

SWEDENBORG'S ALLEGED INSANITY[†]

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How do you know that someone is telling the whole truth and nothing but the truth? Maybe the person's reputation for honesty and integrity, or his or her expertise or specialty or interest in the subject under discussion, or even our past experiences of the person concerned? Maybe the person's beliefs, biases or presuppositions are enough like ours or exactly like ours to justify believing the person? If we're talking to someone, maybe it's their body language or their facial expressions, which convince us of their sincerity, or then maybe we rely wholly or solely on our instincts or 'gut reaction'? Maybe it's because their argument or case is reasonable, or their explanation of known or agreed facts is the best? Maybe a lot of their case is based on a commonly accepted authority figure or book, such as the inspired books of the Bible? Maybe we can be convinced by how confident or erudite the speaker is? I remember one of my Mathematics lecturers at university, warning us undergraduates never to believe anyone who said something was "clearly true," and there are advocates on both sides of any debate who use superlatives and state how clearly, obviously and indisputably true their opinion is.

How do we know that anyone from over 200 years ago is telling the whole truth and nothing but the truth? Some of my suggestions listed above, such as the person's body language or facial expressions, will not be able to be brought into finding an answer. This is the question people will have to ask when they consider the story which originated with a certain John Paul Brockmer, a Londoner of the Moravian faith, in whose house Swedenborg lodged around 1744 and possibly later,¹ and who

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claimed that Swedenborg called himself the Messiah, foamed at the mouth, ran into the street naked and jumped into the mud. (This story will be examined in much greater detail later on this article.)

Whatever the truth of this story, there is a variety of opinions among New Church people as to the truthfulness of the tale. Some dismiss it outright in whatever version it has come down to us, others believe some of it to be true, others choose to interpret what they assume to be true very tentatively. Whether people choose to believe that Swedenborg was insane or sane, their judgment is not based solely on this supposed incident.

A controversy such as whether or not Swedenborg was insane certainly has aroused strong passions in the past, not only from those who believe it implicitly, but those who disbelieve it. Exasperation and anger have been expressed by a number of New Church people, such as the following two opinions from 1906 and 1914 respectively:

These charges are like so many nine-pins which have been set up again and again during the course of a century and a half, and as often struck down by irrefutable proofs—only to be merrily set up again just as if nothing happened.²

From time to time, the opponents of Swedenborg have attempted to bring discredit upon his life-work by raising the cry that he was a madman. This theory, in the past, has easily been exploded by a scrutiny of the life-history of the seer, and all the contemporary stories of his insanity have been proved to be fabrications.³

One New Churchman in 1890 wrote:

It is humiliating to have to discuss the subject. Brockmer is cited as the sole authority, and he denies the story in every essential particular, and adheres to only one feature of it, namely, that Swedenborg once called himself the Messiah. The story says that Swedenborg was removed to the house of Mr. Caer, and put under the charge of Dr. Smith. Where is the evidence of this Mr. Caer and this Dr. Smith? The Swedish envoy was a witness of this escapade. Where is the evidence of this functionary? Swedenborg pulled off his clothes, rolled himself in very deep mud in the

gutter, and distributed money from his pockets among the crowd. Here is a case of public notoriety—where is the evidence of any one among the crowd? The footmen of the Swedish envoy found him in this stage—where is their evidence? The whole thing is so glaringly and ridiculously false, and it has been so repeatedly and so fully exposed and refuted, that Dr. Ireland has not a grain of reason for believing it, except that his case is weak, and in his desire to establish it he works up every shred of evidence however rotten or foul.⁴

A New Church Minister wrote in 1913:

We thought this fallacy concerning Swedenborg's vision and his sanity had long been exploded, and we think it quite possible that Dr. Jones did not arrive at his conclusions by reading Swedenborg's Biography or works. If this is correct, it is very unfortunate.⁵

This brings us to the issue of the uncritical acceptance of another's opinion. Why should I believe the New Church people I've already quoted? I have tried as much as possible to consult the original sources and read as widely as I can. This will go some way to objectively evaluating the evidence, but we human beings can't be totally objective. It seems psychiatrists want Swedenborg to be an example of someone who was insane, so that's what they find, and they support their view by quoting like-minded psychiatrists. Swedenborgians want a seer or revelator, and so quote other Swedenborgians who are of similar opinions.

A New Churchman in 1901 in talking about psychiatrists, like Henry Maudsley, Wm. W. Ireland, Sir T. Lauder Brunton, Andrew Wilson, and J.F. Nisbet, obtaining "their 'information' (about Swedenborg) from the same source," writes:

The adage "One fool makes many" must in this connection be modified into "By one misleader many are misled."⁶

The question is, who is the "fool"? At one point in Jesus' life his family thought that he was mad, whereas his theological opponents just thought he was possessed by evil spirits (Mark 3:21–22, 30). In John 10:19–21 Jesus

again divided his Jewish listeners into those who thought he was possessed and insane, and those who thought he was sane and a miracle worker. The disciples regarded Rhoda, the servant girl of John Mark's mother, as mad, because she told them that the Apostle Peter was out of prison and standing at the door (Acts 12:15). In Acts 17:18 the Apostle Paul was described as a "babbler." Festus, the Roman governor of Judea, accused the Apostle Paul, of being "out of his mind" due to his great learning, which Paul denied (Acts 26:24-25). In his first letter to the Corinthians Paul talks about being "fools for Christ" (4:10), and teaches that "the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1:18). Another passage which talks about self-destructive attitudes in us, which block out or distort the truth from God, occurs in the Old Testament prophecy of Hosea:

The days of punishment have come,
the days of recompense have come;
Israel cries,
The prophet is a fool,
the man of the spirit is mad!
Because of your great iniquity,
your hostility is great. (Hosea 9:7) (NRSV)

But the psychiatrists I have mentioned would probably, given the chance, ask us Swedenborgians, why can't the fool or the misleader be Swedenborg⁷ or even Swedenborgian authority figures we admire? One of the most challenging statements for me in William White's second biography of Swedenborg, is to be found in his preface:

As a critic of Swedenborg my difficulties have not been slight. With a few exceptions, he had undergone no criticism. He has been cursed without reserve, and he has been blessed without reserve, but he has been rarely appreciated. I have therefore had to form many judgements, which I feel sure would be modified had I enjoyed the discussion of liberal and enlightened minds.⁸

I suppose that, to be as objective as we can, we must acknowledge our presuppositions, and at the same time explore the arguments and presuppositions of those who don't agree with us, so that hopefully we will become wiser, more enlightened people.

John Johnson's article

The main reason for looking at this topic was due to an article in the *British Journal of Psychiatry* of 1994, written by a Manchester-based psychiatrist named John Johnson (FRCPsych) entitled "Henry Maudsley on Swedenborg's Messianic Psychosis."⁹ As the title suggests, Johnson's article is based on the theories of Maudsley, a 19th century psychiatrist, some of whose work is known in New Church circles.¹⁰

As the title suggests, Johnson claims that

Swedenborg developed a messianic psychosis in middle life, considered by Maudsley to be a monomania, possibly due to epilepsy. (p. 690a)

In 1744 there was a dramatic change in Swedenborg's life, which Maudsley saw as "a morbid development." He abandoned all scientific interests and claimed that he had been admitted to the spirit world and had developed the power to talk with angels. Maudsley asserted that Swedenborg's subsequent history is that of a "learned and ingenious madman." (p.690a)

In 1744, while on a visit to London, he had an acute psychotic episode during which he proclaimed he was the Messiah and had come to be crucified for the Jews. He locked himself in his room for two days, finally emerging foaming around the mouth and stammering. Maudsley thought this was "a fit" and attributed it to epilepsy. (p.690b)

Maudsley considered that Swedenborg suffered an attack of "acute mania" between 1743 and 1744, followed by "chronic mania." This persisted for the rest of his life, and he was dominated by revelatory experiences and the conviction that he was the Messiah and the second advent of the Lord Jesus Christ. (p.691a)

Maudsley was convinced that Swedenborg had become psychotic in 1743, and that his religious experiences were rooted in this. Whether Swedenborg's messianic psychosis was due to acute schizophrenia or an epileptic psychosis will remain a diagnostic enigma. (p.691b)

We will deal with this allegation that Swedenborg claimed to be the Messiah later in the article. Suffice to say at this moment that I know of no place where he claimed to be "the second advent of the Lord Jesus Christ." Johnson comes a lot closer to Swedenborg's genuine claim, when he writes:

He maintained that the Lord Jesus Christ had made through him His second advent for the institution of the Church of the New Jerusalem, described in Revelations. (p. 690b)

Of course, Swedenborgians are disappointed that neither Johnson nor Maudsley have considered a third option, and that is that Swedenborg was sane and his unusual experiences were genuine. Johnson's use of Swedenborgian sources is extremely limited. His treatment of Swedenborg is almost completely based on psychiatrists who viewed him as being insane. The only biography he consulted is White's second of 1867, but doesn't note in his bibliography that it comes in two volumes, so I suspect that he has never consulted it first hand but relies on what Maudsley drew from it. This "diagnostic enigma" of Swedenborg's condition will be taken up later in this article, when we look at what psychiatrists have thought of Swedenborg.

Johnson writes that Maudsley's psychopathography of Swedenborg was in his first edition of his book *The Pathology of Mind* (1879), but not in his second edition (1895), and puts the reason down to criticism and pressure from "Swedenborg's followers." This seems to be an unsupported hypothesis of Johnson's. In a letter to Dr. Johnson of 23rd October 1995, I suggested an alternate explanation, namely, that Maudsley "realised that his conclusions were based on errors and lies contained in White's 1867 biography of Swedenborg." It seems a bit far fetched that people from what is possibly the smallest Christian denomination in England,

could pressure a psychiatrist into changing his mind!¹¹ However, in White's defense, he only argued that Swedenborg was insane during the *Journal of Dreams* period, namely 1743–1744.¹² I wonder what Maudsley or Johnson made of the following comment of White's?:

It is only pert scientific ignorance which imagines, that Swedenborg's life and writings for seven and twenty years subsequent to 1745 are accounted for by asserting, that he was out of his mind in 1744. Not all the jargon gathered from the most approved treatises of the most enlightened 'mad Doctors' will avail to impose such a conclusion on any intellect in which common sense is stronger than scientific credulity.¹³

How carefully Maudsley or Johnson read White's biography of 1867 might be shown by an error such as that Swedenborg completed "his PhD at the University of Uppsala."¹⁴ This point is made by White, but corrected in an appendix.¹⁵ Johnson writes that Swedenborg "expressed a paranoid system of ideas about the Quakers and what he regarded as their obscene rites," not realizing that Swedenborg is describing some spirits in the spiritual world, who happened to be Quakers before their death. Not all the deceased Quakers Swedenborg met in the next world were depraved.¹⁶ Johnson is correct in stating that Swedenborg believed he was being suffocated by spirits, or that spirits were inciting him to steal or commit suicide. He readily admitted to being possessed by evil spirits, but that the LORD protected him by ensuring that he could see through the pretenses and delusions of the possessing spirit. Johnson says that Swedenborg "had hallucinations of taste and smell, and somatic hallucinations when he felt his hair was a multitude of snakes," but by using the loaded word "hallucinations," betrays a dismissive attitude to these particular types of visions experienced by Swedenborg. To quote Rev. Arvid Ferelius' comment, that Swedenborg "never washed or brushed his clothes, maintaining that no dirt would adhere to them," is uncritically mischievous and naively libelous, since no mention is made of the more numerous testimonies of Swedenborg's contemporaries to the contrary.¹⁷

But it seems that Johnson, like some of his psychiatric predecessors, judge Swedenborg *in absentia*, or in his own absence, to use Miss Signe

Toksvig's phrase. Toksvig was not a Swedenborgian¹⁸ and while talking about many religious teachers from the East and the West having visions and hearing voices, writes:

As has been said before, it comes down to whether it is believed that such "projected" religious experience is always due to a neurosis.

Some of the psychoanalysts who believe this—religiously—have attempted to deal with Swedenborg *in absentia* mainly by the aid of excerpts from his so-called dream diary and 'spiritual' diary. They do not seem to have been well acquainted with his scientific work, nor do they seem to have studied history with a view to finding out whether Swedenborg could not at the time have held certain ideas without differing much from his contemporaries.¹⁹

Where is the mention in Johnson's article of Swedenborg being an active member of the Swedish House of Nobles all his life, writing memorials to it and attending its sessions when in Sweden? Why has the testimony of Prime Ministers and leading Swedish politicians of the time been ignored? More questions like these could be asked. This explains the quotation above that the theory of Swedenborg's insanity "in the past, has easily been exploded by a scrutiny of the life-history of the seer."³

Maudsley on Swedenborg

Sadly, I have neither the time nor the specialist training needed to wade through Henry Maudsley's book *The Pathology of Mind*, in either of its editions of 1879 and 1895, to which Johnson refers. However, although it is secondhand testimony, it would be remiss of me not to mention a review of one of Maudsley's earlier books entitled *Body and Mind*. His second edition of it was reviewed in the *Intellectual Repository and New Jerusalem Magazine* for 1874.²⁰ *Body and Mind* is apparently a collection of lectures delivered to the College of Physicians and articles in various magazines collected in one volume.²¹

It needs to be emphasized that this section is entirely based on comments by a New Church writer on Maudsley's ideas and theories from

1874. Maudsley's ideas may or may not have been different in 1879, when he wrote the book Johnson refers to.

The Swedenborgian reviewer had certain difficulties with Dr. Maudsley's ideas of 1874. He claims that Maudsley believes people are all body and no mind,²¹ and "everything supernatural he dismisses with a summary sneer"²² (p. 260). With these presuppositions seemingly based on a belief in scientific empiricism and materialism, they are diametrically opposed to the Divinely-enlightened rationalism of Swedenborg and Swedenborgians, which views the supernatural in a more balanced way. Maudsley claims that some fanatics, madmen and imposters claim supernatural powers, so all who claim such experiences, including Swedenborg, must be insane.²³ The trouble is, if all visionaries are mad, so are all the Old Testament prophets, Jesus of Nazareth, and the Apostles John and Paul!²⁴ As we've already seen, there were some people in Biblical times who also believed this to be so.

Maudsley complains that Swedenborg's heaven is "rather a vulgar and commonplace invention," and he much prefers Dante's without realizing that at least one of the latter's illustrious commentators regards Dante's as vulgar!²⁵ Maudsley doesn't seem to have offered us his own vision of how heaven will be.

Maudsley believed that Swedenborg had a sudden epileptic fit around 1744, which began his lifelong madness of claiming to speak to spirits and angels.²⁶ Swedenborg himself says it was a gradual awakening to an awareness of the next world, so not only Swedenborg himself contradicts Maudsley,²⁷ but also a French neurologist nearly 30 years later!²⁸ Of course, we have the advantage of hindsight, but it's interesting that at least one psychiatrist didn't put Swedenborg's spiritual experiences down to a fit. Our reviewer then goes on to accuse Maudsley of circular reasoning based on Brockmer's story:

He says, "The outbreak of acute insanity," was one such as any medical psychologist, acquainted with what had gone before, might have almost ventured to predict. (p. 234)

We cannot, but fear that in this sentence we get the clue to Dr. M.'s ready authentication of this confused and baseless story.

To make out the case as Dr. M. explains it, Swedenborg ought to have been mad about that time. If he was not, why, so much the worse for him; but to make the diagnosis of his case complete from Dr. M.'s point of view, he SHOULD HAVE HAD AN ACUTE ATTACK, THEREFORE HE HAD. It is another version of the case of the French theorizer. If the facts do not suit the theory, why, so much the worse for the facts.²⁹

Our reviewer also accuses Maudsley of being uncritically over-reliant on White's 1867 biography of Swedenborg, which contains a "farrago of facts and conjectures which Mr. White calls history," and hopes that Maudsley would read Swedenborg first-hand.³⁰ White believed that anybody who had written the *Journal of Dreams* should have been locked up in a mental asylum, so consequently White was "careless to contest"³¹ that Swedenborg was mad during 1743 and 1744. As has been said, White didn't believe that Swedenborg was mad subsequently.¹³

Maudsley claimed that Swedenborgians "have impugned the veracity of Brockmer's story."³² But how would he know? White believes that Mathesius' account of Brockmer's story is:

Plainly a straightforward and well authenticated story, possibly somewhat coloured by the influence of Mathesius, and by the inevitable treachery of a twenty-four years' memory; but fitting into the incoherences of the Diary with singular credibility.³³

In 1868 White added the following sentence to this quotation: "Attempts have been made to discredit the narrative, but altogether in vain." (These will be explored more fully later in this article.) But at the end of the day this is White's opinion. Maudsley's work was based solely on White's biography of 1867, so if there were any errors in White, they would be repeated by Maudsley. One of the basic criticisms of White's treatment of the Brockmer story of Swedenborg's alleged insanity is summarized by a New Church Minister in 1867:

the object of this biographer of Swedenborg appears to be to credit whatever has been said against Swedenborg, and to discredit what has been alleged against his traducers.³⁴

The only way of checking whether this is true or not is to read more widely than the opinion of one commentator. Whether White's account is true or not, and I don't think it is, Maudsley is still guilty of being uncritically over-reliant on White.

It all comes down to a question of bias. In a reply to my letter of 23rd October Dr. Johnson curtly dismissed any Swedenborgian apologetics as biased. But every human being, including Johnson, has biases. It is appropriate at this point to say that it doesn't matter whether Swedenborg had momentary mental illness, which I would suggest is yet to be proved; we Swedenborgians place a much higher value on discovering the truth. I could put it no better than Maudsley's reviewer of 1874:

We demur altogether to the objections taken to our investigation of this matter, because we are admirers of Swedenborg. We claim to be as faithful to truth, as sincere in our adherence to fact, as those who take other views than ours of his character and writings, and we suggest that the objection is unscientific and unworthy.

Let it be shewn that an admirer of the principles of Swedenborg is too feeble-minded to investigate a fact, or too insincere to be trusted in his investigations, or let us hear no more from professed scientific inquirers that such or such a one is not to be regarded because he is a Swedenborgian. We claim that a Swedenborgian, or, better, a New Churchman, is one who has the most sacred reverence for truth, and the delicacy and clearness in its perception which come from habitual thoughtfulness and care in research. We reject the testimony of no honourable person, because he has either in science or religion different views from those we conscientiously take, and we respectfully but firmly request that our own may stand upon its merits, and not be rejected from sectarian repugnance.²⁹

Again, every single human being has biases, including White. Mr. White was the agent or manager of the Swedenborg Society, until he was sacked by the Committee, for turning the Swedenborg Society into a book shop for spiritualist publications.³⁵ Dr. Johnson, as he admitted in his reply to my letter of the 23rd October 1995—and I'm sure others—was unaware that White wrote "a small competent and sympathetic biography of

Swedenborg in 1856," but his 1867 biography was "a hostile biography," as was his 1868 revision, due to his dismissal at the Swedenborg Society.³⁶ An American reviewer of White's second biography of Swedenborg, writes very succinctly:

ten years before the publication of the volumes before us, their author had given to the world a little volume bearing the same title, every page of which glows with enthusiastic admiration of the very man whom now it seems to be his chief object to malign.³⁷

Tafel talks about White

turning a complete somersault in his convictions...on the literary and personal character of a man, dead for nearly a century, all whose writings, and all the important particulars of whose life were as fully known to the writer in the one case, as in the other.³⁸

Tafel is not absolutely correct as White was not aware of Swedenborg's *Journal of Dreams* in 1856, as it was first published in 1859 in Swedish, and was shortly afterwards on arrival in England translated by Dr. J.J. Garth Wilkinson for the use of members of the Swedenborg Society. It appeared first publicly in English translation in the magazine *The Dawn* of 1861.³⁹ It is strange that White in his 1856 biography mentions Swedenborg being considered mad by various Swedish clergymen, and even mentions John Wesley, but doesn't mention Wesley considering him mad. Neither does White mention Brockmer.⁴⁰ It is tempting to suggest that White in 1856 considered the whole Brockmer story in its various recensions as a lie and not worth writing about, since he doesn't mention it. But arguments from silence are not very satisfactory.

