

PHILOSOPHY, I hope the Editor will let his interested readers know where it can be found in print.

The Academy of the New Church
Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania

Sincerely,
LYRIS HYATT

Editor of THE NEW PHILOSOPHY:

I should like to comment on Dr. Van Dusen's article on *Meditation* in your October–December issue, 1975. The author anticipates comment, indeed negative comment, for he says: "Some will probably respond to this paper by saying it is not possible to become aware of the internal and will cite some passages from the Writings that seem to suggest this, i.e., AC 2557" (p. 320). This makes it a bit awkward for a respondent, for it might appear that what he might wish to say is prejudged already, and this the more if he should think, as I do, that Dr. Van Dusen's contention may in fact not be in real agreement with the very burden of AC 2557.

However, what I have to say is not all negative. It is quite likely that we New Church people do not meditate as often and as deeply as we should, and therefore it may serve a use for someone to say with a loud voice, Do it! I also feel sympathetic with the author's emphasis on affection. We tend perhaps to bring out the thought-aspect of doctrine and religion more than the affectional elements in life; when yet affection is interior to thought, and is what gives life and direction to it.

What worries me is my impression that the author advocates a form of meditation that I do not find supported in the Writings. He says there are two forms, or kinds. One is "the *Britannica* definition and Swedenborg's main approach," while the other form "does not identify with any content, [but] instead its internal focus is on what is occurring now in the mind in order to look at mental processes without any controls and without identifying with them, or being caught up in their trends" (p. 311). The *Britannica* definition of meditation, as being "a profound and generally peaceful consideration of truths that are thought to have great importance in ordering and living one's life" (quoted by the author on p. 309), fits well with the examples afforded by the Writings. "On a certain day I was in meditation about the creation of the universe" (TCR 76); "Once I fell into a profound meditation about God" (AR 961); "When I was in meditation on the arcana of conjugal love hidden away with wives. . . ." (CL 208)—these are familiar phrases to us and familiar examples of the kind of meditation we meet in the Writings. We recall also Swedenborg's rule of life: "Diligently to read the Word of God and to meditate upon it."

As for the other kind it appears inspired from Eastern religions or from Christian mystics. In the East, especially, meditation is achieved through a prescribed technique (including bodily posture) and consists in a transcendent experience beyond the limits of the world. Buddhist meditation for example, as developed in the Ch'an school in China or the equivalent Zen school in Japan, is "based on the theories of the 'universality of Buddha-nature' . . . [and points] 'directly to the human mind and to becoming a Buddha by

seeing one's nature.' " (Zen teachings quoted in *An Encyclopedia of Religion*, edited by Vergilius Ferm, London, 1956).

Dr. Van Dusen of course does not tell us to try to become a Buddha; also I am with him in much of his range of advocacy, as when he says that "those who sit quietly in an empty church in silent prayer are essentially meditating" (p. 310), or when he lines up meditation with reflection (*ibid.*). But he comes also to an extreme form of meditation, and that is where I sense the Eastern influence. On p. 311 a verbalized prayer is held as "interfering with preceiving influx." The rule is "to temporarily suspend control and identification with mental processes" (p. 313), and the mode of achieving this includes sitting relaxed "with gaze fixed on a point" (p. 310). "Meditation, by deliberately attempting to become aware of the internal, leads to the preception of influx which is the basis of all life experience" (p. 320). In this way meditation becomes "one of the avenues to regeneration . . . it gives voice to the inner, it teaches of influx first hand and thereby helps to undo proprium" (*ibid.*).

What is wrong with this? What is wrong with the Eastern approach? I find an answer in the Lord's prayer to His Father on the eve of the crucifixion: "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil" (John 17:14, 15). The focus is on shunning evil in act and speech in the world, and in thought and affection in the external mind (see DP 100 ff.), not to withdraw into the realm of the mystical. Dr. Van Dusen says that perceiving influx, etc. is one of the avenues to regeneration. I would agree that meditation of the *first* kind is (identified as "Swedenborg's main approach"), for unless a man meditates on the Word and the things of life that are to be seen in the light of the Word, he cannot form for himself principles by which to live. But the *other* kind meets with teachings such as the following:

"It is a law of the Divine Providence that man should not perceive and feel anything of the operation of the Divine Providence, but still should know and acknowledge it" (DP 175 ff.).

"External things have such a connection with internal things that they make one in every operation. Man is with the Lord only in certain externals; and if he were at the same time in internals, he would pervert and destroy all the order and tenor of the course of the Divine Providence" (DP 180).

"Man does not perceive the presence and operation of God, although God being most perfectly present operates in man all the good of love and all the truth of faith" (TCR 105).

"The Lord leads man as silently as an imperceptible stream or a favourable current bears a ship" (DP 186, TCR 652).

"They who are instructed by influx what to believe or what to do, are not instructed by the Lord, nor by any angel of heaven" (DP 321:3).

"But man could never have any reflection upon the things that are inscribed in his interiors and inmosts" (SD 2595).

