. Had there really been a fire? Or was the seventy-one-year old's imagination running amok? An apparent answer came the following night when an express messenger arrived from Stockholm with news of a great fire. Three days after the vision, a second messenger brought more details. They matched Swedenborg's account of the blaze and confirmed that it had halted only three doors from his own and had ended, just as he said, at 8:00 P.M.

Swedenborg was a respected engineer, inventor, and author whose intellect encompassed sciences ranging from psychology to zoology. When he was in his late fifties, however, he received what he regarded as a visitation from God. Thereafter, he turned his full attention to theology, metaphysics, and the exploration of his psychic powers, which seemed abundant.

To many parapsychologists, Swedenborg's reported vision of the Stockholm fire is an example of clairvoyance: the ability to see psychically what the eye cannot perceive.

New Researcher's Manual Published

Hot off the press as this magazine goes to press is the Rev. Dr. William R. Woofenden's new Swedenborg Researcher's Manual. Published by the Swedenborg Scientific Association, this is a beautiful hardbound volume that offers a sound organization of Swedenborg's scientific and theological writings, doctoral dissertations on various aspects of Swedenborgian concepts, the most significant of the collateral works (including basic reference works), plus a glossary of Swedenborgian terms and a list of key Swedenborgian concepts.

Swedenborg on Colors

For those with a special love for colors or with a particular interest in the meanings of various colors from a Swedenborgian perspective, a 12-page full color booklet (8½ × 11) is now available. Conceived and put together by the Rev. Clifford Curry of the General Conference, this booklet, Beyond the Rainbow, offers a brief overview of the subject with illustrations that together provide a useful framework for understanding the mysterious and beautiful realm of color. It is available for \$6 postpaid from: New Church House, 34 John Dalton Street, Manchester, England M2 6LE.

Women's Weekend

Almont New Church Assembly

8:00 p.m. November 11th—3 p.m. November 13th, 1988

This weekend will be a special opportunity for women to come together and use the unique resources offered by the Swedenborgian Church in developing individual self-worth, life goals and personal identity. The sessions will help us to rediscover our image of womanhood, and through presentations, meditation, worship and sharing we will be led into new areas of growth.

Come and join us in a week-end for and about women. The beauty and joy of being a woman is ours to cherish.

Cost: \$10.00 (U.S.) registration fee plus \$50.00 (U.S.) per person includes linens, room and board, Friday evening reception.

Leaders: Rev. Judith Dennis, minister of the Urbana, Ohio Swedenborgian Church.

Rev. Dorothea Harvey, former Professor of Religion and Chaplain at Urbana University.

To register send name, address, registration fee, and special dietary and housing needs, by October 31, to:

Women's Weekend Almont New Church Assembly 1513 Cameron Road Almont, MI 48003



Guest Editors Coming Up!

In order for COMSU's new outreach ministry, J. Appleseed & Co., to start up on schedule, we have arranged to have guest editors for the fall and winter magazine issues of *The Messenger* (October and December.) Since I am the director of this fledgling project, I needed to be free of the majority of *The Messenger's* demands to launch J. Appleseed with sufficient time for planning and execution.

The team of Ethelwyn Worden and Steve Koke will conceive and produce the October issue and the Rev. Dr. Robert Kirven, a former editor of *The Messenger*, will take a nostalgic turn at the wheel for the Christmas issue. I will edit the newsletter *Messenger Express* issue for November.

COMSU will select the new editor by October 1st. The new permanent editor of *The Messenger* will be announced in the November *Messenger Express*.

New Address for Lifeline Editor

Lifeline, a monthly magazine published by the General Conference of Swedenborgian Churches, headquartered in England, is edited by Harry Heap. His new address is: 20, Cox's Close, Stapleford, Cambridge, England CB2 5SP

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Baptism

Pringle—Emanuel Salvatore Jason Pringle, son of Donna and Antonio Pringle, was baptised on June 12, 1988 at the New Church (Swedenborgian), New York, NY, the Rev. Robert McCluskey officiating.

Marriage

Mackenzie-Switaj — Kevin Mackenzie and Susan Switaj were united in marriage at Windham, Maine on June 25, 1988, the Rev. Robert McCluskey officiating. Susan is the granddaughter of Peggy Regamey and the late Rev. Antony Regamey.

Deaths

Clark—Sheldon D. Clark, 75, passed into the spiritual world on May 25, 1988 in Sandy Spring,
Maryland. His wife, Lucy, is a homeopathic physician with Swedenborgian roots. Mr. Clark was the brother of Nancy Perry and brotherin-law of Fred Perry, the vice president of Convention. He was an active member of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). An attorney and political activist, he was known especially for his work in promoting peace.