Another reference to Maudsley's ideas about Swedenborg's mental state occurs as an aside in a lecture by the Rev. J.R. Rendell on Swedenborg's contribution to science, given at the International Swedenborg Congress in 1910, which was to celebrate the centenary of the Swedenborg Society. In a section devoted to talking about Swedenborg's flying machine, Rendell hints that Maudsley was a bit presumptuous to use this invention of

Swedenborg's (which only reached the planning stage) to support his theory that Swedenborg was insane:

He [Swedenborg] quoted approvingly a humorous passage from Fontenelle: "Do we pretend that we have discovered everything, or have brought our knowledge to a point where nothing can be added to it? Oh, for mercy's sake, let us agree that there is still something for the ages to come to do." I may add parenthetically, that this anticipation of the flying machine was one of the evidences of aberration alleged by Dr. Maudsley about fifty years ago. We know now who was the wiser of the two.⁴²

It has already been mentioned a number of times that biases or pre-suppositions will color how we see something, or affect our conclusions regarding something. It doesn't matter whether we are a Swedenborgian, or a psychiatrist, or an atheist, or a scientist, or a materialist, or whatever. We all have our own belief-system. I have also already mentioned the accusation that some people who have adjudged Swedenborg to be mad have done so without looking at his life-story,³ or have judged him in his own absence.¹⁸ This point was also made by the American clinical psychologist, Dr. Stephen Larsen, in a lecture to the annual meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, held in San Antonio in 1980,⁴³ when he spoke about "epistemological intrusion" or "violation." Larsen does accept that historical figures from the distant past can be psychoanalyzed successfully, but is wary that some psychohistories merely reflect the beliefs of their authors:

These observations should make it less defensible to adjudge someone "mentally ill" based on the assumptions of a particular 'school' or psychological system.⁴⁴

The question of Swedenborg's sanity then, must be considered within the socio-cultural climate of his times, and must include evaluations of his personal happiness, productivity and freedom from anxiety. Swedenborg was never adjudged insane, nor institutionalized. It was only later than psychiatrists would ex-post-facto judge him insane.⁴⁵

Some other psychiatrists on Swedenborg

Johnson mentioned that Maudsley believed that Swedenborg suffered from “a monomania, possible due to epilepsy,”¹⁴ but Maudsley is not the first psychiatrist to diagnose Swedenborg as being a monomaniac. In 1833 Dr. Elliotson, the Professor of Medicine at London University wrote in the *London Medical Gazette* that he believed that Swedenborg should be so diagnosed. His Swedenborgian reviewer, who I assume was also a physician, as he signed himself “Hippocrates Junior,” wrote that Elliotson had listed Swedenborg “among a great number of instances, some of them very ludicrous ones, of the species of mental hallucination to which medical writers have given the name of *monomania*.”⁴⁶ As Rev. W. Mason pointed out 30 years later, the basis of the diagnosis is due to Swedenborg claiming to have supernatural communication with deceased people:

The allegation against his state of mind rests wholly on his assertion of intercourse with spirits, and his statements of a multitude of particulars relating to the unseen world, as resulting from such intercourse.⁴⁷

Mason’s nontechnical definition of a monomaniac has certainly helped me understand this allegation:

A monomaniac has always been considered as one who acts sanely, so long as his mind is kept disengaged from that one subject on which it is diseased; and in order to put a monomaniac to the test, it is usual to lead him to the subject on which, if a monomaniac, he will be sure to betray himself. A change then is seen to pass over him.⁴⁸

The picture that some psychiatrists, such as Dr. Elliotson, and Dr. Johnson (and presumably Dr. Maudsley) draw, is that Swedenborg was normal apart from when he had his “hallucinations”¹⁷ or when he talked about them. (Swedenborgians would term them visions or spiritual experiences, not hallucinations.) The word “hallucination” and its connotations incited Rev. Mason to write about:

that unhealthy state of mind implied by the term hallucination. In fact, the charge of the latter always appears, to those who are well acquainted with Swedenborg's writings, to be the most contemptible piece of impertinence that conceited ignorance and impudence ever exhibited, even although it is backed, as it may be, by the confident testimonies of a certain description of medical men, who have not read, and will not read his writings; or, what is the same, will not read them in that careful manner in which works in general estimation are read, by which alone a just judgment can be formed.⁴⁹

It is somewhat curious that Dr. Elliotson wrote about Swedenborgians, who believe that Swedenborg "had communication with the Almighty for thirty years," in the following way:

Many think he was right; but no one could have that idea without some insanity.⁴⁶

How convenient! How circular can an argument get? If I think that Swedenborg did have Divinely-inspired communication with deceased people, then I'm suffering from "partial insanity" as well!⁴⁶

Elliotson's reviewer regarded the allegation that Swedenborg was a monomaniac as a "calumny," and expressed "regret" that Elliotson,

has suffered himself to be seduced into the ranks of the partial and prejudiced maligners of truth. May he not reasonably be asked, whether it is not a mark of great intellectual rashness, and almost amounting to one of the forms of monomania, to charge a person with madness, simply because he makes an assertion, which however extraordinary, cannot be proved to be false. Can Dr. E have considered the matter with sufficient attention to the consequences, seeing that, on this principle, all the great characters of scripture are chargeable with madness?⁵⁰

Hippocrates Junior appeals for fairness in determining Swedenborg's state of mind:

In the mean time, let fair play be conceded to Swedenborg's advocates, and they will prove quite competent to vindicate that excellent man from all the slander and calumny which malicious ignorance has cast upon him. A fair opportunity has never yet been afforded to those who are zealous in the cause of truth for its own sake. Fair discussion is all that they require to enable them to shew, how superior a man Swedenborg is to all those who have ignorantly pronounced him a monomaniac.⁵¹

Rev. W. Mason once asked

a highly respectable member of the College of Physicians, who has acquired eminency in the treatment of the insane, and who justly appreciates the writings of Swedenborg, publicly to meet this charge of monomania, when he indicated, in reply, that he knew not how to bring his faculties to occupy themselves with such a ridiculous employment. He felt as if he could as soon sit down to prove that darkness is not produced by the presence of the sun!⁵²

I have already confessed to relying on secondhand sources for my evaluation of Maudsley's views of 1874. This direct borrowing of opinions without checking original sources has also been levelled at certain psychiatrists of the Victorian age, by someone writing in the Swedenborgian magazine *Morning Light* of 1901. It seems to imply that all the psychiatrists mentioned borrowed indiscriminately from the same source. Was this William White's second biography of Swedenborg of 1867?:

Sir T. Lauder Brunton and his reporter, Dr. Wilson, with their fore-runners, Dr. Maudsley and Dr. Ireland, are, unfortunately, not the only "scientific" men who are similarly "cocksure" on this subject [Swedenborg's insanity], and who obtain their "information" from the same source. Mr. J.F. Nisbet, in his book *The Insanity of Genius* (fourth edition, 1900), devotes to Swedenborg two pages, the second paragraph of which is amusingly paradoxical, thus:

Swedenborg was not only an epileptic, but at times an irresponsible maniac, who, nevertheless, in his writings exhibits much subtle philosophical insight."⁵³

One of the problems of scholarship, whether it's Swedenborgian, psychiatric, scientific, or whatever, is that sometimes open-ended words like "possibly" or "probably" get left out, or subjunctives like "might be" or "could be," become so easily indicatives like "is" or "was." Notice that Nisbet in the preceding quote says "Swedenborg was not only an epileptic," not *might have been*, or in all likelihood, *could have been*. Then compare it to the quotation of Dr. Johnson's almost inconclusive sentence: "whether Swedenborg's messianic psychosis was due to acute schizophrenia or an epileptic psychosis will remain a diagnostic enigma" (p. 691b). It is a lesson for us all that, when we use other people's opinions, we also need to convey the degree of certainty of the person we quote.

In his reply to my letter of 23rd October 1995, Dr. Johnson also made the point that non-psychiatrists don't realize that someone can be insane and function quite normally, which is explained above as "monomania." This is how Dr. Ireland in 1889 was able to reconcile Swedenborg's "extraordinary intellectual power with the wildest hallucinations,"⁵⁴ and admit that Swedenborg's writings were systematic.⁵⁵ The only difficulty I have with this is that if behavior is not the key to determining insanity, does it come down to the beliefs of the psychiatrist? This may sound like an incredibly inane, if not presumptuous, question, until we consider that Dr. Ireland considered Swedenborg to have suffered from "delusional insanity," because "he had experiences different to those of ordinary healthy minds."⁵⁴ If readers think that psychiatrists appealing to the lowest common denominator of human experiences to determine insanity is an isolated phenomenon, compare the beliefs of Dr. Ballet, the French neurologist, who held:

that the abnormal can only be judged by comparison with the everyday anomalies already brought to light and classified by clinical science. The

extraordinary and the miraculous he argues, must be held in suspense until explained or put out of court by science alone.⁵⁶

It could even seem that science or psychiatry has become its own self-authenticating "god." (If ever Swedenborgians were to argue in this way, then they too could be judged accordingly!) If this is true, it seems like a very circular argument to me. It is claimed by his reviewer that Dr. Ireland⁴ in 1889 collected facts from various biographies of Swedenborg which did not tend "to help his theory, but militat[ed] directly against it," and because Swedenborg's explanations fitted his experiences, Ireland accused him of systematizing his "hallucinations." As the reviewer asks:

If the things which Swedenborg said he experienced in the spiritual world were capable of being harmonized with his philosophical theories, and of being embodied into a system of god and the universe, where is the evidence of "hallucination"? Nowhere, except in the mind of Dr. Ireland. That gentleman set to work to show that his subject laboured under "delusional insanity," and, finding it impossible to prove the point, he quietly assumes it because of the unusual character of Swedenborg's statements, even while admitting that they are in harmony with his systematized theories!⁵⁴

Dr. Ireland further exasperates his reviewer by proposing to put Swedenborg to the test, but then failing to do so.

But the utter incapacity of Dr. Ireland to discuss the subject is shown by the following extracts:

As for Swedenborg, we know so much of his mental condition that, as already said, the choice lies between receiving his supernatural pretensions or declaring him subject to insane delusions. Had Swedenborg fought with his delusions, or had he been led by his friends to turn his thought from them, his mind might have recovered his former clearness and power: but he did the very contrary. He nourished his delusions, he gave up all his scientific studies, and passed his whole time in reading the Bible and a few religious books.

The Doctor here presents two alternatives. Either Swedenborg had supernatural gifts, or he was insane. We admit it. We ask that the test should be applied and that judgment should be given. But Dr. Ireland applies no test, and gives judgment in favour of "delusion" without calling for reasons for the opposite view. Is this just?⁵⁷

The one test that careful readers of White's second and third biographies will know about, is that,

Truth is attested Divine through meeting the appetite of the Mind, and ministering to its growth, precisely as bread is verified by its adaptation to the Body. Than such congruity between demand and supply, between the Mind and the Truth there can be no evidence of Divine appointment, which is worth repeating. He who seeks for better will never find it, and he who is content with less will get gorged with wind and poisoned with rubbish.

To this test must Swedenborg's teachings be brought; *a priori* none can tell whether they are Divine or not. Whether his bread is good or bad, or innutritious as sand or sawdust, or somewhat good and somewhat bad, must be decided by trying. In the matter of Truth, quite as much as that of Pudding, the proof is in the eating. Any one who reads Swedenborg and finds his mind nourished and strengthened by his words may safely shut his ears to the clatter of controversialists, prating concerning a feast of which they know nothing save the names of the dishes.⁵⁸

Of course, what is beneficial to our mental health depends on our presuppositions, and our willingness to challenge them and grow beyond them, by learning from peoples whose beliefs are at most diametrically opposed to our own. This openness requires courage, humility, patience, and other God-given virtues, at least according to my belief-system.

Ireland in his book of 1889,⁴ believed that Swedenborg was insane for four reasons: (1) he inherited his insanity from his parents; (2) when Swedenborg was 10 years old he was continually thinking about God, salvation and people's spiritual diseases, which his parents put down to him talking to angels; (3) Swedenborg saw lights, that is, photism, and

heard voices; and (4) Swedenborg “had dreams connected with the things of which he was writing, and he tried to interpret his dreams.”⁵⁹

I personally don’t find these reasons convincing. The last two are anti-supernaturalist, and would convict many Biblical characters of insanity, such as the Apostle Paul, particularly in regard to (3).^{24, 50} As the Rev. Edwin Paxton Hood wrote in his 1854 biography of Swedenborg, the charge of insanity is “very easily levelled against a character whose movements we do not clearly understand,” such as Jesus, Paul and Swedenborg.⁶⁰ I suppose (4), if taken on its own, would judge every Jungian psychologist or psychiatrist as insane. The first two reasons are agreed by the Swedish psychiatrist Dr. Emil A.G. Kleen in 1914. Kleen argues that Swedenborg inherited a nervous disposition from both his parents, which resulted in paranoia.⁶¹ Kleen’s Swedenborgian reviewer wrote:

All these and other accusations are based mostly on “little knowledge” (which we know is a dangerous thing), or on bias, which is worse. The biography of the venerable bishop is a lasting testimony to his integrity and sincerity. The only fact which might be construed in support of the insanity charge is the unfortunate fate of Swedenborg’s maternal grandmother who shortly before her death suffered from a disease which affected her mind so that she committed suicide, but this is hardly a sufficient ground for such an elaborate theory.⁶²

Rev. James Spilling in his review of Dr. Ireland’s book, states that Dr. Ireland

professes to believe the utterly foolish and unbelievable story that Mathesius set afloat on the authority of Brockmer, who, however, when the question was put to him, emphatically denied four-fifths of it, and said that “the whole was exaggerated and unfairly stated.”⁶⁴

Dr. Ireland says that it is clear that Swedenborg became possessed “during a period of nervous excitement and mental derangement, which culminated in an attack of mental insanity.”⁶³ Obviously this presumes or at least assumes that Brockmer was telling the whole truth, which we will explore later in this paper.

Dr. Ballet, the French neurologist and Professor of Medicine in Paris around 1903,²⁸ believed that Swedenborg suffered from:

the hallucinations of a mind habitually surrendering itself to sheer automatism. He comes to the conclusion that Swedenborg's was a ratiocinating or reasoning Theomania...and, finally, a "megalomathical delirium"—which Dr. Ballet is satisfied to deduce from the fact that Swedenborg had "an absolute faith in his mission," a faith which, he thinks, led him to aggrandize his spiritual *role* and calling.⁶⁴

His reviewer concluded that "Swedenborg's transparent sincerity and modesty are the best answers to such a charge."⁶⁴ But note that again if a psychiatrist has anti-supernatural presuppositions, then Swedenborg cannot have had spiritual experiences, and so the only category left for him, is some sort of insanity. Dr. Ireland, Dr. Ballet and Dr. Johnson (and presumably Dr. Maudsley) seem to share the same circular argument, as can be seen by their use of the "loaded" word "hallucination."^{54, 64}

Dr. Robert Jones⁵⁴ in 1912 thought that Swedenborg was an epileptic because he (1) alternated between extreme wickedness and extreme piety; (2) he had "an extraordinary tenacity and correctness of memory for the smallest events of past years, an accuracy which would be rare even in a sound mind."; (3) he had sudden "visual illusions" as recorded in his "diary";⁶⁵ and (4) Brockmer "described automatic actions after a sudden seizure, in which he foamed at the mouth and fell."⁶⁶

Again Brockmer has a lot to answer for, but with all diagnoses, Jones wrote that "many" epileptics may have these symptoms, which implies that not all do. I can't comment any further than that, as I have neither a medical nor psychological background.

Dr. Emil A.G. Kleen gave a talk to the Swedish Medical Society in Stockholm, on May 19th 1914. Kleen

considers that not only were Swedenborg's parents abnormal and Swedenborg neurotic even during his childhood, but that later on he developed all the symptoms of a kind of insanity formerly designated as *paranoia tardiva expansiva religiosa*, described more recently by the French

school of Magnan and Serieux as "le Delire Chronique a evolution systematique" and by the German school of Kraepelin as "paraphreni."⁶⁷

We know from the members of the Swedish New Church, that Dr. Kleen's grandmother, Madam Fredrika Ehrensberg, was a prominent Swedenborgian, who, in 1860 wrote an article "Reflections on the lately discovered dreams of Swedenborg" [Woofenden 1974, p. 17; Swedenborg's *Journal of Dreams* (1977, Preface ii-iii)]. Madam Ehrensberg, unlike most Swedenborgians, was a spiritualist. Kleen "received, in his youth, at Stockholm, Lund and Linkoping, a thorough knowledge of the doctrines of the New Church, which he now utterly rejects."⁶⁸ One wonders whether as a reaction against his grandmother's spiritualism, some of which the majority of Swedenborgians would possibly agree with, he went to the opposite extreme of being anti-spiritualist to the extent of being an anti-supernatural materialist. A Swedish "Who's Who" of the time describes him as being "a polemic of rank who has shown that he thoroughly knows the art of casting ridicule upon the side which he attacks, in a witty, but rather ruthless manner."⁶⁹ Once again, however, our presuppositions can be ideologically-based or morally-based. Nobody, no matter how scientific a psychiatrist, can be totally objective. Presuppositions color our conclusions. In Kleen's case Swedenborgians can postulate more accurately about why he turned against his upbringing.

Apart from the psychiatrists mentioned, Larsen⁷⁰ notes that:

Karl Jaspers diagnosed him as schizophrenic (in a study comparing Swedenborg to Strindberg, Van Gogh, and Holderlin).^[71] Lagerborg, a Finnish scholar, believed the diagnosis to be paranoia, marked by regression.^[72] Von Winterstein postulated an inverted Oedipal attachment to his father with repressed homosexuality.^[73] Emil Kleen's diagnosis was "*paranoia tardiva expansiva religiosa*," presumably a rare subspecies of paranoia.^[74] The paranoid is "delusional" because he believes unusual or grandiose things to be true: Swedenborg's "appointment by the Lord" to reveal the inner sense of the scriptures has been construed in this way. The "special mission" syndrome is in fact known to many clinical consulting rooms.

In my letter of the 23rd October 1995 I asked Dr. Johnson how he resolves the different types of insanity from which his psychiatric colleagues have adjudged Swedenborg to suffer. He replied that each psychiatrist uses different terminology. I'm sure that's part of the answer, but I don't think it's the whole of the answer. It doesn't seem reasonable to assume that all schizophrenics are repressed homosexuals, or does it?

Larsen's reasons for believing that Swedenborg was sane were that

Swedenborg was clearly able to distinguish his visions from waking consciousness. He sought solitude when the visionary world became dominant. Only on a few noteworthy occasions, such as his clairvoyant seeing of the Stockholm fire hundreds of miles away, did visions disrupt his ordinary social composure. His social persona is described in different places as "polite," "gallant," "kind," "open-hearted."

Swedenborg went through a heroic struggle to reconcile his visions with this ingrained Christian belief system of "the Lord" and a literal heaven filled with winged angels above, and Satan's pit yawning beneath.⁷⁵

Drawing on his clinical experience treating those with the "special mission" syndrome, to which he refers above:

I have personally spent considerable time with those strange wounded modern visionaries called "paranoid schizophrenics." At best they are filled with a burning intensity of purpose and belief. At worst, and far more often, they are boring and exasperating. They harangue one with their monomyth to exhaustion. They ignore the satisfying give-and-take of human communication; often, in fact, belabouring the mythic and ignoring the human. There is a "blaming" aspect, in which the world and its deficiencies are responsible for their own shortcomings. There is an emphasis on others' evil and a literally projected "devil."

We see none of this in portraits of Swedenborg. If he even spoke of his visions it usually was at another's request. In ordinary social discourse he was a reasonable and urbane man. He could discuss politics, economics,

his travels, without intruding his visionary insights. Lacking a culture with which to share these, he wrote—for whoever would read. There was no coercion, no bombast. For over fifteen years he published his visionary writings anonymously. He blamed no one for his “predicament.” His image of the devil is, in fact, psychological—the principle of exclusive self-love in each of us. His devil (or Jungian “shadow”) not only is not projected but is considerably more sophisticated and *less* paranoid than that of his contemporaries.⁷⁶

So amidst all the psychiatric voices diagnosing Swedenborg to be a “paranoid schizophrenic,” we have a clinical psychologist with more knowledge of Swedenborg’s life-story saying he wasn’t. If the psychiatrists can only deny Larsen’s testimony because he is a Swedenborgian, then we Swedenborgians can humbly yet sincerely ask, why the work of Larsen has not been read and critically assessed by the contemporary psychiatrists who claim to be experts on Swedenborg’s mental health? But I know of another clinical psychologist whose testimony has been ignored, and that is of the retired American clinical psychologist Wilson van Dusen. In 1972 van Dusen wrote:

Rumours circulated that he was mad. He found too much, described too much. His reputation as a great scientist was overshadowed by his psychological/religious findings.⁷⁷

Two years later van Dusen wrote along similar lines, acknowledging that several Swedish clerics of the time regarded Swedenborg as

a crazy heretic upsetting the state religion. One simply did not speak of God and heaven and hell from direct experience, especially when this contradicted established doctrine. They failed. Swedenborg was too well known by too many, including heads of states.

Even in his eighties he was described as a vigorous, congenial social gentleman.⁷⁸

Whether we believe Swedenborg was a monomaniac or a paranoid schizophrenic, or not, and I don't, everybody, whether psychiatrist or Swedenborgian, is involved in a search for the truth. What is the real state of Swedenborg's mental health? Of course, if either camp, if there are only two, is not aware of vital information, then the other is duty-bound to gently and assertively draw their attention to it. I believe that Swedenborgians need to carefully and respectfully make the psychiatrists know of Larsen's work and his reasons why Swedenborg was not a paranoid schizophrenic. Also Swedenborgians need to make psychiatrists aware of the views of a non-Swedenborgian like Toksvig. We don't have anything to hide, and I believe that we have an emotional maturity to explore the sensitive issue of Swedenborg's sanity calmly, rationally and in a scholarly fashion.

We now proceed to the topic of "Brockmer's story" and a critical look at its different versions.

Brockmer's Story

John Paul Brockmer was a good watch chaser or engraver, who lived in Salisbury Court, Fleet Street, London. It was at his house that the Fetter Lane Moravian community met in 1743.⁷⁹ He was one of the officers of the congregation with the title "servant."⁸⁰ Higham calls him "an illiterate artisan" based on his misspelling of "desire" and "disease" in the inscription to his copy of the Moravian hymn book, and then proceeds to say that he was questioned "by four New Churchmen—a deputation of his fellow citizens of similar social standing to his own." Maybe they were more literate?⁸¹

In the *Arminian Magazine*⁸² of January 1781,⁸³ John Wesley printed a story about Swedenborg, which he had obtained from the minister of the Swedish Church in London, Rev. Aaron Mathesius. Mathesius had heard the story from Brockmer some time after his arrival in London in 1765, but before 1772, because he said that Swedenborg was still alive when Brockmer told him the story.⁸⁴ To quote the story in full would take up too much space, so I propose to summarize it.⁸⁵ The events are said to have taken

place in 1743, but according to Swedenborg's diary of the time, he wasn't in London until the 17th May 1744, after leaving the Hague on the 13th and arriving at Harwich on the 16th!⁸⁶ Its claim to being historically accurate doesn't start off too well!