More serious, however, is the risk that the kind of meditation that seeks to perceive influx, instead of "helping to undo proprium," may unwittingly open up a flux from the proprium itself. Meditation *per se* is no guard against evil. "Man may know, think, and understand much, but when he is

left to himself alone, and meditates, he rejects from himself those things which do not agree with his love" (HD 113). The sternest warning of all is in DP 183: "The Divine Providence never acts in unity with the love of a man's will, but constantly against it, for man from his hereditary evil is always panting towards the lowest hell." This, of course, is said of the unregenerate will.

The insistence in the Writings on *what* it is that opens the interiors is emphatic and unchanging; it is to look to the Lord and shun evil as sins against Him. "Insofar as anyone shuns evils as sins, so far he loves truths," says *The Doctrine of Life* (32-41); [and] "so far he has faith and is spiritual" (ibid. 45-52). DP 34 and 35 reinforce: "They are wise from the Lord who reject the devil, that is, evil, from themselves. . . . A man has the love of wisdom so far as he holds in aversion the diabolic crowd of the lusts of evil and falsity." And the second law of Providence sets forth the universal operating principle: "Man should as from himself remove evils as sins in the external man. . . ." (DP 100 ff.).

But we return to AC 2557. The reference is to Abraham in Gerar, and he is there saying to Abimelech, the king, that Sarah his wife is also "truly my sister, being the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother" (Gen. 20:12). Sarah as wife is spiritual truth (AC 2517:2), but as sister, rational truth (2556). Our passage discusses the "two arcana contained herein; one, that man's rational is conceived of Divine celestial good as a father . . .; the other, that the rational is not conceived of spiritual truth as a mother" (2557). The Divine celestial good is the affectional flow that enkindles, recognizes, and directs any concept of truth with the man. It comes from his celestial remains, which are a Divine dwelling-place with him. But for the purposes of the present exchange we are more immediately concerned with the second arcanum, which is that "it has been provided by the Lord that nothing of truth flows in through man's internal, but only through his external, from which it is evident that man's rational is *not* from spiritual truth as a mother" (ibid.). I think this tells us that influx does not teach. It *disposes* the mind, so that it may be taught, but no more. The fourth law of Providence says it affirmatively: "It is a law of the Divine Providence that man should be led and taught by the Lord from heaven through the Word and through doctrine and preaching from it, and this in all appearance as by himself" (DP 154).

Bryn Athyn, Pa.

ERIK SANDSTRÖM, SR.

To the Editor:

It has recently been reported that the sun undergoes regular cyclic pulsations, with a periodicity of about two hours and 40 minutes.¹ The discoverers of this phenomenon have at present no satisfactory theory to explain it. They presumably will search until they find what seems to them

¹ A. B. Severny et al., "Observations of Solar Pulsations," *Nature* 259 (1976): 87; J. Christensen-Dalsgaard and D. O. Gough, "Towards a Heliological Inverse Problem," *ibid.*, 89; J. R. Brookes et al., "Observation of Free Oscillations of the Sun," *ibid.*, 92.

a sufficient hypothesis, but it seems unlikely that they will look so far as the Writings in so doing. Yet if they did, they would discover that the natural sun is there described as nothing but a dead "covering and auxiliary to spiritual heat and light [of the spiritual sun] to allow [that heat and light] to pass over to man."² and that "there is a general cardiac and pulmonic movement throughout heaven, and a particular movement therefrom in each angel. The general cardiac and pulmonic movement is from the Lord alone, because love and wisdom are from Him alone. For these two movements are in the sun where the Lord is and which is from the Lord, and from that in the angelic heavens and in the universe."³ Thus even at the level of our solar ultimates the Lord's love appears to "stand at the door and knock"⁴ or "beat," so to speak.

This apparent confirmation of doctrine in science is, however, far from the only reason for New Church scientists to be interested in solar physics since we learn in *Apocalypse Revealed* 468 that the relation between the spiritual and natural suns is no less than the "origin of correspondences." And, as Bishop W. F. Pendleton pointed out 75 years ago, restoration of the Ancient Church's "science" (a word they used differently than we do) of correspondences⁵ is a key part of the "new science" that will develop in conjunction with the new theology of the New Church.⁶

Delmar, NY

KURT SIMONS

ACADEMY OF THE NEW CHURCH MUSEUM ASSOCIATION

The Academy of the New Church Museum Association was established in January of this year, and subsequently an invitation to church-wide membership was issued. Since The Academy Museum is developing into an important research center under the leadership of the Museum Committee, the establishment of the Association is very timely. It provides an opportunity for church members wherever they live to support these activities and participate in research programs. We are glad to publish here an excerpt from the above mentioned invitation. Further information and membership forms may be requested from Miss Margaret Wilde, Secretary, Box 278, Bryn Athyn, Pa. 19009.

"The Academy Museum began with the acquisition of the Lanzzone collection of Egyptian artifacts and a collection of Greek and Roman items in 1878. Since that time additions have been made (especially in the 1920's) to build a modest but useful collection of Egyptian, Assyrian, Italian,

² TCR 75; cf. also DLW 157ff; D. Wis. xii:2; TCR 29:3.

³ DLW 381; cf. also AC 3886; SD 4317.

⁴ Rev. 3:20; cf. also AE 248; DP 119.

⁵ AE 514.

⁶ W. F. Pendleton, "The Future of the Academy," *NEW CHURCH LIFE* 21 (1901): 70ff.