

## COMMUNICATION

Editor  
New Philosophy  
Bryn Athyn, Pa. 19009

Dear Sir:

This letter is in response to an article published in the July-September issue of the NEW PHILOSOPHY entitled "What is Man?" by Edward F. Allen. On page 255 of this issue Professor Allen says:

" . . . Man is only a small part of that "universe" (*i.e.*, the external material universe). Most of the universe is 'out there,' out there from man.

That is not the meaning of 'universal' as Swedenborg uses the term. Man looks with his eyes and sees outside of himself what he first may think is universal. But a degree removed from man's senses is his imagination, and *when man retires from the senses*, when he 'closes his eyes,' as Swedenborg somewhere quotes Augustine, he sees what the eye does not see. *He sees what is within himself*. And that vision, as Swedenborg illustrates in the *Economy*, can penetrate more and more deeply. This is a different kind of penetration than that of the physical eye when it sees farther and farther away from man."

This statement is fascinating from many angles, but especially from the angle of the practices of Soto Zen Buddhism. (The practice of Soto Zen Buddhism I refer to as just Soto Zen without the Buddhism; Zen is the Japanese transliteration of the Indian Dhyana which means quiet meditation. Soto Zen Buddhism is Soto Zen practiced in the context of a Buddhist ideology, and, although Buddhism contains many truths, it is only introductory religion to one who considers New Church Christianity to be the revealed religion of God.) Soto Zen is a practice of sitting quietly and allowing the natural mind, or ego-mind, or carnal mind, or *i.e.*, the consciousness associated with a personality built up from a history of sense experiences, to be quiet. Anyone who practices Soto Zen will find experiential proof of the accuracy of Professor Allen's statement because Soto Zen is a process of closing one's eyes in order to be capable of seeing what the eye does not see.

The practice is begun by sitting in a quiet softly lit room at a comfortable temperature. One can sit on the floor on a cushion placed on a mat, or one can sit in a chair. If one sits on the floor, a cross-legged posture should be assumed (the lotus or half-lotus position is the most comfortable). The spine should be kept straight, and the eyes half-closed. The tongue can rest on the upper portion of the mouth to prevent the mouth from becoming dry, and the mouth should be kept closed with the teeth firmly set against each other. The hands should be placed in the lap, palms up, one on top of the other, and with the tips of the thumbs touching. In this position one can sit comfortably without moving for some time.

The practice itself begins by learning to watch the action of breathing: usually the first exercise is one of counting the breaths up to ten and starting over. (It may come as a shock to most of us to realize that we

have so little ability to concentrate that we cannot do this sort of thing for long without losing the count.) Eventually the person learns to be aware of the action of the breath without having to count. After a while the person learns to concentrate on nothing in particular, but is counselled to allow his thoughts and images to enter consciousness and leave without either inviting them or being attached to them. The thoughts and images should pass through the meditators' consciousness unhindered and without breaking the awareness, like clouds passing through the sky.

As one gets into this practice, one can actually experience, feel, perceive the layers or degrees of one's interior life open up. And as one's interior life opens up with each degree one's consciousness becomes more "Universal" because each degree of interior life encompasses the degrees that lie in series below it. Thus the person who is only aware on the level or degree of sense experience has, comparatively speaking, a constricted or "short-sighted" consciousness. The person who is aware on the level or degree of the imagination has a more expanded or "universal" consciousness.

There are many in the New Church who are well versed in the philosophy of the New Church and who know of many things concerning their interior life by remembering what they have read. But this is an external way of knowing second-hand which, although necessary, can be greatly animated by actually experiencing first-hand what is talked about. The New Church needs some practical technics, if such are provided and I believe they are (this is a possibility for motivating a study of comparative religions within the New Church. The Scriptures say somewhere, "Test all things and accept that which is true"). The practical technics needed are such as would allow New Churchmen to *experience* the facts about ourselves described in the Writings and the philosophical works. I don't believe the warnings against seeking converse with spirits should prevent us, as New Churchmen, from investigating experientially the doctrines concerning interior life and growth outlined in the philosophical works and scientific writings of Swedenborg.

Mystical doctrines (I am speaking here of true mysticism represented by such people as St. John of the Cross, Meister Eckhardt, Hui Neng, etc. not occultism or theosophy, etc), although much maligned and mistrusted in New Church circles, can be a means of coming into a first-hand perceptual understanding of what we know man to be from having read the Writings and other *Opera* of Swedenborg. It is assumed of course that these doctrines are applied in the context of a saving regenerating faith in the Lord Jesus, Who is our Savior and God, and in His Word.

Sincerely and Affectionately,  
GARY DIGMAN  
a fellow believer.

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## ANNUAL MEETING

The Seventy-Sixth Annual Meeting of the Swedenborg Scientific Association will be held in the auditorium of Pendleton Hall, Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, on Wednesday, May 2, 1973 at 8:15 p.m.

Brief reports and the election of President and members of the Board of Directors will be followed by an address by Dr. Horand Gutfeldt, Urbana College, on the subject: "Swedenborg and Modern Parapsychology."

All members and friends are cordially invited.

MORNA HYATT  
*Secretary*

## NOMINATIONS

Suggestions for nominations to the office of President and nine members of the Board of Directors of the Swedenborg Scientific Association will be accepted until April 25, 1973, by the undersigned Nominating Committee.

MICHAEL A. BROWN  
E. BOYD ASPLUNDH, *Chairman*

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