At first Swedenborg "behaved very decently" in Brockmer's house in 1743: "he went every Sunday to the chapel of the Moravians in Fetter Lane."⁸⁷ He lived very much as a recluse though often talked to Brockmer. When he began to write his book *The Worship and Love of God* on 27th October 1744, he did not open his bedroom door for 2 days, to let the maid make his bed and sweep the room. The maid got somewhat agitated at this and found Brockmer at a coffeehouse. Brockmer returned home and knocked on the door. Swedenborg got out of bed but refused to let the maid in because he was working on his book. At 9 o'clock which was Brockmer's bedtime, Swedenborg ran after Brockmer and "looked very frightful: his hair stood upright and foamed a little at his mouth." After overcoming his speech impediment he told Brockmer that "he was the Messiah: that he was come to be crucified for the Jews," and that because of this impediment, Brockmer was going to be his spokesman at the synagogue the next day. Swedenborg repeatedly assures Brockmer that an angel will confirm what he has said to him during the night. Brockmer suggests that they send for Dr. Smith, a friend of Swedenborg's, but they eventually reach an agreement that Swedenborg will only go to Dr. Smith if the angel doesn't appear. Brockmer had a restless night and got up about 5 a.m. When Swedenborg heard this he raced upstairs to him, and questioned him whether the angel had appeared, "foaming continually." Brockmer insists they go to the doctor, to which Swedenborg replies that he is talking to one spirit on his right hand who says to go with Brockmer, the other says not to, because Brockmer is a "good-for-nothing." Swedenborg leaves Brockmer's room and cries "like a child" reassuring Brockmer that he won't hurt him. When Brockmer dresses himself and goes to Swedenborg's room, he finds him dressed also. While Brockmer went to Dr. Smith to arrange alternative lodgings for Swedenborg, eventually finding some with a Peruke-maker 3 or 4 doors from Dr. Smith, Swedenborg went to see the Swedish ambassador and not finding him at home, "He then went to a place called the Gully-hole, undressed himself, rolled in very deep mud, and threw the money out of his pockets among

the crowd." Some of the Ambassador's servants brought him home to Brockmer covered with mud. Swedenborg had a bath in the back room, but Brockmer feared for his safety and had the lock taken off the door. When they barged in they found Swedenborg washing his feet. He had used 6 towels and required 6 more. Leaving Swedenborg with 2 men, Brockmer got some medicines from Dr. Smith and informed the Swedish envoy what had happened. Brockmer continued to visit Swedenborg at his new lodging, but he would never dispute Swedenborg's continual claim that he was the Messiah. One day Dr. Smith had given Swedenborg a purging powder, and he went out in a field and outran his attendant, and sat on a stile laughing. Whenever the attendant caught up with him, he outran him to the next stile and so on. After this Brockmer didn't see much of Swedenborg to talk to him.

A critical look at Mathesius' accounts of Brockmer's story

Tafel regarded the first part of the story as true, that is, up to Brockmer retiring to his room at 9 o'clock, because "it is confirmed by collateral testimony. But the rest of his account...is an unmitigated falsehood."⁸⁸ Tafel then proceeds to list what books Swedenborg was writing between 1743 and 1745, and then lists what official duties, particularly at the Swedish College of Mines, he performed on his return to Sweden from August 1745 to July 1747. "In the Minutes of the College of Mines for 1745 he is marked 'unwell' five times, and in 1746 four times; and in 1747 he is never marked absent on account of illness," despite the other times when he was frequently out of the country researching and publishing books. He was unanimously nominated by his colleagues for the vacant councillor's position at the College of Mines in June 1747, but Swedenborg asked that the King release him on a pension of half-pay.⁸⁹ Tafel concludes by saying:

It is difficult to understand how, in the face of this testimony received from the King of Sweden in 1747, and from his colleagues at the College of Mines, who had daily an opportunity of watching and observing him, a Swedish minister of the Gospel could dare to publish a report that Swedenborg, ever since 1743 had been insane; and indeed on the

strength of an occurrence which happened thirty or forty years before he circulated this report; and still more difficult is it to understand how his biographer [White] who must have been acquainted with the real state of the case could conscientiously endorse, and publish as true, such testimony.⁹⁰

But there is more than one version of Brockmer's story. Mathesius had two versions: one he gave to John Wesley which was published in 1781, and one he wrote down in 1796. Wesley also published a much abridged version in 1783.

White in his last two biographies of Swedenborg published a translation of Mathesius' account of Swedenborg from 1796, which he claims only differs from the 1781 version in "two or three extra details."⁹¹ However Tafel says that "There is a considerable discrepancy between these two accounts, as we shall have occasion to show."⁹² Only people who weigh up the evidence will be able to make a sound judgment. In 1914 Higham sides with Tafel when he concludes, that Tafel "submits the two versions to a searching analysis and comparison, with effects disastrous to the reputation for veracity of the narrator, or his interviewer."⁹³ Well what do I make of Tafel's comparison of the two accounts?

In my opinion there are more than two or three differences between the 1781 version and the 1796 one. If Brockmer's story is to be regarded as important evidence for either a medical or psychological diagnosis, then the discrepancies between the two accounts need to be taken into account and explained. In weighing up the truth of the accounts it may be helpful to ponder how good a witness Brockmer was, because in the later version: "My wife and children were at the same time very ill, which increased my anxiety."⁹⁴ What state of mind was Brockmer in when he related the story to Mathesius? We don't know, but it doesn't justify Mathesius elaborating the story in 1796.

Mathesius' later account adds that Swedenborg "was a Godfearing man"⁹⁵ and that "I know you are an honest man...and, as you tell me, have never taken medicine,"⁹⁶ which is complimentary to his character and state of health. However, I would suggest that Swedenborg is more psychologically disturbed in the 1796 version, which of course is the version

White inserted in his last two biographies of Swedenborg, and the version on which I and other Swedenborgians, mentioned above, suspect psychiatrists have based their diagnoses of him.⁹⁷ Here are the reasons for my assertion:

In his 1796 account Mathesius elaborates his first, by saying that Swedenborg *continued* to complain *for several months* that the learned and rich must go to hell, whereas in the 1781 account Swedenborg complained once.⁹⁸ In 1796 Mathesius says that apart from his stammering or well-known speech impediment, "he could not utter his thoughts,"⁹⁶ which is important for a medical or psychological diagnosis. As is he "foamed a little at his mouth" and later on "He foaming continually cried" (1781), as against "he foamed round the mouth" and later on "He foamed and cried again and again" (1796).⁹⁹ Later Swedenborg went upstairs and "spoke, but so confusedly that he could not be understood," and then Brockmer was worried that Swedenborg would injure him with "a penknife or other instrument,"⁹⁴ and yet in 1781 Brockmer claims that Swedenborg takes the initiative by expressing Brockmer's concerns: "sitting down in a chair cried like a child, and said, 'Do you think I should hurt you?'"¹⁰⁰ When Swedenborg locked himself in an inner room serving as a bathroom in 1781, Brockmer became apprehensive that Swedenborg might hurt himself, whereas in the 1796 account Swedenborg would not open the door despite their request. Two men in 1781 become six guards in 1796.¹⁰¹ Swedenborg's attendant in 1781 becomes his "keeper."¹⁰²

I cannot help but be sympathetic towards Higham's position when he writes: "But, strange to say, the revised version of 1796 differs widely from the authorized version printed by John Wesley in 1781."¹⁰³ However, I would have toned down "widely" to "to quite an extent." But in conceding that, it seems reasonable to me, that Swedenborg was more psychologically disturbed in Mathesius' 1796 version than the 1781 version. But how many psycho-historians have carried out this exercise? None that I know of, because they haven't examined all the evidence, because they haven't known about or bothered searching for it. I suppose in 1796 Mathesius could have remembered details that he had forgotten to tell John Wesley in 1781, but that becomes a bit doubtful, when we consider that the accounts were written 38 and 53 years respectively after the alleged event.¹⁰⁴

In his *Arminian Magazine* for 1783¹⁰⁵ Wesley began by quoting Swedenborg's autobiographical letter to one of his early English readers, Rev. Thomas Hartley,¹⁰⁶ and then wrote:

Many years ago the Baron came over to England, and lodged at one Mr. Brockmer's: who informed me (and the same information was given me by Mr. Mathesius, a very serious Swedish clergyman, both of whom were alive when I left London, and, I suppose, are so still,) that while he was in his house he had a violent fever; in the height of which, being totally delirious, he broke from Mr. Brockmer, ran into the street stark naked, proclaimed himself the Messiah, and rolled himself in the mire. I suppose he dates from this time his admission into the Society of Angels. From this time we are undoubtedly to date that peculiar species of insanity which attended him, with scarce any intermission, to the day of his death.¹⁰⁷

This 1783 account of Wesley's differs in a number of ways from his version of 1781. (It is intriguing that both Mathesius' and Wesley's later versions are more elaborate and exaggerated than their originals!) The fever in 1781 became "a violent fever" in 1783. Swedenborg is more psychologically disturbed in 1783 than 1781, because he is "totally delirious," and has to break out of Brockmer's grasp. Both details are missing in the 1781 version. In the 1781 version Swedenborg claimed he was the Messiah inside Brockmer's house and next day took off his clothes outside, whereas Wesley in 1783 switches the places these actions occurred around, and has them happen consecutively.

Even White doesn't believe this second account of Wesley's, regarding it as "discreditable to Wesley's veracity" and "but we cannot forget, that he was a sad gossip, and that truth was nearly certain to suffer when it encountered his dislike or self-will. The instance before us is no more than characteristic of his loose and unscrupulous habit of writing and speaking."¹⁰⁸ In 1868 White wrote of Wesley that "in apparent oblivion of what he had printed in 1781, he entertained the readers of the *Arminian Magazine* in 1783 with the following creation of his lively imagination."¹⁰⁹ In support of this statement he mentioned Rev. Francis Okely's opinion of John Wesley and testimony concerning Brockmer's story, which was pub-

lished in an article by Rev. W.H. Benade in an American New Church magazine printed in New York.¹¹⁰ Higham had access to it and quotes Okely as follows:

As I rather suspect J.W.'s narratives, they being always warped to his own inclination, I enquired since of Mr. Brockmore concerning it, and have found all the main lines of it truth.¹¹¹

Okely only believed that Swedenborg was temporarily insane on the basis of Brockmer's story, but when he met Swedenborg, he describes him as "very composed in his countenance and whole demeanour."¹¹² Rev. Francis Okely was a Moravian minister who had met Swedenborg in 1771 in London,^{112a} and had discussed Mathesius' account of 1781 with Brockmer himself. In a letter to John Wesley, Okely testified that Swedenborg "spoke with all the coolness and deliberation you might expect from any, the most sober and rational man"¹¹³ and whose theological works are "most exceptional" to his critic.¹¹⁴

But there is a slight complication in taking Okely's validation of at least "the main lines" of Brockmer's story too literally. In 1783¹¹⁵ four Swedenborgian gentlemen went to visit Brockmer. We know two of their names: Mr. Robert Beatson, the first secretary of the General Conference of the New Church and Rev. Robert Hindmarsh. After Wesley's 1783 account was read to Brockmer he is quoted as saying:

That it was entirely false; that he never gave any information of the kind to Mr. Wesley, but supposed that some other person might have made such a report to Mr. Wesley, who he said was very credulous, and easy to be imposed upon by any idle tale, from whatever quarter it came. Mr. Brockmer further added, "That Baron Swedenborg was never afflicted with any illness, much less with a violent fever, while at his house; nor did he ever break from him in a delirious state, and run into the street stark naked, and there proclaim himself the Messiah." Mr. Brockmer acknowledged, "that he had heard a report, that Baron Swedenborg had rolled himself in the mire; but he could not be certain of the fact, because he did not see it himself, but was only told so."¹¹⁶

When asked about Wesley's account of 1781:

After reading it, he replied, "That to the best of his knowledge and recollection, some things in that account were true; that other things were absolutely false; and that the whole was exaggerated and unfairly stated." He said, it was true, that Swedenborg once called himself the Messiah; but not true that he always persisted in it, whenever he saw him afterwards, as Mr. Wesley insinuates. It was true that his hair stood upright, for as he wore a wig, it was necessary to keep his hair cut short, in which case any person's hair will stand upright; but it was not true that he looked frightful or wild, for he was of a most placid and serene disposition. It was true that he had an impediment in his speech, and spoke with earnestness; but not true, that he foamed at the mouth, as Mr. Wesley has represented him.¹¹⁷

Woodman is not far wrong with his summary: "Brockmer, ... declared it to be in some things absolutely false, and in those which has a substratum of truth as exaggerated and unfairly stated."¹¹⁸ So what do we make of Brockmer's evidence which he made a few months before he died, that Swedenborg was never ill while lodging with him, that he never had a frightful appearance nor foamed at the mouth, but that Brockmer had heard from some unknown person that Swedenborg had proclaimed himself the Messiah?

White doesn't attach a great deal of significance to the evidence arising from the visit of four New Churchmen to Brockmer. He argues that Brockmer's four visitors questioned him so intensely "to the great alarm and confusion, we apprehend, of poor Brockmer's mind,"¹¹⁹ and their reading from *The Arminian Magazine* and cross-questioning "muddled Brockmer's memory,"¹²⁰ but offers no evidence to support this conjecture. Even his statement that "The interview with Brockmer is repeated by Hindmarsh in several works, and is a stock quotation of Swedenborgian apologists"¹²¹ is unsupported. I can't understand how White can conclude that Hindmarsh "did nothing substantially to upset Brockmer's testimony as delivered to Mathesius," even allowing for his "unsatisfactory" examination? I agree it would have been a good question to ask Brockmer, "under what circumstances he confided to Mathesius the story about his

lodger." In White's opinion it boils down to deciding who to believe, Mathesius or Hindmarsh, and he chooses the former.¹²⁰ One American New Church Minister, Rev. Ormond Odhner, comes to a different black-and-white judgment:

It could only have been with Brockmer that the insanity story originated. Later he vowed he had nothing to do with it. At one time or the other, then, he lied. His insanity story, therefore—if ever he told it—was the testimony of a liar. As such it is worthless.¹²²

It is one thing for a psychiatrist or anybody to be uncritically over-reliant on White's biography, that is, by ignoring other opinions of the same evidence, but Maudsley went too far by claiming that Swedenborgians "have impugned the veracity of Brockmer's story."³² Surely Brockmer has also brought into question the story attributed to him, by what he said to the four Swedenborgians? Also its accuracy is questionable because Wesley published it without consulting Brockmer, and only had Mathesius to authenticate it.¹²³

However the question of bias will not go away. In his third biography White elaborates on only Robert Hindmarsh being "a zealous Swedenborgian" to "Some zealous Swedenborgians" and "Whatever their verdict, their bias would have made it suspicious; but we are able to produce a voucher which ought to settle every cavil as to the general accuracy of Brockmer as delivered by Mathesius." White then goes on to quote Okely.¹²⁴ It is a shame that White never explained why Beatson and Hindmarsh's story of their visit to Brockmer was trivial or annoying.

In White's opinion Mathesius' account is the true one, that is, the 1796 version, and he then proceeds to accuse Swedenborgians of attacking Mathesius and slandering him by saying that he himself [I.e. Mathesius] went mad. He seems to single out Rev. Samuel Noble as the chief culprit.¹²⁵ White thought that Mathesius just disagreed with Swedenborg's theology,¹²⁶ whereas Noble said that Mathesius was a "personal and violent enemy."¹²⁷ Presumably Noble based his opinion on the testimony of two leading members of the Swedish Church in London: Eric Bergstrom and Christopher Springer.

In 1787, fifteen years after Swedenborg's death, Eric Bergstrom told the physician, Dr. Peter Provo:

Mr. Mathesius was an opponent of Swedenborg, and said that he was lunatic, &c; but it is remarkable that he went lunatic himself, which happened publicly one day when he was in the Swedish Church, and about to preach: I was there, and saw it; he has been so ever since, and sent back to Sweden, where he now is: this was about four years ago.¹²⁸

Bergstrom was a member of the church council and trustee of the Swedish Church in London,¹²⁹ besides being the innkeeper of the King's Arms Tavern, in Wellclose-square, London, with whom Swedenborg lived for 10 weeks.¹³⁰ Another leading council member of the Swedish Church in London, regarded as its "oldest pillar," was Christopher Springer.¹³¹ Robert Hindmarsh quotes Springer as saying that Mathesius "was known to be a professed enemy of Swedenborg, and had set his face against his writings: it was he that raised and spread the false account of Swedenborg's having been deprived of his senses."¹³² Springer testified to Benedict Chastanier, which the latter recorded in his book published in 1786, that Mathesius "had already expressed himself strongly against these doctrines" of Swedenborg's.¹³³ Springer had also told Chastanier in 1785:

that Swedenborg had presented his *Arcana Coelstia* to Mathesius, who was never willing to read the work, and who, from hostility he had conceived against the doctrines contained therein, had been constantly one of the greatest antagonists of Swedenborg; and who had contributed not a little to circulate and affirm the egregious falsehood which John Wesley, a minister of the Anglican Church and one of the chiefs of the sect called Methodists, was inconsiderate enough to insert in the January number of the "Arminian Magazine," I believe for 1781 or 1782. Wesley himself, however, is by no means the author of that falsehood, which he endeavoured to make as plausible as possible.¹³⁴

Chastanier also recorded that Mathesius "had become mad, and had in consequence of this been suspended from his ministry."¹³⁵ The records of the Swedish Church attest to Mathesius suffering "a severe illness,

whereby he was disabled from continuing his office"¹³⁶ so White is partially right in saying that "by the records of the Swedish Church" Mathesius didn't go insane,¹³⁷ but wouldn't they be circumspect in what they said about one of their ministers in their church records?

White thinks these accounts of Mathesius becoming insane, "are of next to no authority,"¹³⁸ and then goes on to say that "It is certainly of little consequence to us at this day whether Mathesius went mad or not; and the fact of his sanity or insanity in 1784 in no wise affects the truth of the narrative he drew out of Brockmer about 1770."¹³⁹

Attempting a critical examination of Brockmer's story is easy when comparing Mathesius' version of 1781 with his later one of 1796, or even John Wesley's abridged version of 1783. However, to weigh up Okely's estimation of Brockmer's story as "all the main lines of it truth"¹⁰⁴ against Brockmer denying four-fifths of it to Beatson and Hindmarsh, saying that "the whole was exaggerated and unfairly stated,"⁶³ is next to impossible. There seems to be less information or 'hard evidence' to go on, than opinions of individuals at the time and those of commentators some years removed. There is little if any corroboration of the testimony of Brockmer, Mathesius, Okely, Hindmarsh and Beatson, which leaves vast room for speculation.

At least we have quite a significant amount of information about Swedenborg's character and habits from Mr. Richard Shearsmith, with whom Swedenborg lodged for most of his stays in London.

Weighing evidence from Shearsmith with Brockmer's story

It seems to me imperative that if we are to evaluate Brockmer's story we must hear the various testimonies of the last English person with whom Swedenborg lodged, that is, the wig-maker and barber Richard Shearsmith. Swedenborg lodged with him "from July or August 1771 until his death, on March 29, 1772,"¹³⁹ which was his second time staying with Shearsmith,¹⁴⁰ for he stayed with him about seven months in 1769.¹⁴¹ We can easily gain an understanding of what it was like to have Swedenborg as a lodger, because many people had talked about this with Shearsmith.

Some evidence which was only published in 1885, which White did not have access to when he wrote his last two biographies of Swedenborg,

throws interesting light on Brockmer's tale as told by Mathesius. In fact this testimony of Shearsmith's may resolve some of Tafel's dilemmas while he tried to piece together the evidence.¹⁴² Tafel tried to identify the peruke-maker in Cold Bath Fields, to whom Dr. Smith found rooms for Swedenborg. In 1796 Mathesius names the wig maker as Mr. Michael Caer of Warner Street, Cold Bath Fields, who lived 3 or 4 doors from Dr. Smith.¹⁴³ When Shearsmith was interviewed by the physician Dr. Peter Provo in 1792, he said that Swedenborg lodged with a Mrs. Carr in Great Warner Street, next to the Red Lion in 1745,¹⁴⁴ after he stayed with Brockmer in Fetter Lane, and before he came to Shearsmith.¹⁴⁵ This would also suggest that he stayed with Brockmer and the Carrs or Caers (if they're one and the same people) in 1745 and 1769.¹

If Swedenborg's alleged "epileptic fit," for want of a better description, happened in 1769, it might explain why his good friend Brooksbank or Brocksbank related to Benedict Chastanier that Brockmer alleged this against Swedenborg for what he wrote about the Moravians in his book *Continuation concerning the Last Judgment* 86–90, which was published in Amsterdam in 1763.¹⁴⁶ The only difficulty with this is that it was first translated into English by Rev. Robert Hindmarsh in 1788, although presumably a few Latin copies were available, at least if one of Brockmer's Latin-reading friends were given access to Swedenborg's papers.¹⁴⁷

However, Shearsmith is of the opinion that Brockmer spread his false report concerning Swedenborg's sanity in 1745, and if there were any truth in it, both he and Mrs. Carr would have known about it since he had lived in the locality for 40 years, and Mrs. Carr was also a 'local'.¹⁴⁸ Shearsmith had told Rev. Robert Hindmarsh that "every report injurious to his character had been raised merely from malice, or disaffection, to his writings, by persons of a bigoted and contracted spirit."¹⁴⁹ In 1792 Shearsmith told Dr. Provo that, while Swedenborg was staying at Brockmer's

he and his maid were continually interrupting him in his studies, and wanted him to conform himself to their manner of living; and as to the story about his rolling himself in the dirt, I think it untrue, and more likely must have related to a Mr. Smith in whose house he lived in Cold Bath Fields, and who was a man of a strange turn of mind.¹⁵⁰

This allegation that Brockmer interrupted Swedenborg was also mentioned by Shearsmith to Mrs. E.O. Shaw a relative of Dr. J.J. Garth Wilkinson. Brockmer “used to meddle with his papers”¹⁵¹ and they “were so angry with his leaving them, that they spread a report that he was mad.”¹⁵² Shearsmith goes on to say that,

it seems to me remarkable that Mr. Brockmer became insane before he died, as well as another person who had aspersed Mr. Swedenborg's character by saying he was so. That Dr. Smith is dead, and I know of no person in this part of the town who is now alive who knew him.¹⁴⁴

I know of no other person who says that Brockmer went insane, although he seems to have died in poverty according to Springer.¹⁵³ It is possibly a bit strange if Mathesius and Brockmer both have nervous breakdowns, but maybe Brockmer's poverty contributed to it. Probably we'll never know. With reference to Dr. Smith, is this the same Dr. Smith who Mathesius says that Swedenborg was “intimate” in 1781 and a mutual “friend” in 1796?⁹⁸ If so, who do we believe and why? Is the Mr. Smith Shearsmith refers to the same as the Dr. Smith he refers to?