Douglass—Iza H. Douglass, 99, longtime member of the Church of the New Jerusalem, Fryeburg, Maine, passed into the spiritual world on July 23, 1988 in Fryeburg. Mrs. Douglass was the grandmother of Lewis Walker and grandmotherin-law of Beverly Walker, Chairperson of the Trustees of the Fryeburg church. Until her passing, she was the oldest resident of Fryeburg and represented the oldest generation of a five-generation family. A memorial service was held on July 27, 1988 at the Pine Grove Cemetery in Fryeburg, the Rev. James F. Lawrence officiating.

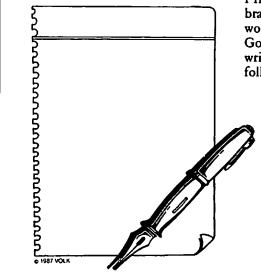
True New Church in Minds and Hearts

Dear Editor,

I read Brian Kingslake's article on The Ecclesia with great pleasure. He is talking about the real New Church, the Nova Ecclesia, that comes down from God out of heaven. All are "called out" from the former Church and into this New Church. In the posthumously published little work *Invitation to the New Church* one of the points in the "Syllabus" reads: "Invitation to the New Church, that men should go and meet the Lord," and this point is then strengthened by a reference to Rev. 21, 22, and 1.

New Church organizations should have no other purpose than to testify concerning this Church of the Lord and to lead into its faith and life. The New Jerusalem seeks to have an abode in the hearts and minds of men and women. It is a heavenly city, and its laws are the Heavenly Doctrines.

Rev. Erik Sandstrom, Sr. General Church Huntingdon Valley, Penn.



Only God is Ultimate

Dear Editor,

With regard to the letter in the Opinion section of the May, 1988 The Messenger Express entitled "Free Will and Homosexuality": I must admit that I am distressed to read this kind of argument, which, it seems to me is a thinly disguised claim for the inerrancy of the Bible (a doctrine which has caused more pain and misery over the centuries than perhaps any other) in a magazine which is the official publication of a church which heralds the "New Age." The unfortunate fact is that there is no absolute known cause for differences in sexuality; yet it is out of our fear of that which is different that we strike out at anyone who is "not like us." On this score we have not progressed much further than the writers of the Bible who presumably were reacting in the same way. There is an illuminating article in the May, 1988 issue of Psychology Today entitled "Doctor of Sexology," concerning the complexity of factors which go into the formation of sexuality. It is worth reading—that is, if one's mind isn't "made up" and doesn't want to be confused by "the facts." I find that Christians, of whatever brand, often lapse into the error of worshiping the Bible, not the living God about whom the Bible was written. I hope that we will not follow in that mistaken order.

Rev. Dr. Robert Bossdorf S.S.R., Newton, Mass.

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NOTES Notes notes.

Notes from the Central Office

Ethelwyn Worden, director

As this is written, just before press time, the day after Labor Day, it is sunny, cool and wonderful in the Boston area (after a very wet Sunday), and the aroma of freshly-mown grass is wafting up from below where Dick Byrne is carving patterns with the riding mower.

To bring you up to date on the Central Office staff, please take note that Muriel Liddy is secretary, Andrea (Anne) Peterson is the new typesetter, and Anna Baranchuk the new bookkeeper. Muriel joined us at the beginning of March, and the other two ladies were "on board" in time for many of you to meet them at Convention. Lu Freedman continues to join us one or two days a week and, among other things, keeps our mailing lists current.

Speaking of mailing lists, we appreciate the efforts of many of you to help us keep abreast of address and phone number changes, and heartily encourage you to keep up the good work. One would think our lists are fairly stable, but instead our office receives between 5 and 15 address changes a week! And when the Messenger is returned to us with an address change, we

have to pay 30 cents besides—so we would appreciate being informed of changes BEFORE the next *Messenger* comes out!

The Science and Spirituality Symposium sponsored by the Swedenborg Foundation, at Tarrytown, NY, was a great success—more about it in the next issue; speakers included Renee Weber, Larry Dossey, John Hitchcock, Wickham Skinner standing in for Sir John Carew Eccles, Robert McDermott, Frances Vaughan and Raymond Moody. Audio cassettes of each talk, including its follow-up panel discussion (by the other speakers) and the open discussion, will be available from the Swedenborg Foundation, 139 E. 23rd Street, New York, NY 10010—cost yet to be determined. The proceedings will be published this fall and available at \$12.50 a set from the Foundation. The talks will also appear in the Spring issue of *Chrysalis*.

We look forward to a year of good communication between members, churches and the Central Office—for which purpose we include our phone number: (617) 969-4240. Let us hear from you!

s From The Central Office