Again we find gaps in the evidence. We can't corroborate whether Mathesius' Mr. Caer is the husband of Shearsmith's Mrs. Carr, or whether Mathesius' Dr. Smith is the same person as Shearsmith's Dr. Smith or Mr. Smith. Mathesius relates that Brockmer's maid did interrupt Swedenborg writing, as did Brockmer subsequently, which is confirmed by testimony obtained either directly or indirectly from Shearsmith. It also seems reasonable that Brockmer's overzealous maid meddled with his papers. How far we can stretch the other evidence depends on our opinion of Mathesius' accounts of Brockmer's story. Nobody seems to have dismissed Shearsmith's testimony.

What was it like to share a house with Swedenborg?

So what would it be like to have Swedenborg as a lodger, or indeed as a master? I would like to deal with this in two ways. Firstly, to let witnesses describe how he looked during his visions, and secondly, to talk about his sleeping habits.

Henry Peckitt (died 1808), the retired physician and pharmacist, was the first President of the General Conference of the New Church in 1789. When Peckitt spoke to Richard Shearsmith, he was told the following:¹⁵⁴

Mr. Shearsmith was affrighted when he first lodged with him, by reason of his talking in the night and day. He said, he would sometimes be writing, and sometimes would stand talking in the doorstead of his room,¹⁵⁵ as if he was holding a conversation with some person; but as he spoke in a language Mr. Shearsmith did not understand, he could not make anything of it.¹⁵⁶

Shearsmith told Dr. Peter Provo in 1792, that sometimes during these daytime and nocturnal conversations with invisible people, Swedenborg "often gave signs of approbation or disapprobation at what was said."¹⁵⁷ He further adds:

I have often seen a pleasant smile on his countenance, but did not ever observe him to laugh. At times, I think, he was under temptation of mind; for I have heard sometimes a kind of moaning or rather weeping.¹⁵⁸

...what he saw was in a wakeful state, as he generally stood between the bed and front room when conversing in the day with spirits or those who were invisible to others; which conversations would often also be held in the night, or towards 2 and 3 o'clock in the morning, and would last for an hour or more, he often appearing to be in a kind of conflict, and saying, Nay! nay! nay! often, and sometimes loud; but when it met his approbation, Yea! yea! was pronounced, and more often.¹⁵⁹

Back in his house in Sweden his gardener and his wife, who was his housekeeper, told Carl Robsahm, an accountant at the Bank²⁶² in Stockholm, that they slept in a nearby room and often heard Swedenborg call out in the night, due to being tempted by evil spirits. He was usually indignant with his tormentors or revilers and spoke to them thus. He was often heard to weep bitterly and cry out to the LORD not to leave him while he was in temptation. When they asked him about the cause of his crying out,

he replied that they weren't to worry because it was permitted by the LORD and that he wouldn't be tempted beyond what he could bear.¹⁶⁰

After one such incident of lamentation Swedenborg didn't get out of his bed for several days and nights, which greatly worried his servants. Not wishing to break down the door or worry his friends, the gardener peered through his window and eventually saw Swedenborg turn over in bed to their great relief and joy. The next morning when Swedenborg rang the bell, the housekeeper went into his room and expressed her own and her husband's fears about his well-being. Swedenborg cheerfully replied "that he was doing well, and that he did not need anything."¹⁶¹

After one such vision, the housekeeper saw that "the pupils of his eyes had the appearance of the brightest fire," at which she expressed her fears and concerns out loud to Swedenborg. On finding out how he looked, Swedenborg replied, "Well! well! don't be frightened. The Lord has opened my bodily eyes, and I have been in the spirit; but in a little while, I shall be all right again; and this does me no harm." Half an hour later he had returned to normal.¹⁶² In Abbe Pernety's version, Robsahm had told him that the fire in his eyes was due to spirits seeing into our world through them.¹⁶³

When Pastor Arvid Ferelius, the minister at the Swedish Church in London, visited Swedenborg one day, he heard him enthusiastically addressing a crowd, but when he asked Shearsmith's servant, Elizabeth Reynolds, later Shearsmith's second wife, she said that Swedenborg had been like that for 3 days and nights. When Ferelius entered his room, Swedenborg welcomed him "with great calmness" and asked him to sit down. Swedenborg then told Ferelius he had been infested and tormented by evil spirits, whose wickedness had been greater than any others he had previously experienced. Swedenborg then told Ferelius, he was then in the company of good spirits.¹⁶⁴

Mr. Eric Bergstrom the innkeeper of the King's Arms Tavern in Wellclose-square reported to Dr. Peter Provo in 1787, that he heard joyful noises coming from Swedenborg's bedroom one time during Swedenborg's ten week stay in his inn:¹³⁰

He commonly retired to his chamber in the evening, and once I heard some noise from that part, and went to speak to him about it; and as he seemed rejoiced, I asked him the occasion; when he told me that he had seen some extraordinary things which pleased him.¹⁶⁵

From Shearsmith's conversation with Mrs. E.O. Shaw, we learn:

Swedenborg desired Mr. Shearsmith never to disturb him, when in his spiritual state. Sometimes he was two or three days in it. Shearsmith remarked a very peculiar look about his face at such times, and sometimes feared Swedenborg was dead. He, however, told him never to be troubled: all would be well.¹⁶⁶

Swedenborg's instructions to Shearsmith are entirely consistent with his instructions to his Swedish housekeeper, who told Mr. C.F. Nordenskold,

That Swedenborg often lay for several days in his bed without eating. He gave orders that they were not to awake him, or to touch him in such a state, but to place a basin of water before his bed. When he awoke he did not feel the least weakness, but was strong and hale, as if he had partaken of hearty meals during the whole of that time.¹⁶⁷

Shearsmith told Peckitt that shortly before his death, Swedenborg "lay some weeks in a trance, without any sustenance; and came to himself again."¹⁶⁸

We have some idea of what would happen if Swedenborg was disturbed during one of his visions, from the testimony of General Christian Tuxen (1713–1792?), the head of Danish customs at the port of Elsinore.¹⁶⁹ In his enthusiasm to see his old friend, Tuxen burst into Swedenborg's cabin one day, with the ship captain's permission, and also found him in a trance:

I found the Assessor seated in undress, his elbows on the table, his hands supporting his face, which was turned towards the door, his eyes open, and much elevated. I was so imprudent as immediately to address him,

expressing my happiness at seeing and speaking with him. At this he recovered himself (for he had really been in a trance or ecstasy, as his posture evinced), and rising with some confusion, advanced a few steps from the table in singular and visible uncertainty, expressed by his countenance and hands, from which, however, he soon recovered, bidding me welcome, and asking me whence I came.¹⁷⁰

On captain Harrison's ship once, Swedenborg was in bed for the whole voyage talking to people. The cabin-boy and mate thought he was mad. Harrison replied that Swedenborg was quiet enough, and always spoke to him prudently and discreetly, and they always had favorable winds when Swedenborg sailed with them.¹⁷¹ Another sea captain also told Robsahm that "Swedenborg generally lay in bed and talked" while on his ship as well.¹⁷²

Christopher Springer (1704–1775) related to Abbe Pernetz the time when he and Swedenborg were staying at an inn near the port of London (Harwich?). Swedenborg

went to bed, and I sat in another room with the landlord, with whom I conversed. We heard a noise; and not being able to tell the cause, we approached a door, which had a little window looking into the room where Swedenborg was sleeping. We saw him with his hands raised towards heaven, and his body apparently very much agitated. He spoke much for half-an-hour, but we could not understand what he was saying, except when he dropped his hands. When we heard him say with a loud voice, "My God!" but could not hear more. He remained afterwards very quietly in his bed. I stepped into his room with the landlord, and asked whether he was ill. "No," said he, "But I have had a long discourse with the angels and the heavenly friends, and am at this time in a great perspiration." As his things had been taken on board, he asked the landlord for a fresh shirt and a fresh sheet. Afterwards he went to bed again, and slept till morning.¹⁷³

But Swedenborg would also be talking to invisible people while out on walks.¹⁷⁴ According to what Burkhardt, a former clerk to the Swedish Chapel in London, told Dr. Peter Provo in 1783:

Swedenborg was a holy, good man, much given to abstraction of mind; that even when walking out he sometimes seemed as if in private prayer, and latterly took but little notice of things and people in the streets.¹⁷⁵

But Swedenborg's facial expressions were also known to have changed when he learned that Emperor Peter III of Russia had been executed, and also while at a dinner party in Gothenburg he learned of a fire in Sweden near his own house.

John Henry Jung-Stilling (1740–1817), an ophthalmologist and professor of agriculture at the University of Heidelberg and then Professor of political economy at the University of Marburg, was told by a friend, that on 17th July¹⁷⁶

“In the year 1762, on the very day when the Emperor Peter III of Russia died, Swedenborg was present with me at a party in Amsterdam. In the middle of the conversation, his physiognomy became changed, and it was evident that his soul was no longer present in him, and that something was taking place with him.” As soon as he recovered, after being urged repeatedly, he began to say how Peter III had been executed in his prison cell, which was confirmed in newspapers some days later.¹⁷⁷

According to the results of Immanuel Kant's investigations of Swedenborg's psychic experience of seeing a fire in Stockholm¹⁷⁸ while at a party at the home of William Castel in Gothenburg 300 miles away, Swedenborg left the company to walk in the garden¹⁷⁹ at 6 p.m., and returned “quite pale and alarmed.” “He was restless, and went out often.” “At eight o'clock, after he had been out again, he joyfully exclaimed, ‘Thank God! the fire is extinguished, the third door from my house.’”¹⁸⁰ Swedenborg stated to the assembled company “he had been told by the angels, that a fire was raging in Stockholm, in such and such a street.”¹⁸¹ The details were confirmed some days later by a messenger.

According to Shearsmith in 1792, Swedenborg

paid no attention to particular hours, but ate and slept only when he was hungry or weary.¹⁸²

He was never known to be in a passion, but was always kind and civil, living as a philosopher, and not minding what others thought or said of him.¹⁸³

This is confirmed by what Shearsmith told Henry Peckitt in 1778:

It seems he had not particular regard for times or seasons, or days or nights; only taking rest when nature required it.¹⁸⁴

This is confirmed by Robsahm, who wrote:

Swedenborg worked without much regard to the distinction of day and night, having no fixed time for labour or rest. "When I am sleepy," he said, "I go to bed"¹⁸⁵

Burkhardt told Dr. Peter Provo in 1790 that "He was never married; indeed, he was so taken up with his studies and writings, that he had no time for anything else."¹⁸⁶

John Christian Cuno reports that his landlady in Amsterdam, who owned a drapery shop, told him that he required little or no help. Her servant lit his fire in the morning, and he tended it during the day.

Swedenborg went to bed at 7 p.m. and got up at 8 a.m.¹⁸⁷ Shearsmith reports that Swedenborg when staying with him in London often got up about 5 or 6 o'clock in the morning, worked until 8 a.m. and then had breakfast, and often went to bed at 6 or 7 p.m.¹⁸⁸ Cuno also informs us that sleeping 13 hours straight, was "not too much for him."¹⁸⁹ In 1743 and 1744, from reading his *Journal of Dreams*, we learn that he usually went to bed around 9 p.m. or 10 p.m.¹⁹⁰ and slept for 10 or 11 or even 12 hours.¹⁹¹

So we can begin to see that if Swedenborg did behave in such a way while staying with Brockmer, it could upset the running of the house, particularly if Brockmer had a meticulous maid, and wasn't used to lodgers keeping irregular hours. It is therefore quite feasible that she would have gone to fetch Brockmer from the coffeehouse, because she had no reply from Swedenborg in his room. If Swedenborg did not "conform himself to their manner of living"¹⁵⁰ with regard to mealtimes and bed-

times, and couldn't tolerate Brockmer meddling "with his papers,"¹⁵¹ his life-style was incompatible with that of the Brockmer household.

We know that in 1744 Swedenborg stayed with Brockmer between 18th May and 9th July,¹⁹² after being introduced to him by a shoemaker called Senniff.¹⁹³ We accept that Swedenborg could have been seen in a trance by the maid, or the Brockmer household could have been woken up by Swedenborg talking to invisible visitors in the night, but as Higham wrote in 1914, there is "no contemporary account of the special incident, or incidents, of May-June 1744, and of their physical and psychological effect upon Swedenborg."¹⁹⁴ In fact Higham also says:

That such mental perturbations, and so stupendous a Divine interposition, should *not* be accompanied by abnormal physical phenomena in their human subject is—to speak simply—unthinkable. But to ascertain the exact character of those phenomena, and to assess their temporary or permanent impress upon Swedenborg's mental constitution, are tasks far beyond the powers of the present compiler.¹⁹⁴

But even allowing for the possibility of Swedenborg being noticed having an abnormal experience, why does he say both before and after his stay with Brockmer that nobody knows about the profound ecstatic experiences he is having? Advocates of his alleged monomania may have an explanation, but there are so many things they haven't explained.

Around 1927 Acton put together references in Swedenborg's works from 1744, 1746 and 1748, which state that nobody knew about his unusual experiences until 1763.¹⁹⁵ We will now take a look at the references Acton lists for 1744 and 1746.

Six weeks before his stay at Brockmer's house Swedenborg writes:

During all this time I was in society as usual and no one could in the least [observe in me any change]; this was of God's grace.¹⁹⁶

Around April 1746 Swedenborg also writes that nobody has noticed yet that he can be having a conversation with another person and yet having a conversation with a deceased person simultaneously:

for about a year...in company with others I speak just like any other man, so that as yet no one has been able to distinguish me from myself as I was formerly, nor from any other man. Yet in the midst of company I have sometimes spoken with spirits and with those who were about me; and it may be that certain conclusions might have been drawn from this circumstance. Of this, however, I know nothing, that is to say, as to whether, for this reason anything has been noticed, in that then, the internal senses were sometimes withdrawn from the external, though not in such way that any one would make any judgment therefrom; for at such times they could think no other than that I was occupied with thoughts. The actual speech is not heard by any one save myself and those in the heavens who are present and to whom God Messiah grants permission to hear it. Yet sometimes the speech is as clear and distinct as the human voice—though not so high or with so rough a sound as when coming through one's lips. So much is this the case that sometimes even angels and spirits, etc., were afraid they would be heard by those who were present in the world.¹⁹⁷

Both before the time he stayed with Brockmer and afterwards, Swedenborg doubted that anybody was aware of his unusual experiences. It really does make me wonder, if Brockmer's story did actually take place, why Swedenborg doesn't mention it in his books of the time? Why does Swedenborg say nobody noticed anything unusual about his public behavior, and yet if we are to believe Mathesius' account of Brockmer's story in both its recensions, all these witnesses noticed Swedenborg naked and rolling in the mud, and so on. As Rev. James Spilling asked in 1890, where is the testimony of all these witnesses?⁴

Possible origins of the Brockmer story

We know that while Swedenborg was with Brockmer, he did attend the Moravian Chapel in Fetter Lane every Sunday.¹⁹⁸ Higham suggests that Swedenborg's mere attendance could have created some interest, if not gossip about the Swedish gentleman who was lodging with Brockmer and came to the chapel with him.¹⁹⁹ I have already mentioned that second-hand testimony from Shearsmith attested that Brockmer was so angry at Swedenborg leaving him that he "spread a report that he was mad."¹⁵²

In 1914 Rev. Hugo Odhner came up with an interesting theory based on the evidence that Brockmer and his maid were guilty of meddling with Swedenborg's papers.¹⁵¹ The two came across Swedenborg's *Journal of Dreams* and finding it written in Swedish, showed it to a Swedish speaking acquaintance, who translated Swedenborg's dreams of the night between 20th and 21st June, in which he sees himself naked, except for a shirt, in a church at nighttime. Swedenborg interprets it as referring to his lack of preparation for the task ahead.²⁰⁰ Odhner continues:

Brockmer disappointed at losing a lodger and at the same time a possible convert to the Moravian Church, (which Swedenborg had been attending while living with Brockmer), may have told others of this dream (and other dreams equally personal) as if it had described an actual occurrence—subsequently adding further embroideries—until it finally reached the ears of Wesley, and of Mathesius, the Swedish Clergyman in London, who was personally acquainted with Brockmer, and whose malevolent gossip coined the 'Insanity myth' into common currency.²⁰¹

I suppose it is possible, but how could anybody prove it to be true? As with a lot of evidence or opinions about the evidence concerning the whole Swedenborg "Insanity myth," there is no corroboration from other witnesses or facts.

Chastanier relates that in 1785 Springer confirmed to him "in the presence of a numerous and respectable company"¹³⁴ that there were two origins to Brockmer's story. One was mentioned above attributed to Brooksbank, that Brockmer as a Moravian was upset about what Swedenborg said about Moravians in his book *Continuation concerning the Last Judgement*,¹⁴⁶ although I find this hard to believe for reasons stated above. Maybe from hindsight it could have aggravated things, but it seems far more realistic to believe that Swedenborg left because Brockmer and his maid meddled with his papers, and were trying to dictate how he should live his life, which caused him to leave. Brockmer, worried that his reputation might have been damaged, which would result in him not obtaining further lodgers, began a malicious rumor to protect his reputation.

The second incident which may have caused Brockmer's story concerned two thieving Jews who took advantage of Swedenborg when he was in

a swoon, or a kind of ecstasis or trance into which Swedenborg fell in their presence in his own house; when they profited of this ecstasis, to steal from him his gold watch. As soon as Swedenborg recovered his consciousness after his trance, he noticed that his watch had been taken from his pillow, and he asked the two Jews who were with him to restore it. They said to him, "Do you not know that in your ecstasis you seized your watch yourself; that you went out into the street, and threw it into the gutter." Swedenborg contented himself with replying, "My friends, you know that this statement is false." Being afterwards advised to prosecute these two rogues in a court of justice, he said, "It is not worth while; these good Israelites by this action have injured themselves more than me. May the Lord have pity on them."²⁰²

Circumstantially this story may fit in with the fact that Brockmer was a gold watch engraver. We also know that during 1743 and 1744 Swedenborg had experienced trances,²⁰³ ecstasies²⁰⁴ and swoons.²⁰⁵ Maybe his defence would have been harmed if he had admitted to having an altered state of consciousness, or he would have drawn unwelcome publicity to himself if he had resorted to prosecuting the Jews?

In the *Word Explained* Swedenborg mentions that the kingdom of heaven "has several times been shown me, first in the quiet of sleep and afterwards in midday or time of wakefulness, so that I could perceive it with the utmost clearness by every sensation."²⁰⁶ Presumably a swoon is one subcategory of Swedenborg's second type of "apparition," "when the man is in wakefulness, and the internal senses are removed, as it were, from the external,"²⁰⁷ which happened to him "frequently."²⁰⁸ Presumably it is this type of spiritual experience, which was described by Shearsmith,¹⁶⁶ Tuxen,¹⁷⁰ and when he knew that Emperor Peter III of Russia had been executed.¹⁷⁷ So there are possible examples of Swedenborg beginning a vision by having a swoon.

Secondly, we know from what Shearsmith told Dr. Peter Provo in 1792 that Swedenborg

was also regardless of money, leaving a very large purse of guineas in an open closet in his room, and the room-door open when he went out,²⁰⁹ and He seemed to lead a life like an infant, putting little value on money, and giving what people asked for their goods when he bought them.²¹⁰

Charles Lindegren retrieved “a good gold watch” amongst his effects after his death.²¹¹ Whether this was a replacement watch for the one stolen, or whether Swedenborg was wealthy enough to have two or more, we will never know.

As with most of the explanations of the events alleged by Brockmer, there is no way of corroborating Rev. Hugo Odhner’s theory, nor of corroborating Springer’s two origins of the ‘insanity myth’. We do know about at least some of Swedenborg’s trances, ecstasies and swoons from 1744 onwards and later. Whether he had such an experience at Brockmer’s house in 1744 is doubtful, because Swedenborg himself maintains that nobody knew he was having altered states of consciousness. As Higham argued in 1914, nobody knows what experiences Swedenborg had at Brockmer’s,¹⁹⁴ apart from the dreams he had during his stay with him.

Swedenborg the alleged Messiah

In Mathesius’ accounts of Swedenborg’s alleged “epileptic fit,” for want of a better description, Swedenborg is supposed to have told Brockmer that “he was the Messiah: that he was come to be crucified for the Jews.”²¹² White claims that this detail as well the rest of Brockmer’s story fits “into the incoherences of the Diary with singular credibility.”²¹³ We will now examine whether this fits as snugly as White makes out.

The first problem is that Swedenborg doesn’t seem to use the word “Messiah” in his *Journal of Dreams*! The Greek translation of the Hebrew word MASHIACH is Christ in its anglicized form. Swedenborg uses “Christ” some 36 times, 6 of which in conjunction with “Jesus.” The *Journal of Dreams* was written in Swedish, so I am not able to confirm whether Swedenborg uses “Messiah” in these places, or the Swedish equivalent of “Christ.” I can only assume that he uses the latter.

[Editor's note: Rev. Erik Sandstrom writes: "Swedenborg nowhere uses the name Messiah, but frequently the Swedish form *Christus* of the Greek equivalent for "Messiah." He inflects the name Latin-style (as is still customary in Swedish religious language), so that the genitive becomes *Christi* and the dative (*in*) *Christo*. It is interesting that Swedenborg, still a Lutheran, frequently falls back on contemporary church phrases, such as 'Gudz nad igenom Christi fortienst' (the grace of God through the merit of Christ). 'Ware Herre' (our Lord) occurs a number of times, and sometimes the expression is joined to 'God' rather than 'Christ,' as in 'Den Hogste...helig, helig, Herre Gud Zebaoth...ware Herre' (The Most High...holy, holy, Lord Zebaoth...our Lord). As Swedenborg tells of the Lord Himself appearing to him, however, the names are Jesus and Christus, sometimes in combination, as: 'Det ar Jesu Christi werk och intet mitt' (the work is that of Jesus Christ, and is not mine).]

The second difficulty is that nowhere in the *Journal of Dreams* does Swedenborg call himself the Messiah. He nowhere calls himself "Christ," or "God," or "the Almighty," or "the Holy Spirit," which is not surprising to Swedenborgians. For Swedenborg, God, in whatever terms he uses for Him, is separate and distinct from him. Some examples of his usage of "Christ" will suffice without laboring the point. The first example occurs while he was staying with Brockmer:

Christ showed me the divine grace. (JD 209)

...the all in all is to allow Christ to draw his providing care about us in the spiritual and the worldly. (JD 233e)

But God through Christ is the only one that helped me herein. He is my Lord and Master, and I am his slave. Honor and thanks to him, without whom no one can come to God. (JD 248)

In his *Journal of Dreams* Swedenborg spoke like any other 18th century Lutheran about God. I will now restrict myself to those entries written while he was staying with Brockmer:¹⁹²

3. Love to God in Christ is that by which salvation is promoted. 4. And then the man allows himself to be guided by the Spirit of Jesus. 5. All that comes from ourselves is dead, and nothing else than sin; and worthy of everlasting condemnation. 6. For no good can come from any other source than the Lord. (JD 198)

The day before I was so set in order that I had inward rest and peace in the Lord's disposal; and also the whole time recognized the Holy Spirit's strong operation, the bliss, and the earthly kingdom of heaven that filled the whole body. (JD 199)

I was in thoughts about those that resisted the Holy Spirit and those that allowed themselves to be governed by it. (JD 203)

To God alone be praise and honor. (JD 210e)

In 1746 in his book *Adversaria* or *Word Explained*, there was only one Messiah, and it certainly wasn't Swedenborg! For Swedenborg the 18th century Lutheran Christian, the Messiah is Jesus Christ:

...the Messiah, the Savior of the world. (WE 95; 98)

...the Messiah himself, the Saviour of the world, Jesus the Nazarene. (WE 478)

...the Messiah alone, the King of that kingdom, the Savior of the world, Jesus the Nazarene, anointed as King, whence he is called Christ, born of the virgin Mary... (WE 483)

Now Christians often quote passages in the Bible, which talk about Jesus being in them.²¹⁴ Swedenborg in 1746 also talks about Christ or the Messiah being in people:

the Messiah, the only-begotten son of God, in those who are his, when he is in them as in himself,...And yet there is not the least thing in the thought, nor the least thing in the will, and consequently not the least

thing in all that flows from the will, such as the actions and the several motions of man's body, which is not actuated by the Messiah himself just as if it were himself. Thus man is led in all respects like a passive potency or a dead force (as, in himself, he indeed is, although he himself is of a different opinion) by its active and living force; that is, as an instrumental cause is led solely by its prime efficient cause.

That the life of those who are in the Messiah is of this nature, can never be believed by anyone who has not been informed by Him, and who could have no experience testified to in himself.²¹⁵

As usual, Swedenborg's theology was based on the Bible and personal experience of God. It would be extremely out of character for Swedenborg to call himself the Messiah. However, it would not be un-Christian of him to talk about himself as being "moved," "inspired" or "actuated by the Messiah."

If ever Swedenborg were to call himself the "Messiah" it would be in this derivative sense, just as Jesus "the light of the world" (John 8:12) called his followers "the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14). This was the way that Beatson argued, when he wrote to John Wesley sometime in the 1780s:

Even supposing it to be true, that Swedenborg once called himself the Messiah, (which, however, is a character that he has nowhere assumed in any of his writings) this may be accounted for in the same manner, as we would account for angels calling themselves Jehovah, as they frequently did, when they appeared to the prophets of old. On such occasions, their own proprium or selfhood was quiescent, or as it were laid aside; and they were so filled with the presence and spirit of Jehovah, that they knew no otherwise but they themselves were Jehovah; having for the moment no consciousness or perception of their own proper life as creatures, but being overwhelmed as it were with the Divinity, which, for the purpose of revelation, made use of their persons as organs of divine speech. In like manner we apprehend it to be *possible*, (though we do not say that it was a *real fact*,) that Swedenborg, by whose means the Second Advent of the

Lord is actually effected, might once have called himself the Messiah, when, being filled with the Holy Spirit, he as it were lost the consciousness of his own existence, and spake merely as the representative of the Lord. Be this however as it may, it is certain, that in the whole of his writings (by which alone we can form a true judgment of his character) he discovers the deepest humility, the soundest judgment, and the most pious and christian-like spirit, disclaiming every idea of self-importance, and perpetually ascribing to the Lord alone all glory, honour, praise, and power.²¹⁶

In the Bible the prophets spoke as though they were the LORD,²¹⁷ and human messengers spoke as though they were their master.²¹⁸ So if Swedenborg were to call himself the Messiah, it could only be in a derivative sense, because as said in his writings from that period and others, the Messiah is always Jesus Christ.

Another explanation given by Swedenborgians in the past is that Brockmer misheard Swedenborg. Rev. Woodville Woodman expressed this theory in 1867:

And if the description given in Mr. White's book of Swedenborg's broken English, when he exclaimed of his works, 'De voil be not vordy of dem,' is a correct one, the probability is rather that Mr. Brockmer mistook what Swedenborg said, than that the latter should have so directly contradicted the whole tenor of his writings.²¹⁹

The Shearsmiths told Peckitt in 1778 that Swedenborg "did not know the English language so as to hold a running conversation in it. He had an impediment in his speech."²²⁰ Four years later Shearsmith told Dr. Provo:

In English he conversed but indifferently, but more freely in Latin with those who visited him. Mr. Hartley and he, I think, always conversed in Latin, and also some of the Swedish clergy.²²¹

Swedenborg always had a speech impediment.²²² Swedenborg "usually spoke very distinctly, but stammered a little when he spoke too fast."²²³ According to Robsahm, "It was difficult for him to talk quickly; for

he then stuttered, especially when he was obliged to talk in a foreign tongue."²²⁴

Snippets of his broken English have been preserved for us, such as "Dat be he! Dat be he!," when, from his approaching coach he saw Shearsmith.²²⁵ When Swedenborg asked Shearsmith to shake his carpet on a Sunday, and Swedenborg hadn't realized what day it was, and Shearsmith suggested they do it the next day, Swedenborg immediately replied, "Dat be good! Dat be good!"²²⁶ Minutes before his death, which he had predicted a month before, Swedenborg asked the Shearsmiths what time it was, and when they said 5 p.m., he said "Dat be good! Me tank you, God bless you." He said goodbye to them and then calmly passed on.²²⁷

So for Swedenborg the stammerer speaking English as a foreign language, he might have been misheard by Brockmer. Even Mathesius agrees that Swedenborg did have a speech impediment, both in his 1781 account and his 1796 one.²²⁸ It is reasonable that he could have been misheard, because nowhere in his writings of the period and later, does he acknowledge himself to be the Messiah. For this 18th century Lutheran Christian, only the LORD Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ or Messiah. The only sensible conclusion is that were he to have called himself the Messiah, it was in a derivative sense, that is, the LORD Jesus Christ inspiring him, made him the Messiah.

The only passage in his theological writings which I know of which could remotely be envisaged as Swedenborg acknowledging himself to be the Messiah is in *True Christian Religion*, but even it is in a derivative sense, and he never uses the word "Messiah":

This, the Lord's second coming, is taking place by means of a man, to whom He has shown Himself in person, and whom He has filled with His spirit, so that he may teach the doctrines of the new church which come from the Lord through the Word.

Since the Lord cannot show Himself in person, as has just been demonstrated, and yet He predicted that He would come and found a new church, which is the New Jerusalem, it follows that He will do this by means of a man, who can not only receive intellectually the doctrines of this church, but also publish them in print. I bear true witness that the

Lord has shown Himself in the presence of me, His servant, and sent me to perform this function. After this He opened the sight of my spirit, thus admitting me to the spiritual world, and allowing me to see the heavens and the hells, and also to talk with angels and spirits; and this I have been doing for many years without a break. Equally I assert that from the first day of my calling I have not received any instruction concerning the doctrine of that church from any angel, but only from the Lord, while I was reading the Word.²²⁹

White also knows of no place in Swedenborg's theological Writings, that he claims to be the Messiah. Without any proof whatsoever, he suggests: "it may be that he left off the use of that title [Messiah] when he emerged from the phantastic state described in the Diary of 1744,"²³⁰ which is consistent with his view that Swedenborg was insane during the writing of it.²³¹ White also argues that *True Christian Religion* 779 quoted above "may fairly be held as its equivalent."²³⁰

Swedenborg's alleged "special mission' syndrome"⁷⁰

If some of the psychiatrists we have mentioned were asked to examine TR 779, I suspect they would diagnose Swedenborg as a schizophrenic with "special mission' syndrome."^{64, 70} Other passages which White quotes in his book could also be regarded as further examples: eg AC 5; CL 1; NC 52.²³² White seems to anticipate the psychiatrists, when he writes:

Swedenborg's frequent assertion, that the Lord had manifested Himself before him in Person, is often adduced as the final touch of his fanaticism; but when we ascertain the terms of his meaning, much of its strangeness disappears.²³³

(We will look at God's appearances to Swedenborg later on in this article.)

White expresses annoyance at Swedenborg's "habit of parading his Divine Call as a passport to confidence; and yet no man ever more emphatically taught the impossibility of creating belief by external compulsion."²³⁴ One reason he (White) seems to give for this is because

The speciality which Swedenborg attributes to his Divine Call and Mission is a great annoyance to many...they feel they must either pronounce him a fanatic, or he will throw their intellectual system into chaos. There is something to be said for and against their perplexity.²³⁵

Consequently, White is at great pains to moderate the apparent exclusivism of Swedenborg's statement:

For myself I am very tolerant of such pretensions, with the proviso, that they are in no sense final or exclusive. If Christ be Truth, and we discover Truth in Swedenborg's books, Christ makes His advent to us in them. Nevertheless he lays an illicit emphasis on his service; for if, as he himself testifies, whoever wills what is good or thinks what is true, receives and reveals the Lord, why should he try to make off as unique what is happily so frequent and familiar? By these pretensions, totally inconsistent with his philosophy, he brings an air of *charlatanerie* about himself which is highly offensive to sincere minds.²³⁰

White's attempt to moderate such seemingly exclusive statements is based on the following arguments:

- (1) Hindu fakirs, like Swedenborg, have been able to control their respiration, and experience altered states of consciousness;²³⁶
- (2) Swedenborg's was like most Seers' experiences but the latter's were only momentary;
- (3) Everyone is unconscious in the next world right at this very moment (HH 438);²³⁷
- (4) Every Anglican clergyman and bishop claim to have been called by God, as does every "Dissenting Minister," and every Roman Catholic priest;²³⁸
- (5) The Divine in Swedenborg is the same as in all other people, no matter how wise or how simple. It all depends "on the quality of their acceptance of the divine" (LW 78);²³⁹
- (6) There is no reason why any of us cannot say that God has spoken to us;²⁴⁰

- (7) God is too transcendent to be seen by human beings,²⁴¹ so when Swedenborg saw the LORD, he saw Him as the Sun of heaven,²⁴² or, like the prophets and apostles of the Bible, he saw an angel filled with the LORD's presence.²⁴³ (I would also add that when angels see the LORD they see a 'higher' angel infilled with Him.²⁴⁴);
- (8) "We shall see the Lord, if at death we find ourselves among the angels; and so we should see Him even now were our inner eyes opened."²⁴⁵

White summarizes his view:

So likewise even here, we may at times have seen the Lord possess a good man, as Swedenborg tells us he has seen Him possess an Angel, in some sacred hour when "filled with the Holy Ghost," his face has become as Stephen's, as though "it had been the face of an Angel," we observe a light in his eyes hitherto unseen, a sound in his voice heretofore unheard, a passion and an unction in his eloquence heretofore unknown. When the afflatus has departed he feels that he has been other than himself, that a glory not his own has been round his brows and that words such as he never conceived have been gliding over his lips. After such an experience, reverently, may we not say?—We have seen and heard the Lord in His servant.²⁴⁶

How do I cope with Swedenborg's claims that his experiences were unique?

When reading that some of the things Swedenborg heard and saw, "have never come to any man's knowledge, nor even entered his imagination,"²⁴⁷ and "admission into the spiritual world...has not been granted to anyone since the creation, as it has been to me,"²⁴⁸ I, like White, temper such statements with such claims as:

- (1) Swedenborg's admission that he was unique, was "as far as" he knew,²⁴⁹ or from his knowledge of history.²⁵⁰
- (2) Every human being is capable of having visions and talking to angels in the next world, if they weren't so materialistic and worldly,²⁵¹ and if the LORD wanted it to happen.²⁵² Swedenborg believed that a few people in his day could have visions,²⁵³ and that as the new spiritual

age progressed the likelihood of people having visions would increase.²⁵⁴

- (3) Swedenborg knew that besides prophets, Christian saints had seen into heaven.²⁵⁵ Angels had told Swedenborg that several 'mortals' like himself had been with them in their heaven.²⁵⁶
- (4) In 1748 some spirits "supposed" that Swedenborg was 'exclusively' unique, but presumably angels told them otherwise. These spirits had assumed that Swedenborg only

was in such a state as to be capable, by a spiritual idea, of perceiving interior things, and of being as a spirit, from whence, as usual, they drew some kind of sinister inference; but it was said to them that all could be such if the Lord pleased, even the most stupid...with whomsoever the Lord pleases the mind may be opened, so that by a spiritual idea things may be intuitively perceived—in an orderly manner with those who are in faith, and in an extraordinary and miraculous manner with those who are not in faith.²⁵⁷

This exploration of how unique Swedenborg's experiences were, reminds me of the discussions that took place between Wilson van Dusen and Rev. Erik Sandstrom, and the former and Rev Erik E. Sandstrom in 1976 and 1977 respectively, regarding the validity of such things as meditation and Near Death Experiences, based on what was revealed to Swedenborg as opposed to what has been experienced personally by individuals.²⁵⁸ Possibly the doctrinal material presented in this section would go some way in helping them to bridge the gap between their respective positions?

In 1980 Larsen talked of looking at Swedenborg's "visions...as particularly unique and valuable instances of what is, in fact, a universal human capacity. It is the recorded annals of this capacity I refer to as 'the visionary tradition.'" Larsen believes that for Westerners, "Swedenborg is indeed an exemplary guide, helping us to establish both the scope of the quest [of exploring our 'inner space'], and its potential value as well as dangerous pitfalls."²⁵⁹

Possibly if psychiatrists knew that Swedenborg wasn't so absolute, in his emphasizing his uniqueness, then maybe they wouldn't regard him as

suffering from monomania or schizophrenia. Possibly if Swedenborgians were more aware of the material in this section, they wouldn't feel so threatened when Swedenborg's uniqueness is questioned. As with all writers, it is only when you study their books in depth do you get the full picture of what they're saying. It is not really fair to home in on one statement a person makes, and make this the only pronouncement on a particular subject—despite what the media does! I believe that Swedenborg's visionary experiences were extraordinary, special, and unique, but I don't believe that they preclude other people having similar visions. At the end of the day I have to admit that I haven't found time so far to read more visionaries from the East and the West to fully evaluate Swedenborg's experiences. Therefore I can't in all honesty deny the possibility that another 'unique' individual hasn't had visionary experiences on a par with or which surpass Swedenborg's. I still admire Swedenborg as a person, and I still believe his theological Writings are a revelation from God.

The Vision in the Inn²⁶⁰

We now move on to an incident which, it is claimed, happened to Swedenborg in April 1745, while he was in an inn in London. Some non-psychiatrists have used this to question Swedenborg's sanity.²⁶¹

According to Carl Robsahm, an accountant²⁶² at the Bank of Stockholm, in April 1745 while Swedenborg was in London, he had a vision which began his calling as a revelator. Swedenborgian commentators, would assume that this was a visionary experience, in which the LORD opened the sight of his spirit, so that he was able to witness this event unfolding in the next world. With regard to Swedenborg's call it is generally assumed in Swedenborgian circles to have been a gradual one beginning in the *Journal of Dreams* period of 1743–1744.²⁶³ In writing his "memoirs of Swedenborg" for Carl Frederic Nordensköld in 1782, Robsahm recalled the conversation with Swedenborg in which he asked him about "where and how it was granted him to see and to hear what takes place in the world of spirits, in heaven, and in hell." Robsahm continues:

...Whereupon Swedenborg answered as follows: I was in London and dined rather late at the inn where I was in the habit of dining, and where I had my own room. My thoughts were engaged on the subjects we have been discussing. I was hungry, and ate with a good appetite. Towards the close of the meal I noticed a sort of dimness before my eyes: this became denser, and I then saw the floor covered with the most horrid crawling reptiles, such as snakes, frogs, and similar creatures. I was amazed; for I was perfectly conscious, and my thoughts were clear. At last the darkness increased still more but it disappeared all at once, and I then saw a man sitting in a corner of the room; as I was then alone, I was very much frightened at his words, for he said: "*Eat not so much.*" All became black again before my eyes, but immediately it cleared away, and I found myself alone in the room.

Such an unexpected terror hastened my return home; I did not let the landlord notice anything; but I considered well what had happened, and could not look upon it as a mere matter of chance, or as if it had been produced by a physical cause.

I went home; and during the night the same man revealed himself to me again, but I was not frightened now. He then said that He was the Lord God, the Creator of the world, and the Redeemer, and that He had chosen me to explain to men the spiritual sense of the Scripture, and that He Himself would explain to me what I should write on this subject; that same night also were opened to me, so that I became thoroughly convinced of their reality, the worlds of spirits, heaven, and hell, and I recognized there many acquaintances of every condition in life. From that day I gave up the study of all worldly science, and laboured in spiritual things, according as the Lord had commanded me to write. Afterwards the Lord opened, daily very often, my bodily eyes, so that, in the middle of the day I could see into the other world, and in a state of perfect wakefulness converse with angels and spirits.²⁶⁴

It cannot be stressed too much that Robsahm's account is secondhand, despite Robsahm putting it in the first person, which gives the impression

that it is firsthand. Thus it is not as reliable as Swedenborg's firsthand accounts.^{265, 301} As Regamey says:

Is it not the first duty of a scrupulous biographer worthy of the name to verify the source of all the documents he plans to use and give primary importance to the actual testimony of the man himself?²⁶⁶

A third-hand account of this event, occurs in Pernety's preface to a French translation of *Heaven and Hell*, published in 1782 in Berlin.²⁶⁷ In "Pernety's account" the animals change from being "the most horrid crawling reptiles, such as snakes, frogs, and similar creatures" to being "snakes, toads, caterpillars, and other hideous reptiles."²⁶⁸ Pernety seems to incorporate Dr. Beyer's description of this calling, which he included in a letter to C.F. Nordenskold in 1776,²⁶⁹ by adding the details that the man or angel was surrounded by light, and that he "was clothed in imperial purple."²⁷⁰ The actual text of the letter Dr. Gabriel Beyer wrote to C.F. Nordenskold in 1776, is as follows:

The information respecting the Lord's personal appearance before the Assessor, who saw Him, in imperial purple and in majestic light, seated near his bed, while He gave Assessor Swedenborg his commission, I had from his own lips at a dinner-party in the house of Dr. Rosen, where I saw the old gentleman for the first time. I remember that I asked him how long this lasted; whereupon he answered, About a quarter of an hour; also, whether the strong light did not affect his eyes; when he said, No.²⁶⁹

There are other slight differences in Pernety's account, such as the angel appearing the following night, rather than later during that same night; slightly different words used by the angel although the substance is the same; and the angel would "dictate"²⁷¹ rather than explain what Swedenborg had to write.²⁶⁴ Pernety then assures us that "Swedenborg related the same circumstances to Doctors Beyer and Rosen, while dining at the house of the latter in Gottenburg."²⁷²

However, there are subtle differences between Robsahm's account and Swedenborg's own accounts, written 37 and 2 years after the event respectively. In 1747 Swedenborg wrote his own less complete account of

these events. He does concur that these occurrences happened in April 1745, but at midday not "rather late"! There is not "the most horrid crawling reptiles such as snakes, frogs, and similar creatures" but only worms! In Swedenborg's account the man is identified as "an angel," who tells him "not to indulge the belly too much at the table," but he appears before the vision of creatures, not after it! Swedenborg in his version writes:

While he was with me there then clearly appeared to me, as it were, a vapour exuding from the pores of my body like something watery, in the highest degree visible, which slipped down to the ground where a carpet was seen upon which the collected vapour was turned into various little worms, which being gathered together under the table, were burnt up in a moment, with a loud noise or sound: the fiery light therein was seen by me and the sound heard. I suppose that in this way all the little worms which can be generated by an immoderate appetite were cast out of my body, and thus were consumed, and that I was then cleansed from them.²⁷³

Also between 1744 and 1748 in his unpublished work *Adversaria* or *Word Explained* in commenting on the plague of frogs mentioned in Exodus 8:2–15, Swedenborg talks about "unclean spirits of the lowest sort" who excite a person's desires and "pleasures of the senses," who are symbolically seen as frogs, or sometimes insects, in the next world,²⁷⁴ Thus, frogs are psycho-spiritually related, but not biologically related, to insects. Swedenborg then continues:

On a certain occasion these likewise appeared to me when they were going forth, and this quite plainly so that I saw them crawling before my eyes and soon afterwards gathered together into a unit. Then they were afire, as it were, and burst asunder with a noise which sounded to my ears like the crash when things are shattered. The place was afterwards purified. This was in London in the month of April 1745. Something like smoke was coming out through the pores, but on the ground it appeared like so many crawling worms in great abundance.²⁷⁴

From my understanding of the context, Swedenborg sees insects “crawling before his eyes” and not frogs, and not snakes! The frogs merely come into the equation because as Swedenborg is expounding the frogs of Exodus 8, he is reminded of a vision he had in April 1745. (This also seems to be Toksvig’s conclusion.²⁷⁵) It seems that Robsahm confuses the two, and adds extraneous material to his account of the vision. However, this is my reading of the passage. Pernety possibly mistranslates and elaborates it further.

A different explanation is suggested by Regamey, who believes Swedenborg in WE 3557 describes both frogs and larger insects appearing to him.²⁷⁶ However, the context describes the creatures as “crawling.” Frogs hop. I don’t know that they crawl! But maybe in a vision anything goes, such as locusts looking like war-horses with human faces, hair like that of women, and teeth like those of lions! (Revelation 9:2,7–10) Regamey suggests that Robsahm “may be confusing two separate and unrelated events,”²⁷⁷ by combining two visions Swedenborg had in the Aprils of successive years: one of April 1744²⁷⁸ and one from April 1745 in which he sees frogs and insects,²⁶⁵ but I’m not wholly convinced. Even if this were true, there is no Divine Call in the theophany of April 1744 as strong as that alleged by Robsahm in April 1745.

A Critical Look at the Vision in the Inn

Most if not all biographies of Swedenborg in English, whether supportive, hostile or neutrally critical, don’t mention the problems that exist with Robsahm’s account of the “Vision in the Inn.” It is imperative therefore for serious investigators of this incident to study articles by Rev. A. G. Regamey [1937, 1966]²⁶⁰ and Rev. Dr. Friedemann Horn [1987].²⁷⁹ No matter which part of Robsahm’s memoirs is used by researchers, they also need to be aware that there are various versions of them. Hallengren’s [1994]²⁶² excellent introduction to a critical edition of Robsahm’s memoirs has thankfully been translated into English by Rev Dr. George Dole. However, Hallengren’s synoptic examination of the various versions are only available in Swedish, as far as I know. Sadly I must confess to neither

understanding Swedish nor having access to this publication.* Having made these remarks, let us now proceed to a critical examination of the "Vision in the Inn" incident.

Swedenborg himself in his indices confirms that SD 397 and WE 3557 describe the same event.²⁸⁰ There are definite similarities between the first part of the vision in Robsahm's account, such as Swedenborg overeating as in SD 397, or frogs symbolizing bodily appetites in WE 3557. It is Robsahm who mentions "dimness" which the other two accounts don't mention.

It seems reasonable that Swedenborg had a vision about worms in April 1745. He was reminded of this incident in late December 1747, because at that time he was shown the symbolism of filthy and disgusting little animals, such as mice, as being that of illusions and fantasies derived from avarice.²⁸¹ In the next world people are shown their failings in a very visible way, by them being projected in front of their very eyes in a symbolic way. Even insects²⁸² are used to encourage people to confront their disproportionate love of physical things. When this attachment to food or money has been lessened, then the little creatures are turned into human beings, because the person has become more human.²⁸³ Although the angel spoke to Swedenborg before the vision in SD 397 but after the vision in Robsahm's account, I wonder whether this vision showed Swedenborg that he was tempering his gluttony, that is, "cleansed from" the worms?

In WE 3557 it is "The place was afterwards purified." In the next world whether the person or his surroundings are improved, it is one and the same thing, because our surroundings are a mirror of our character or mood at any given moment.²⁸⁴ As mentioned above from Acton's translation, only worms occur in the vision—even though Regamey's translation assumes that frogs were seen²⁷⁶—but Swedenborg links their symbolism with that of frogs, because he is expounding Exodus 8:1–2. Possibly there is an ambiguity in the Latin, which also confused Robsahm, or Swedenborg in linking worms symbolically with frogs, confused Robsahm.

* See Appendix.

Regamey asks why Swedenborg left out the vision of the LORD in SD 397 and WE 3557?²⁷⁶ A fellow European New Church Minister, Rev Dr. Friedemann Horn, also assumes that if the purification experience was followed by a Divine call, then Swedenborg would have mentioned it. "This is, however, precisely what one would expect if it was a matter of *continued* experience."²⁸⁵ Horn regards "the all too direct"²⁸⁶ "connection of the two experiences" as being "most certainly mistaken."²⁸⁷ I don't share Horn's degree of certainty, but I do take on board his mild castigation of English-speaking Swedenborgian researchers who do not acknowledge that the connection between the purification experience and the Divine call is not as clear cut as some writers make out.²⁸⁸

Horn makes good points about Robsahm's account being cited "as the only reliable source on his calling into the office of seer," which threatens to cause Beyer's account "to fall into oblivion." Horn believes that Robsahm's account is plausible because Robsahm was a friend of Swedenborg's; Swedenborg expresses himself in the first person; and Robsahm's account is the most detailed and the most dramatic.²⁸⁵ Horn also believes that Beyer's account is "less effective," ignoring "the truth-content of the two accounts."²⁸⁹ Horn also thinks that Robsahm's account is the "livelier and more immediate of the two."²⁸⁷

But assuming for a minute that Swedenborg deliberately left out the Divine call, it could have been that in the SD 397 passage he was setting it in the context of seeing little creatures in the next life, while in WE 3557 he was reminded of it because of the symbolism of the frogs. If an angel is really infilled with the Divine of the LORD,²⁴³ then the fact that in SD 397 an angel tells Swedenborg "not to indulge the belly too much at the table" before the vision, while in Robsahm's account the man saying "Eat not so much" occurs after the vision, means that the LORD had appeared to Swedenborg.

In 1987 Horn would not have agreed with me connecting "the man" with "the angel." He writes quite categorically:

In Swedenborg's terminology an angel is unequivocally a being of the other world to which Swedenborg had been given access by the Lord, but under no circumstance "the Lord God" himself, the "Creator of the world and the Savior."²⁸⁷

However, as has been stated already, the LORD infills angels so that they speak on His behalf to people.²⁴³ Since in Swedenborg's experience, angels are people, both males and females,²⁹⁰ there is no reason why "the man" could not have been "an angel" infilled by "the LORD."

Regamey questions whether this episode "stands in strange contrast to all that Swedenborg says elsewhere on the nature and character of a Divine Revelation." He also wonders whether such a context for the commission "lacks completely the element of dignity that one would expect in connection with such a noble cause and so important a mission."²⁶⁶ This probably lay behind Horn's comment that Robsahm's account "casts a peculiar light—to put it mildly—upon Swedenborg and his calling."²⁸⁷

But if we consider the appearances of the LORD to Swedenborg during 1744—something which neither Regamey nor Horn considered fully—we have to ask ourselves how dignified were they? For example on 6th–7th April Swedenborg experienced both belief in and doubts about God's miracles through Moses. After going to bed, he heard a noise under his head, began to shudder, and "found that something holy was upon me." This returned again and threw him out of bed. Words were put in his mouth identifying his sinfulness, and he then saw the LORD Jesus. He had a few doubts about the genuineness of the experience, but soon convinced himself.²⁹¹ Did Swedenborg see "Christ crucified" after he had a sexual dream and was in temptation on 13th–14th April?²⁹²

It seems to me that if we believe in a God who became a human being to rescue us from all sorts of human frailties, then He has to meet us where we are. To quote SD 2990: "the Lord appears to many, in the other life, *in a form suitable to them*" [my emphasis]. At one of Swedenborg's darkest moments the LORD appeared to him:

When I was in damnable thoughts, the worst that could be, in the same hour Jesus Christ was presented strongly before my inner eyes and the operation of the Holy Spirit came over me, so that I could know therefrom that the devil was away.²⁹³

Later still, Swedenborg sees the LORD borrow some money off someone else. Swedenborg picks up money the LORD drops and gives it back

to Him. Swedenborg notes: "It seemed it was Christ himself with whom I associated as with any other man, without ceremony."²⁹⁴

As with all types of scholarship, if you search long and hard enough you will find someone who agrees with you. So anybody can find people who believe the "vision in the inn" is authentic and others who don't. Even Horn knew that in 1948 Professor Ernst Benz believed that Robsahm's account was genuine:

Precisely the connection between the purification experience and the actual vision of being called appeared to him a sign of authenticity. Similar connections were well known among countless authentic, Christian calling visions, he asserted.²⁸⁶

However, Benz was more cautious in 1969. In 1969 Benz thought this vision "entirely contradict[s] the other visions of Swedenborg's," and is to "be rejected on the basis of being incorrect."²⁸⁸ The world-famous psychiatrist C.G. Jung (1875–1961) didn't believe in its authenticity on the basis that one of his patients saw a white-bearded God in checkered pants, which Jung described as "a similarly grotesque 'caricature.'"²⁹⁵ Horn [1987] is convinced that by believing the LORD was the angel or the man, people would "place Swedenborg's calling-vision into the realm of the absurd."²⁸⁶ But does this say more about the opinions and belief of the maker of such a comment, or the vision? If the LORD "appears to many, in the other life, in a form suitable to them,"²⁹⁶ and when we dream or have a vision, we are seeing into the next life,²⁹⁷ why can't the LORD appear to Swedenborg as a man, or as a white-bearded man with checked trousers?

In 1994 Hallengren²⁹⁸ cited a number of people who believed Robsahm's account was genuine. Walt Whitman believed that the "Vision in the Inn" was

"a historic event" that happened in "somewhat comical" fashion, the most unromantic and vulgar circumstances: toward the end of a meal in an inn in London. Whitman understood this in terms of himself. Like Ralph Waldo Emerson earlier, he had become aware of the divine presence precisely in the most everyday things.

Hallengren then paraphrases Joseph Von Goerres, the German politician and writer, in 1827, who also believed it to be authentic:

This very call vision speaks for Swedenborg's honesty and passion for truth: it gives the impression of authenticity. A charlatan would have come up with a more evocative and dazzling introduction to his visions.²⁹⁸

Hallengren admits to not being able to evaluate how much of Robsahm's information is accurate:

The truth eludes us and we peer through a haze of plausibilities. We tend to say that what Robsahm himself saw and heard during the latter years of Swedenborg's life happened credibly and reliably, while part of the earlier information has more a hearsay quality and does not come from Swedenborg himself.²⁹⁹

However, Robsahm is viewed as "unpretentious,"²⁹⁹ who took information "down in complete honesty and conscientiousness, to the limit of" his "ability and understanding."³⁰⁰

Robsahm as a witness is honest but limited. Like Beyer he is second-hand.^{265, 301} Is my contextual explanation, that Swedenborg didn't need to mention the Divine call in SD 397 and WE 3557, plausible? If not, we still have to speculate that Robsahm has, absentmindedly or unintentionally, linked two separate events. Again we have evidence that is incomplete in this study. We now need to look at Swedenborg's theophanies, that is, the appearances of the LORD to Swedenborg.

In 1990 the Rev. Brian W. Keith presented a paper entitled "Seeing the Lord" to the Council of the Clergy of the General Church of the New Jerusalem in the United States. It was subsequently printed in *New Church Life*. He lists passages in Swedenborg's theological Writings, in which the LORD appears to Swedenborg,³⁰² which we will now examine. Unfortunately, like Regamey and Horn, Keith doesn't look at the theophanies in the *Journal of Dreams*.

Swedenborg quite often mentions seeing our LORD Jesus as a human being,³⁰³ which, along with being conscious in the next world, “surpasses all miracles.”³⁰⁴ In 1764 Librarian C.C. Gjoerwell was told by Swedenborg in a conversation, that the LORD Jesus had appeared to him in person in London in 1744.³⁰⁵ Swedenborg in two letters mentions the LORD Jesus appearing to him in person: such as the one to C.F. Oetinger in 1766,³⁰⁶ and to Rev. Thomas Hartley in 1769.³⁰⁷

Presumably Swedenborg saw the LORD as a Person, when he sent out the 12 disciples throughout the spiritual world on 19th June 1770.³⁰⁸ When Swedenborg saw the LORD it guaranteed that what he had written was true and from Him.³⁰⁹ He also confirms that when people see the LORD they see an angel infilled with the LORD,³¹⁰ with the eyes of their spirit.³¹¹ Several times evil spirits tried to mimic the LORD, but were shown to be false.³¹² On one occasion Swedenborg is allowed to see into the third or highest heaven, and saw “the Lord Only in an appearance similar to that in which He was seen by John (Revelation 1)” “standing upon the foundation stone.” This vision had the effect of filling the “interiors of the minds of the angels” accompanying Swedenborg with “holiness” and impelling them to prostrate themselves.³¹³ This Divinity or holiness is mentioned by Swedenborg in a dream in “the night between the 18th and 19th November 1751”:

The Lord was seen by me, in a dream with the face and form in which He had been when He was in the world. He was such that interiorly He was full, and, so, could have ruled the whole heaven within...When, also, I awaked I saw Him obscurely; and it was stated that such had been His appearance. In a word, He was filled with heaven and with the Divine.³¹⁴

Swedenborg also witnessed the LORD appearing to spirits from Jupiter, first as the sun of heaven, which they did not acknowledge as the LORD, and then “encompassed with a solar circle.” Earthly contemporaries of Jesus confirmed his identity, as did spirits from Jupiter to whom the LORD had appeared before.³¹⁵ The LORD appears to angels from our planet “in the sun as a Man, encompassed therein with a fiery solar [sphere], from which the angels in the heavens derive all light.”³¹⁶ Swedenborg also saw the LORD as a Sun for several years.³¹⁷ At first

Swedenborg only saw the LORD as a moon,³¹⁸ but by the time of *Heaven and Hell*, it was “sometimes.”³¹⁹ Swedenborg also saw the LORD appearing to a cloud full of angels “speaking from the sun” to them.³²⁰

It seems to me that the LORD can appear to people in whatever guise is needed for them to acknowledge Him, as Swedenborg wrote in SD 2990 quoted above. Swedenborg would use the theological term “accommodation.”³²¹ But to explain why the LORD appeared to Swedenborg as a Divine Human Being and on other occasions as an almost everyday human being, it may be because of the state of the spirits or angels with Swedenborg at the time. Swedenborg writes that there is a vast range of angels from the simple to the wise, from the good to the best.³²² Also Swedenborg teaches us that the LORD has “oftentimes” been seen by him “surrounded” by “a column of spirits” or possibly angels.³²³ I would suggest the spiritual state or quality of the angel or spirit who is infilled by the LORD could explain why the LORD has to adapt Himself more or less.³²⁴ Thus, I believe that there is a variety of theophanies: some more Divine than other, some more everyday. This range of ways we can see God is because of the state of the angels or spirits through whom the LORD appears to people.

From my study of the “Vision in the Inn” I would conclude that there was a Divine Presence in the form of an angel, when Swedenborg noticed vapor exuding from his spiritual body, and becoming worms on the carpet on the floor.^{273, 243} In Swedenborg’s accounts he was not emperor-like nor was he commissioned, as he was in the vision he related to Beyer at a dinner party in 1765,²⁷² which Beyer passed on to Nordenskold in 1776.²⁶⁹ The only person to link the vision of worms with a Divine Commission is Robsahm, who doesn’t portray the LORD as an Emperor. Pernety follows Robsahm but includes Beyer’s account.

We cannot disprove that the vision of worms developed or didn’t develop into the vision of the Divine Emperor commissioning Swedenborg, despite Regamey²⁷⁷ rightly pointing out that Robsahm is wrong when he implies Swedenborg had a mistress when he was a young man,³²⁵ or Swedenborg inherited a lot of money from his father.³²⁶ Each part of Robsahm’s memoirs has to be taken on its own merits. I think it fairer to assume that Robsahm is correct and then try to prove him false. Even Hallengren [1994] accepts that Robsahm did the best job that he could

do,³⁰⁰ and that sometimes there is no way of ascertaining the veracity of some of his reminiscences.²⁹⁹

As mentioned above we assume that Swedenborg in SD 397 was talking about the symbolism of small animals in the next world and was reminded of the “worms” vision of April 1745; whereas in WE 3557 Swedenborg was expounding the frogs of Exodus 8:2–15, and so was focussed on the symbolism of frogs and insects. I believe that Swedenborg’s commission could have developed from a vision of “worms,” despite the apparent lack of dignity or what Swedenborg says about Revelation.²⁶⁶ It fits quite comfortably in with Divine Manifestations to Swedenborg in 1744,^{291–294} and with my theory that Swedenborg experienced a range of ways of seeing God, because of the different types of spirits and angels, through whom the LORD appeared to him.

However, apart from Robsahm writing 37 years after the event, there is no contemporary witness to link the “worms” vision with the “Divine Commission” vision. This conclusion by both Regamey²⁷⁶ and Horn,^{285–287} and by me, requires people who use Robsahm’s account to use it with the greatest deal of caution. It is secondhand testimony at best,²⁶⁵ as is Beyer’s.³⁰¹ The difference between Regamey’s, Horn’s and my position is that I argue that these two visions *could have* occurred or *might have* happened on the same or consecutive nights, but this is only my hypothesis, which is incapable of being verified.

Conclusion

In the February 1996 *Lifeline* Rev. David Lomax asked “How do WE react to criticism?”³²⁷ He had discovered a book written in 1824 by a non-Swedenborgian minister, Rev. G. Beaumont, which was in response to some public lectures in Norwich by Rev. Samuel Noble. I think that this is a valuable question to ask Swedenborgians at the outset of this conclusion. How do we Swedenborgians feel when Swedenborg’s sanity is questioned or vigorously disputed by eminent psychiatrists? Hurt? Threatened? Livid? Angry? Disappointed? Disgusted? Challenged? Excited? I must confess that my first reaction to Johnson’s article was to dismiss it as ill-informed foolishness, but since I had never heard the Brockmer story, doubts were

raised in the back of my mind. But I now feel that I have faced and worked through these doubts to my satisfaction at the moment.

When Swedenborg was being charged with heresy in the Gothenburg trial, he wrote to Dr. Beyer in 1769, assuring him that he believed that the LORD was defending him, and that he had

also been told by an angel from the Lord that "I may rest securely on my arms in the night," by which is meant the night in which the world is now immersed in respect to the things of the church.³²⁸

But the use of this passage could be misinterpreted as a tactical retreat to "behind the barricades,"³²⁷ or as a put-down to people who believe Swedenborg was insane, which would only inflame the situation. The same adverse effect could result from quoting Swedenborg's words to Ferelius at his last Holy Communion:

Mr. Pastor, as true as you see me here, and as true as I live, I have not written any thing from myself, but the truth from God; and if you will pay attention to the truth, we shall some time in eternity have important things to talk over together.³²⁹

Quoting passages such as the above could distance us from people with different opinions, and convince them that we are not serious about discussing the issues. Pious sentiment is great; zealous loyalty is admirable; but if we allow it to alienate or humiliate or even demonize our antagonists, then we just come across as being arrogant people with a 'ghetto mentality'. How would a non-Swedenborgian react to these words from Rev Thomas Hartley's introduction to his translation of *Heaven and Hell* [1778]?:

Reader, might it not seem a wonder, if a person of so extraordinary and so apostolical a character, should better escape the imputation of madness, than the prophets of old? And accordingly some have given out, that he [Swedenborg] was beside himself... Now, if to write many large volumes on the most important of all subjects with unvaried consistency, to reason

accurately, and to give proofs of an astonishing memory all the way; and if hereto be joined propriety and dignity of character in all the relative duties of the christian life; if all this can be reconciled with the definition of madness, why there is an end of all distinction between sane and insane, between wisdom and folly. Fie upon those uncharitable prejudices, which have led so many in all ages to credit and propagate slanderous reports of the best of men, even whilst they have been employed in the heavenly work of turning many from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God!³³⁰

Hartley goes on to talk about how an angel or a Divinely inspired person would be received by such error-prone and prejudicial men, and then alludes to the story of Democritus and the citizens of Abdera. The latter asked Hippocrates to cure him of his insanity, only for Hippocrates to diagnose them as the ones needing treatment.³³⁰

I strongly feel that we need to avoid “us” and “them” labels, or black-and-white stereotyping. I don’t think it helps us to be taken seriously. We can still remain loyal—not blindly loyal—to Swedenborg as a person and the LORD’s revelation through him, by arguing calmly and dispassionately.

According to Pernety, when Count Anders von Hopken, a one-time Prime Minister of Sweden, asked Swedenborg why he mixed up his reasonable theological ideas with his visions, which many regarded as fictions and proof of his insanity, Swedenborg replied:

I was commanded by the Lord to write and publish them,...do not suppose that, without such a positive order, I should have thought of publishing things which I well knew many would regard as falsehoods, and which would bring ridicule upon myself. If I assure them that I have received this command, and they are unwilling to believe me, the satisfaction will remain to me of having obeyed the orders of my God, and I shall answer them with Paul in the Corinthians: “We are fools for Christ’s sake, but yet are wise in Christ,” and, “If we are mad, we are mad from God.”³³¹

In a letter to General Tuxen, Count von Hopken answers slightly differently by quoting Swedenborg:

that this did not depend on him; that he was too old to sport with spiritual things, and too much concerned for his eternal happiness to yield to such foolish notions, assuring me, on his hopes of salvation, that imagination produced in him none of his revelations, which were true, and from what he had heard and seen.³³²

If these are pious sentiments of a deluded man, then someone is going to have to convince me with arguments that are stronger than Johnson's or Maudsley's or the other psychiatrists that I have examined. But that is my opinion based on my examination of as much of the evidence as I can get my hands on.

I remember an exchange of letters between Frank Podmore, MA and E.H. Bayley in the 1909 *Morning Light*, which got absolutely nowhere. Both gentleman bombarded each other with fact after fact and conceded little ground to each other.³³³ It reminded me of two of David Lomax's other comments:

...the reality tends to be such battles ride rough-shod over very real feelings which people have.

One of the ironies of life is that those who go on the attack are likely to feel most threatened, and it is, generally speaking, the groups who are most motivated by fear who are the strongest critics of others.³³⁴

Possibly New Church people in the past have not done our cause much good by the way they have argued their case. Maybe they could have been calmer, more understanding, more empathetic of where their antagonists were coming from? Maybe we Swedenborgians need to adopt more angelic responses to our apparent adversaries? What do you make of these two quotations?:

The angels are forbidden to act in any violent manner and thereby crush a person's evil desires and false assumptions: They must act gently. (AC 5992:1)

Angels...so far as the person allows them,...turn evils into good, or into something approaching good, or into something which leads in that direction. (AC 5980)

Our goal as "angels in training" is not to out-argue our opponents necessarily, but possibly to move them at least one step towards our position, if and only if they are willing and we believe that is the LORD's will for both of us. But our aim should also be to learn more about the state of our faith. If all our faith is, is a mere regurgitation of the "party line" or what Swedenborg calls "historical faith," then we don't have a faith which is leading us to heaven very effectively. In some ways we should be thankful to all the people in the past who have questioned Swedenborg's insanity, because the LORD can use such "attacks" to move us all from unquestioning loyalty in Swedenborg and his books, to a much more mature and balanced religious conviction. With our belief in the sanctity of another person's freedom to believe whatever they like for whatever reason, it is not our responsibility nor our privilege to become "control freaks":³³⁵ seeking by force or argument or passion to thrust our beliefs onto others, or make them conform their opinions to ours.

One of the great ironies about Dr. John Johnson's claim, following Dr. Henry Maudsley, that Swedenborg suffered a messianic psychosis in middle life, is that both Dr. Johnson and Swedenborgians are "in the same boat." We are both seeking the truth, but he is sitting at one end being loyal to Maudsley and we're at the other end being loyal to Swedenborg. Swedenborgians need not be afraid of the truth. We are objective enough to face the real picture of Swedenborg's mental health, and I am yet to be convinced that it is as clear cut as either Johnson or Maudsley or some other psychiatrists present.²⁹ Swedenborgians just ask for a fair discussion⁵¹ and for Swedenborg to be put to the test.⁵⁷ We would like some psychiatrist to explain why Swedenborg couldn't be sane and his visionary experiences genuine?

Possibly Swedenborgians and some psychiatrists will have to learn to agree to disagree about a belief in the supernatural,^{24, 50, 59} but any sceptic of either camp needs to be aware of the limitations of scepticism:

In its enthusiasm for truth, scepticism can leave the subject stripped of interest without replacing it with new questions and new enigmas. It reveals not only the follow of fantasy, but it tells us that there is no mystery. This is as nonsensical as the faith-based ideas that it rejects, as it implies that everything is known and that there are no further questions to be asked; all is misperception and illusion. Yet, such dismissal is not applied to the chemistry of the cell or the nature of mind; there is a depth and an enigma in both of them which is applicable to the ill-explored, close encounter experience.³³⁶

It is disappointing that Maudsley, Johnson and others didn't read, or didn't feel a need to read, more of Swedenborg's own work,⁵ or don't quote from books sympathetic to Swedenborg. It is a pity that Swedenborgian psychologists are dismissed as biased, and contemporary evidence about Swedenborg's lack of monomania or schizophrenia is neither admitted nor considered nor evaluated, because of prejudice or poor scholarship. It is unfortunate that the most elaborate version of Brockmer's story is usually quoted,⁶⁶ without having compared it to earlier versions, which aren't as injurious to the diagnosis of Swedenborg's mental health. It is disappointing when Swedenborg is judged in his own absence;¹⁹ when he is portrayed only as someone having dreams and visions, rather than also as a scholar, an active politician and a sociable person.^{3, 76} It is definitely frustrating and threatening, when Swedenborgians are adjudged to be insane as well!^{46, 337}

How reliant we are on another's opinions! It's interesting that most psychiatrists who diagnose Swedenborg as being a monomaniac or schizophrenic rely on White's biography of 1867, and yet White only believed Swedenborg to have a bout of temporary insanity during 1744 and 1745.^{12, 213} White puts it down to "pert scientific ignorance" that psychiatrists should consider him insane after 1745.¹³ Relying solely on the opinion of Maudsley to discredit Swedenborg's and any Swedenborgians' sanity did

not convince an appeals court in about 1892 in the United States of America. They ruled: "It was unfair and improper to urge upon the jury the opinion of one who was introduced to them as 'the highest authority in the world on mental alienation.'"³³⁸ Even Rev. Francis Okely, despite knowing Brockmer's story firsthand, didn't find Swedenborg insane.^{112, 339} Uncritical use of one source, such as Ferelius' comment, that Swedenborg "never washed or brushed his clothes, maintaining that no dirt would adhere to them," without comparing it to the more numerous testimonies of Swedenborg's contemporaries to the contrary,¹⁷ is, as I said earlier in this article, "uncritically mischievous and naively libellous." It is not very scholarly for Maudsley to say that Swedenborgians have "impugned the veracity of Brockmer's story," because White said it, and it just happens to fit in with Maudsley's position.³² The use of the emotive, amorphous term "hallucination," is likely to incite Swedenborgians as it did Rev. W. Mason in 1864.^{49, 54, 64} But also it betrays very loaded presuppositions about Altered States of Consciousness (ASC). As Charles Tart wrote in 1969:

We have available a great deal of scientific and clinical material on altered states of consciousness associated with psychopathological states, such as schizophrenia, by comparison, our scientific knowledge about ASCs which could be considered "desirable" is extremely limited and generally unknown to scientists.³⁴⁰

Are any of us sufficiently aware of ourselves to spot circular reasoning²⁹ or sheer mischievousness all the time?⁴ It is fair to ask both psychiatrists and New Church people whether their respective "psycho-histories" of Swedenborg say more about their respective beliefs than about Swedenborg.⁴⁴ Even if a psychiatrist were to be "cocksure" that Swedenborg was "an irresponsible maniac,"⁵³ or that they are systematic,⁵⁵ or that his theories fit his experiences,⁵⁴ does monomania really explain this? I don't believe it impertinent to ask some psychiatrists to justify their diagnoses, by explaining the relationship of what is abnormal, on the basis of what is common or everyday human experience.⁵⁶ Psychiatrists who have maintained that "schizophrenics have hallucinations, so people who have visions, must be schizophrenics," need to expand on the logic behind their argument, at least for me,²³ because they don't explain why this

implies that characters in the Bible, as well as our LORD Jesus are not mad.^{24, 50} Larsen is of the opinion that "Many psychiatrists have 'taken on' Swedenborg without an adequate grasp of transpersonal psychology."³⁴¹

I find Larsen's article very gentle and very wise. He is quietly confident about Swedenborg's sanity. As a clinical psychologist who has worked with "paranoid schizophrenics," Larsen doesn't believe Swedenborg was one.^{75, 76} Yet Larsen, with his greater knowledge of Swedenborg's life, is willing to go beyond psychology, and look to "history, anthropology, and mythology, as well as psychology" to "amplify, call attention to, and compare" "the mysterious and provocative data surrounding this unusual man."⁴³² This is a lesson for all of us. Whatever our expertise, even our "specialist field," whether it be psychiatry, psychology or even Swedenborgian studies, we sometimes need to look beyond our "field" for help. After mentioning a multi-disciplinary approach, Larsen continues:

In the process we may lay to rest the myth of his "mental illness" which seems to me an error in epistemology and interpretation rather than any kind of valid diagnosis. The visionary tradition reveals a pattern of human psychological experience of a more than personal, or "transpersonal" nature. Swedenborg's visions arose, not from personal pathology (the psychoanalytic assumption), but from an experiential plunge into a transpersonal level of the human psyche. The phenomenology and stages of this level are by now rather well known, having appeared similarly in many human psyches, despite a bewildering variety of personal, cultural, and historical settings. This is not to say that Swedenborg did not bring personal-historical and cultural assumptions to his experiences. These are, in fact, abundantly evident as we follow his journey within to the luminous core of his transpersonal experience.³⁴³

If a psychiatrist or a psychologist is not trained in nor familiar with "transpersonal psychology," then this is yet another area of bias, which needs to be admitted and explored. I'm not convinced any "school" of psychology or psychiatry, whether Freudian, Jungian, Adlerian, or transpersonal, or whatever, has all the answers. Then again, neither do Swedenborgians!

There are different New Church positions in regard to the Brockmer story from Rev. Ormond Odhner's outright dismissal,¹²² through Rev. Dr. Rudolf Tafel's "the-first-bit-could-be-true, but-the-rest-is-pure-fiction" stance,⁸⁸ to Charles Higham's "something-might-have-happened-but-nobody-knows-what, nor-ever-will" position.¹⁹⁴ Knowing about different shades of opinion among champions of Swedenborg could possibly temper the zeal of Swedenborgians. Even White is a champion of Swedenborg; possibly more guarded than most, or even more realistic!?

There are significant pieces of evidence missing in order to fully evaluate the Brockmer story. How can anybody weigh up the evidence supplied by Brockmer, Mathesius, Okely, Hindmarsh and Beatson? Is Brockmer's Dr. Smith the same as Shearsmith's Mr. Smith? Is Mathesius' Mr. Caer the husband of Shearsmith's Mrs. Carr? If Brockmer's story is true, where is the evidence of all the witnesses like coachmen, or embassy officials?⁴ How can Swedenborg's claims of nobody knowing about his visionary experiences at the time, be explained?¹⁹⁵⁻¹⁹⁷ We can understand why there would be tension between Brockmer and Swedenborg because their life-styles, particularly their nocturnal ones, were mutually exclusive.¹⁵⁰⁻¹⁵¹ If Brockmer was angry at Swedenborg leaving him, and was worried that this might affect potential lodgers, he could have "spread a report that he [Swedenborg] was mad."¹⁵² Why do psychiatrists not explore the possibility of this motive, and its possible consequences? If Swedenborg did call himself the Messiah, why doesn't he call himself that in his writings of the period and afterwards? Why is the Messiah always our LORD Jesus? It could have been his speech impediment^{222-224, 228} or his lack of English,^{221, 225-227} which caused him to be misheard.²¹⁹ Why have psychiatrists not considered that maybe Swedenborg was using "Messiah" in a derivative sense?²¹⁶⁻²¹⁸

How does anybody synthesize the "Vision in the Inn" material, when Swedenborg only affirms that he saw worms and an angel,^{273, 274} but it is Robsahm 37 years later who combines it with a Divine commission?²⁶⁴ Is the Latin of WE 3557 ambiguous? Does it refer to worms only as I and Toksvig argue,²⁷⁵ using Acton's translation, or worms as well as frogs, as Regamey argues?²⁷⁶ Scholars need to acknowledge that there is no clear-cut, firsthand link between the purification vision and the Divine call

vision,^{276, 286–288} although I have argued that it could have been possible, taking into account Swedenborg's other visions of 1744, and a belief in a variety of theophanic experiences.

For some, Swedenborg's mere claims to be unique or to have a "special mission"⁷⁰ are enough to condemn him as a monomaniac or a schizophrenic. Hopefully by listing White's and my own attempts to temper these somewhat, a fuller, more accurate picture of what Swedenborg was really saying, will emerge. Swedenborg is not as absolutely unique as some of his statements appear on the surface. Another aspect of this lies in the field of "transpersonal psychology." Swedenborg is part of what Larsen called "the visionary tradition,"²⁵⁹ and so is "more the shaman than the madman."³⁴⁴

But despite differences of opinion, missing pieces of evidence, circular reasoning, overreliance on authority figures, if we humbly and openly engage with people who hold different opinions, this may help fine-tune our objectivity, and encourage the development of our enlightenment. After this long, exhaustive study I remain to be convinced that Swedenborg was ever insane. For me, his character and reputation are intact, and even enhanced. I firmly believe that my faith has become less "historical" and more real through this study.

Finally, thank you Dr. Johnson for your challenging paper! I don't believe that Swedenborg suffered from a messianic psychosis, but I believe that I have grown as a person through exploring the issues.

APPENDIX ON ROBSAHM'S MEMOIR Erik Sandstrom, Sr.

1. Robsahm's own handwritten ms—if there ever was one! see 3 below—is lost. A number of handwritten copies exist.
2. In his Foreword to his annotated publication of Robsahm's memoirs Hallengren writes: "With regard to essential matters, however, there are only minor differences in the known versions, including the oldest translations. The contents can be established with great

certainty” (CARL ROBSAHM OM SWEDENBORG, ABA Cad/Copy & Tryck, Stockholm 1989, p. 14.).

3. Hallengren tracks down five Swedish copies (versions). He is making use of the *Uppsalamanuskriftet* (the Upsala ms), and notes that this is written in German style. Robsahm was an accountant at the Loan Bank (a department of the National Bank at Stockholm). Hallengren: “Did Robsahm cause a copyist at the bank to make a clean copy of his ms? Or has some one of his acquaintances made a copy? The text is doubtless a clean copy [of a draft] or a careful copy [of a ms], as it is virtually free of corrections or signs of hesitation...Perhaps, in fact, *there never was any Robsahm handwritten ms on Swedenborg*, except maybe as a draft? If so we may be as close to the original as we can get” (Ibid., p. 19; emphasis mine.).

Hallengren mentions the following five known copies: The Upsala ms (ms.U); the London ms (ms.L); the Dybeck copy (ms.R); the Deleen copy (ms.Dn); a lengthy copy fragment kept by the *Pro Fide et Caritate* (ms.P). The above are apparently all in Swedish, including the “ms.L,” kept in the Swedenborg Society’s archives at Bloomsbury in London (concerning which Hallengren speculates that it may have been left there after R.L. Tafel’s work on his *Documents*). In addition to the above five there is also a translation into German by Achatius Kahl, a theologian at the University of Lund (ms.Lund). Thus we have five versions in Swedish, and one in German.

A word about Kahl. According to Odhner’s *Annals of the New Church* Dr. Kahl was “an earnest receiver of the Doctrines,” and he is the author of *Nya Kyrkan och dess Inflytande på Theologiens Studium i Sverige* (The New Church and its Influence upon the Study of Theology in Sweden). A striking phrase occurs on p. 7 of Hallengren’s publication: “In a German translation [of the Robsahm Memoirs] done by the theologian of Lund Achatius Kahl (1794–1888), *who owned the manuscript*, the Robsahm Swedenborg memo-

ries had been published by Immanuel Tafel in 1842 in his German collection of documents” (My translation, my emphasis). That “*manuscript*,” however, according to Hallengren’s above observation (see 3), may have been no more than one of the five copies, and then probably the “ms.U.”

4. I mentioned that Hallengren makes use of the “ms.U.” In the section where Swedenborg is telling Robsahm about his vision in the London inn where he was taking his evening meal, we find: “I saw a man sitting in a corner of the room...” But at this point Hallengren puts in a footnote as follows: “*ms. P*: ‘I saw a man, majestically arrayed in purple and encompassed by a bright light, sitting in a corner...’” (ftn. p. 36).

“ms.P” means the *Pro Fide et Charitate* fragment. I doubt that this description of the “man” merits much attention, i.e. not in *this* context. It seems to be a case of two different events being confused (and Hallengren, too, seems confused). In his footnote Hallengren adds his speculation that the detailed description of the “man” who spoke to Swedenborg in the inn may stem from “the brief version of the event that G.A. Beyer gave C.F. Nordenskiöld in a letter dated March 23, 1776” (*Doc.*, vol. 2, p. 426). But I do not think Beyer was referring to the event in the inn!

In his letter Beyer speaks of the Lord *seated near his bed*, which indicates that the event Beyer is referring to is the one in *Holland* concerning which Swedenborg himself writes in the *Journal of Dreams*. The relevant words in Beyers letter, printed in *Documents*, Vol. 2, p. 426, are: “The information respecting the Lord’s personal appearance before the Assessor, who saw Him, *in imperial purple and in majestic light*, seated near his bed, while He gave Assessor Swedenborg his commission, I had from his own lips at a dinner party in the house of Dr. Rosen, where I saw the old gentleman for the first time” (Emphasis mine.).

The *Journal of Dreams* entry is dated 6–7 April, 1744. Swedenborg here says that he had *gone to bed*, and that then he “sat in His bosom, and saw Him face to face.” Swedenborg does not

here say that the Lord appeared “in imperial purple and in majestic light,” but this information he could well have added when he related that same event to Beyer and the others at the party.

5. In the excerpts from Talbot’s article that you sent me, I read at bottom of p. 31: “Horn makes good points about Robsahm’s account being cited ‘as the only reliable source on his calling into the office of seer’, which threatens to cause Beyer’s account ‘to fall into oblivion.’” But what about Swedenborg’s own account of the *earlier* call in his *J. of Dreams*? Robsahm’s account would report *another* and *later* call. I think both accounts are authentic—certainly Swedenborg’s own is. In fact, testimonies by Gjørwell (Librarian at the Royal Library), Beyer, Robsahm, and others, in addition to Swedenborg’s own, clearly suggest, or show, that his call to be Revelator was *progressive*, and was not a solitary occurrence. But this is a subject by itself and in its own right.

Endnotes

1 [In the text, endnote superscript numbers are not always in sequence. The number, however, refers the reader to the correct endnote. See list of abbreviations used at end of article.] R. L. Tafel, *Document Concerning Swedenborg...* (hereinafter *Doc.*): II: I: 598–599. Tafel follows Rev. Samuel Noble (in his preface to *Heaven and Hell*, xxviii) in assuming that Swedenborg stayed with Brockmer in 1744 and also in 1769. Cf. *New-Church Magazine...* (hereinafter *NCM*) (1885): 385–386.

2 *New Church Life...* (hereinafter *NCL*) (1906): 371.

3 *NCL* (1914): 428.

4 *Morning Light...* (hereinafter *ML*) (1890): 12a, which is from James Spilling’s review of Wm. W. Ireland, M.D. *Through the Ivory Gate: Studies in Psychology and History* (Edinburgh: Bell & Bradfute, 1889).

5 *ML* (1913): 191b, which is from Rev. Arthur Wilde’s editorial comments on a reference to Swedenborg in the *Practitioner* of 12th December 1912, in an article entitled “The Relation of Epilepsy to Insanity and Its Treatment” by “Robert Jones, M.D., F.R.C.P., Resident Physician and Superintendent of the London County Council Asylum, Claybury; and Lecturer on Psychological Medicine, St. Bartholomew’s Hospital, London.”

6 *ML* (1901): 494b. The editor also mentions Francis H. Walmsley.

7 Cf. White’s comment that for cessationists, or people who believe “that immediate communion of God with Man ceased with Bible times,” to believe that Swedenborg “was a servant of God and a Seer of Angels, is to them like an invitation to become the dupes of a lunatic or impostor.” White (1867): I: 254, 255. White (1868): 144.

8 White (1867): I: vi, which is repeated in White (1868): vii. White describes his third biography as a “condensation” of his 1867 biography, and proudly states; “No detail of any importance has been omitted.” (1868): ix.

9 Johnson (1994): 690–691.

10 Tafel in *Doc.*: II: I: 592. *Ibid.*: II: II: 1307 mentions Maudsley's article in the *Journal of Mental Science* (July 1870), number 70, *Doc.* II: II: 1235 mentions 1869. (In Johnson's bibliography he mentions an article in the 1869 *Journal of Mental Science*, so maybe Tafel has got his dates wrong?) The book of his lectures *Body and Mind* (2nd edition) is reviewed by the editor of the *Intellectual Repository and New Jerusalem Magazine* (hereinafter IR) (1874): 417–424, 478–484. He is mentioned by name in ML (1901): 494b.

11 A point made by the Rev. Norman Ryder in a telephone conversation with me on the subject of Johnson's article.

12 Johnson (1994): 690a says: "White (1867)...did not express any opinions about Swedenborg's mental state, apart from the single statement 'There is no denying that in 1743, when Swedenborg was introduced into the Spirit World, he was for a while insane'." In dipping into White's biographies I haven't found this reference. Cf. White (1868): 140, 163.

13 White (1867): I: 245. Also (1868): 140. Compare what White says 11 years earlier: "No denial of the possibility of such spiritual vision as is claimed by Swedenborg, can be accepted from the Christian. Such denial is alone the privilege of the professed materialist. We all know how much of our loved and common faith rests on claims that are quite as startling as those of Swedenborg. From the visions of Abraham to those of John in Patmos, the whole Scriptural narrative is interwoven with supernatural incident." White (1856): 27.

14 Johnson (1994): 690a.

15 White (1867): I: 30 but corrected on p. 539 of the same volume. His 1868 biography leaves it out. Cf. White (1868): 24.

16 See e.g. what I wrote about Swedenborg's visions of Quakers in my article "The Toronto Blessing: A Swedenborgian Perspective on Christian Revivals and their Causes." (Part 2) in NCM (July 1995): 7–10.

17 Johnson (1994): 690b. It was Rev. Arvid Ferelius writing to Professor Tratgard (*Doc.* II: I: 561 (¶15); White (1867): II: 343. Also White (1868): 509. But is White correct in saying Swedenborg told Ferelius or are these Ferelius' observations on an isolated day, or, as Tafel suggests, hearsay conveyed to Ferelius, which is easily dismissed by testimonies from other of Swedenborg's contemporaries? (*Doc.* II: I: 561n–562n) It is more likely to be the experience of angels and spirits in the next world. (Cf. SD 5174; 5601:2; 5664) *Spiritual Diary* (hereinafter SD) 5172 may be a possible source of this misunderstanding.

18 Toksvig (1983): 159. Chapter XIII of Toksvig's book is entitled "Swedenborg's sanity" (1983: 156–167). Rev. Brian Kingslake, a Swedenborgian, in the introduction to the 1983 Swedenborg Foundation edition writes:

Miss Toksvig is completely detached and uncommitted, which gives her an advantage in some respects over most other biographers who have been unashamedly partisan...This book is by far the best I have ever come across for bringing the intelligent atheist or agnostic to a friendly confrontation with Swedenborg. It blazes the trail for the sceptic, beckoning him onwards with the assurance that Swedenborg, far from being insane as is so often supposed, was in many respects the sanest man who ever lived! (vii–viii).

For a critical review of Toksvig's book from a Swedenborgian perspective, see Rev. Dr. Bill Woofenden's article in *Studia Swedenborgia* No. 5 (January 1985): 3: 48–62.

On this point of reading Swedenborg as though he were only occupied with his dreams and visions as recorded in his *Journal of Dreams* (hereinafter JD), we note the comments of Acton (1927): 36–37. (As can be seen, Acton is using the word "visionary" and "mystic" in their derogatory meanings of enthusiast or person preoccupied with his own impractical ideas or views.)

It [JD] created a great stir and was the object of attack by those who sought to prove Swedenborg a visionary. Unfortunately, these critics and sometimes also, though to a much less extent, even Swedenborg's defenders have confined their attention to the contents of the Journal; and the result could hardly be other than the appearance

as of a life passed mainly in dreams and visions. The only just way to examine Swedenborg's Journal is to consider it in connection with the contemporary life and work of its author. Seen thus, the Journal assumes an entirely different aspect. It is no longer a record of vague dreams, but is the careful description, by a man of learning, accustomed to accuracy in his statements and logic in his reasonings, of experiences, the significance of which he sought to elicit, but of whose actuality he, as witness, could have no doubt.

In the daytime he wrote these dreams in his Journal and reflected on their meaning; but in the daytime he was also busily engaged in adding the finishing touches to his *Animal Kingdom*, consulting anatomical authorities, meeting learned men, and seeing his work through the press. During the period covered by his Journal, he wrote and published that masterpiece of reasoning, the Epilogue to the second volume of *The Animal Kingdom*, and also the whole of the third volume dealing with the relation to the mind. He also wrote *The Five Senses*, and the Introduction to his work *On the Brain*, in which he lays down the laws of analytical thought. It is unthinkable that the writer of works such as these could at the same time be a visionary or a mystic.

19 Toksvig (1983): 158–159.

20 IR (1874): 417–424, 478–479.

21 IR (1874): 417.

22 IR (1874): 482, cf. 483.

23 Ibid.: 483.

24 Ibid.: 482, cf. 484. This point is also made in ML (1890), p. 11a & *Monthly Observer...* (hereinafter MO) (1864), p. 297. Cf. endnote 13.

25 Ibid.: 472. The non-Swedenborgian science writer Gary Lachmann recently commented: "Swedenborg's heaven is on a par with the visions of Dante" in his article "Heavens and Hells: the Inner Worlds of Emanuel Swedenborg" in *Studia Swedenborgiana* 9: 3 (October 1995): 19.

26 Ibid.: 421.

27 Compare the piecing together of incidents in Swedenborg's life from 1736, 1740 (cf. *The Word Explained...* (hereinafter WE) 6905), 1744 and so on, in Acton (1927): 26–53. Cf. also e.g. WE 1003; SD 2951; 3464. Cf. Beyer's letter to C.F. Nordenskold (*Doc. II: I: 263, 426* (§4). Cf. endnote 263.

28 Dr. Gilbert Ballet, the French neurologist, who was Professor of Medicine at the Faculty of Medicine in Paris, in his book *Swedenborg: Story of an Eighteenth Century Visionary* (Paris, Masson et Cie, 1903), argues for the gradual development of Swedenborg's condition contrasted with the sudden vivid hallucination of St. Paul! NCM (1903): 111.

29 IR (1874): 420.

30 Ibid.: 424; cf. also 417.

31 White (1867): I: 245. Also White (1868): 140. Cf. also endnote 12.

32 IR (1874): 419.

33 White (1867): I: 225. Also White (1868): 132–133.

34 IR (1867): 267. One of White's "tactics" seems to be that he thrusts Swedenborg's "extremely exceptional" comments or "very rare statements" "into glaring distinctness." IR (1874): 478.

35 For a full account of the long and drawn out affair including the court cases during 1860 and 1861, read Tafel's account in *Doc. II: II: 1318–1329*.

36 Woofenden (1968): 163. For a detailed and exhaustive comparison of White's first two biographies of Swedenborg, see Tafel in *Doc. II: II: 1284–1329*.

37 *New Jerusalem Magazine...* (hereinafter NJM) (1868): 472.

38 Tafel in *Doc. II: II: 1286*.

39 Cf. Tafel in *Doc. II: II: 136* and 1312–1315.

40 White (1856): 123, 150–151, etc.

- 41 There is no endnote no. 41.
- 42 Rev. J. R. Rendell in *Transactions of the International Swedenborg Congress* (London: Swedenborg Society, 1910): 45–46. Cited in Higham (1914): 113n.
- 43 Larsen (1980): 14–23, also Larsen (1988): 188–191, explores the issues of Swedenborg's alleged "mental illness."
- 44 Ibid., (1980): 16. (1988): 188b.
- 45 Ibid., (1980): 17. (1988): 188b–189a.
- 46 IR (1832–1833): 419, which is a review of Dr. Elliotson's transcribed lecture in the *London Medical Gazette* of 23rd March 1833, p. 819. Cf. endnote 337.
- 47 MO (1864), pp. 299–300.
- 48 Ibid., 301. Mason speaks from experience, that is, from discussions he has had with psychiatrists of his day (ibid., p. 300).
- 49 Ibid., 300.
- 50 IR (1832–1833): 420. See endnote 24.
- 51 Ibid., 421.
- 52 MO (1864): 302. Could it have been Hippocrates Junior?
- 53 ML (1901): 494b. Rev. Arthur Wilde in his review of Dr. Robert Jones's article in the *Practitioner* on December 12th 1912, entitled "The Relation of Epilepsy to Insanity and Its Treatment," asks: "If Dr. Jones' information has been drawn from this book [Dr. Ballet's], or from an out of date and erroneous biography of Swedenborg [e.g. White?!] it would be well for someone to supply him with more accurate information." See endnote 5.
- 54 ML (1890): 11a. Cf. endnote 4.
- 55 ML (1890): 12b. Ireland particularly appreciated Swedenborg's book on marriage *Conjugal Love*.
- 56 NCM (1903): 110.
- 57 ML (1890): 12a.
- 58 White (1867): I: 271–272. White (1868): 153–154 (with slight variations, such as "vilifiers" instead of "controversialists").
- 59 ML(1890): 11a & b.
- 60 Hood (1854): 161.
- 61 NCL (1914): 428.
- 62 Ibid., 429.
- 63 ML (1890): 11b.
- 64 NCM (1903): 113.
- 65 JD or SD or both?
- 66 ML (1913): 191b.
- 67 NCL (1915): 159. I assume his talk was in 1914 because of the short review in NCL (1914): 428–429.
- 68 Ibid., 158
- 69 NCL (1914): 428 quoting *Svenskt Biogr. Lexikon*.
- 70 Larsen (1980): 17. Larsen (1988): 188b–189a.
- 71 Larsen cites Karl Jaspers, *Strindberg and Van Gogh*, Berlin: Springer, (1926) in Larsen (1988): 191b.
- 72 For Lagerborg, Larsen cites Toksvig (1983): 162, 362 n. 13, who cites *Finsk Tidsskrift* (1923): 281. Lagerborg apparently based his views on the German psychiatrist E. Hitschmann.
- 73 For von Winterstein, Larsen cites Toksvig (1983): 163, 372 n. 14, who cites H.D. Spoerl, in *New Christianity*, (Winter 1937): 14. According to Toksvig: "Von Winterstein, another psychoanalyst, confirms and elaborates Hitschmann's diagnosis." (Toksvig 1983, p. 163).
- 74 Larsen cites Emil A. G. Kleen, *Swedenborg*, Stockholm (1917, 1920).
- 75 Larsen (1980): 17–18. Larsen (1988): 189a.

76 Larsen (1980): 19–20. Larsen (1988): 189a–189b. Confirmed, for example, by Shearsmith's testimony to Dr. Peter Provo in 1792 NCM (1885): 385, 386. According to Ferelius Swedenborg "never sought to make proselytes." In R.L. Tafel, *Doc. II: I: 559*: ¶8, which is confirmed by Robsahm (*Doc. I: 34*: ¶14) and Pernety (*ibid.*): 58: ¶11.

77 Van Dusen (1972, 1981): 190.

78 Van Dusen (1974): 17.

79 NCM (1914): 36 n. Higham collected his information from Daniel Benham's *Memoirs of James Hutton: comprising the annals of his life, and connection with the United Brethren*, London (1856). Moravians "give themselves out as the true Lutherans and recognize the work of the Holy Ghost" (JD 202).

80 *Ibid.*, 37.

81 NCM (1914): 115, 116 n. In his hymn book Brockmer calls himself Paul John Brockmer. White paints Brockmer as "a timid, prudent and credulous London lodging-house keeper." White (1867): I: 133. White (1868): 225.

82 *The Arminian Magazine* became the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine* in 1798. NCM (1914): 84.

83 Higham supplies the page numbers: IV:46–49. NCM (1914): 84.

84 NCM (1914): 82–83. White (1867): I: 232 dates it to "around 1770." Tafel rightly points out that "Instead of taking the evidence of a man given soon after a supposed occurrence, he prefers to accept his testimony on the same subject as written down *sixteen years later*, and after he had an attack of insanity." *Doc. II: I: 587n.*

85 See *Doc. II: I: 586–590* for the full account.

86 Cf. JD pp. 191–193. (*Doc. II: I: 193*: ¶133) taking into account the 12 day difference between the Julian and Gregorian calendars. (Cf. Tafel in *Doc. II: I: 193* footnote.) "But when Mr. White discovers that Swedenborg was not in London during that year, but was at Stockholm, and that he did not come to London till May, 1744, he deliberately changes the figures to 1744!" *New Jerusalem Magazine* (hereinafter NJM) (1868): 476.

87 Cf. JD 202. *Doc. II: I: 196*: ¶142.

88 *Doc. II: I: 590.*

89 *Ibid.*, 590–592.

90 *Ibid.*, 592.

91 White (1867): I: 220. White conveniently left this detail out in his 1868 biography. Cf. White (1868), p. 124. Maybe he realised its falsehood, but "arguments from silence" are notoriously weak!

92 *Doc. II: I: 587n.* Compare *Doc. II: I: 593–600* for a comparison between the two versions. Tafel's conclusion was that "Mathesius' testimony when examined exclusively in its own light, breaks down completely; for it is shown to be full of inconsistencies, and downright contradictions." (*Doc. II: I: 600*) In Mathesius' 1796 version Swedenborg is "a somewhat aged man, and, as you tell me, have never taken medicine." White (1867): I: 222. Also White (1868): 130; *Doc. II: I: 593b*, which makes Swedenborg outchasing his attendant laughable, unless the latter was a geriatric, because Swedenborg was 55 in 1743, assuming the incident did actually happen then, which is impossible. Cf. NJM (1868): 472. For Swedenborg being a spritely 81 year old, compare John Christian Cuno's statement of 1769: "although he is more than twenty years older than I am, I should be afraid to run a race with him; for he is as quick on his legs as the youngest man." (*Doc. II: I: 450*). But how literally do we take Cuno's remark? According to Pernety, when Swedenborg was 80, he had "the bodily vigour of a man of thirty." *Doc. I: 72.*

93 NCM (1914): 87.

94 *Doc. II: I: 594b.*

95 *Ibid.*, 592b.

96 *Ibid.*, 593b.

97 White (1867): I:221–225. Also White (1868): 129–132.

98 *Doc. II: I: 593.*

99 *Ibid.*, 593, 594.

- 100 Ibid., 589.
 101 Ibid., 595.
 102 Ibid., 596.
 103 NCM (1914): 87.
 104 Cf e.g. NJM (1868): 472.
 105 Higham supplies the page numbers: VI:437–441, 495–498, 550–552, 607–614, 669–680 (NCM (1914): 85).
 106 Doc. I: 7–8. Also, *The Letters and Memorials of Emanuel Swedenborg* translated and edited by Alfred Acton, Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania: Swedenborg Scientific Association (1955): 676–679.
 107 Doc. II: I: 584. White published it in (1867): I: 228–229. Also White (1868): 133–134.
 108 White (1867): I: 229. On p. 228, White writes about Wesley's 1783 account of Swedenborg:
 We now come to a painful passage connected with this affair, in which Wesley must be severely censured for some careless tattle, by which he brought down odium alike on Swedenborg and Mathesius, and threw the clear and honest story of Brockmer into confusion and discredit.
 109 White (1868): 133.
 110 *Reflections on Baron Swedenborg's Works in New Jerusalem Messenger*, (28th December 1861), New York (unsighted). See MO (1862): 95–101.
 111 White (1868): 133; NCM (1914): 109, cf. also 115, quoting Okely. Cf. endnote 110. MO (1862): 97.
 112 Ibid., 111. MO (1862): 97.
 112a MO (1862): 96.
 113 Doc. II: II: 696 and quoted in NCM (1914): 111.
 114 NCM (1914): 110 quoting Okely's "Reflections," (cf. endnote 103). Okely expresses some difficulty with *True Christian Religion*, but he also seems undecided in some aspects of Swedenborg's theology, or to at least give Swedenborg the benefit of the doubt concerning his unique claims. Cf. Doc. II: II: 1244–1245.
 115 White (1868): 133.
 116 Beatson (1791): 93. Cf. also Hindmarsh (1821): 19–21. Higham supplied the information that Beatson was secretary to Conference at its first session in 1789. NCM (1914): 109.
 117 Ibid., 93–94.
 118 IR (1867): 264.
 119 White (1867): I: 226.
 120 Ibid., I: 227. White describes Hindmarsh as "a zealous Swedenborgian" (I: 225), "an out-and-out Swedenborgian devotee" and therefore prejudiced. (I: 227) Hindmarsh's account was just "a rhetorical flourish" (I: 227) and mentioned in IR (1867): 266.
 121 Ibid., I: 226n.
 122 NCL (1958): 63.
 123 Hindmarsh (1821): 20, saying Brockmer "positively" declared "'that he had never opened his mouth on this subject to Mr. Wesley, nor had he ever given such an account to any other person:' and he seemed much displeased, that Mr. Wesley should have taken the liberty to make use of his name in public print, without his knowledge or consent." Cf. NCM (1914): 109.
 124 White (1868): 133; cf. White (1867): I: 225.
 125 White (1867): I: 230. I, like White, felt uncomfortable at Noble suggesting it was Divine judgment on Mathesius, namely, that he had slandered Swedenborg as insane, and therefore became insane himself. White (1867): I: 231.
 126 White (1867): I: 128n: "That Mathesius was 'Swedenborg's personal and violent enemy' is merely an inference or colouring of Noble's, and one quite unwarranted. There is no evidence, that the two men ever came in contact. Mathesius apparently had no belief in Swedenborg's claims and doctrines, and this incredulity was in all likelihood the extent of his

aversion." And yet according to Springer, "Swedenborg had presented a copy of his *Arcana Caelestia* to Mathesius," so must have met him at some stage! Cf. endnote 134.

127 Noble's *Appeal* (3rd ed.): 241.

128 *Doc. II: I: 538: ¶ 9*. White (1867): I: 232 calls this "the gossip of a publican to whom Swedenborg had been handsome."

129 *Doc. II: II: 1182*.

130 *Doc. II: I: 536*.

131 *Doc. I: 709*. Pernety says Mathesius was an enemy of Springer, because Springer was a friend of Swedenborg's. *Doc. I: 61: ¶ 14*.

132 *Doc. II: I: 576, 606*. Cf. Hindmarsh (1821): 22.

133 *Doc. II: I: 581*.

134 *Doc. II: I: 609*.

135 *Doc. II: I: 610: ¶4*.

136 *Doc. II: I: 611*; cf. also *Doc. I: 702–703*.

137 White (1867): I: 232.

138 *Ibid.*, I: 231.

139 *Doc. II: II: 1187*.

140 *Doc. II: I: 548–549, 577*; NCM (1885): 385.

141 NCM (1885): 380; cf. also what the Shearsmiths told Henry Peckitt in 1778 in *Doc. II: I: 544: ¶2*

142 *Doc. II: I: 597–600*.

143 E.g. *Doc. II: I: 595b*; White (1867): I: 224. Also White (1868): 131.

144 NCM (1885): 382.

145 NCM (1885): 383–384. Did he move to Shearsmith's because Mrs. Carr had moved? (Cf. *Doc. II: I: 544*). Shearsmith's maid, later his second wife, told Henry Peckitt, that before he came to the Shearsmith house the first time, "he was offered another lodging in the neighbourhood, but he told the mistress there was no harmony in the house; which she acknowledged, and recommended him to Mr. Shearsmith's." *Doc., II: I: 546: ¶10*. Could it have been Mrs. Cartwright who had the disharmonious house? (*Doc. II: I: 554: ¶ 2; II: I: 556: ¶12*.

146 *Doc. II: I: 610*; cf also *Doc., I: 61: ¶14*.

147 LJ (C) translator's preface in any edition.

148 NCM (1885): 382, 383.

149 *Doc. II: I: 547–548*.

150 NCM (1885): 381–382

151 *Doc. II: I: 554: ¶1*.

152 *Doc. II: I: 555: ¶2*.

153 *Doc. II: I: 610: ¶4*.

154 *Doc. II: II: 1191–1192*.

155 That is, "the door-way between the two rooms, where he had often observed Swedenborg to stand, while he was conversing with his invisible friends." A gentleman from St. Croix, who greatly admired Swedenborg, gave Shearsmith half-a-guinea to stand on this spot. (Shearsmith to Hindmarsh, *Doc. II: I: 550: ¶8*. Shearsmith told Dr. Peter Provo in 1792 that Swedenborg "generally stood between the bed and front room when conversing in the day with spirits or those who were invisible to others" NCM (1885): 385–386.

156 *Doc. II: I: 544: ¶ 4*.

157 NCM (1885): 380–381.

158 *Ibid.*, 384–385.

159 *Ibid.*, 385–386.

160 *Doc. I: 39–40: ¶24*; cf. 1 Corinthians 10: 13.

161 *Doc. I: 40: ¶ 25*.

162 *Doc. I: 40: ¶ 26*; cf. the Apostle's vision in Revelation vol. I, p. 14 and Swedenborg's comments in *Apocalypse Revealed...* (hereinafter AR): 48, *Apocalypse Explained...* (hereinafter AE): 68.

- 163 *Doc. I*: 70: ¶ 34.
 164 *Doc. II*: I: 558: ¶ 5; cf. *Doc. II*: I: 562–563: ¶1.
 165 *Doc. II*: I: 537: ¶ 3.
 166 *Doc. II*: I: 555: ¶ 4.
 167 *Doc. I*: 53: ¶ 2. Cf. Elijah's 40 days and nights (I Kings 19: 8).
 168 *Doc. II*: I: 545: ¶ 7).
 169 *Doc. II*: II: 1147–1151.
 170 *Doc. II*: I: 434: ¶ 10.
 171 *Doc. I*: 41: ¶ 29 (Harrison to Robsahm).
 172 *Doc. I*: 41: ¶ 30.
 173 *Doc. II*: I: 531–532: ¶ 12.
 174 NCM (1885): 385–386, cf. WE 943, 1149; *Arcana Coelestia* (hereinafter AC) 1884 (as in *Heaven and Hell* 441), AC 5605:2e, *True Christian Religion* (hereinafter TR) 157:1, AR 896:1; *Conjugal Love* (hereinafter CL) 316:1.
 175 *Doc. II*: I: 541E.
 176 *Doc. II*: I: 619.
 177 *Doc. II*: I: 490.
 178 The Stockholm fire took place on July 19, 1759 (*Doc. II*: I: 619) or July 29, 1759 (*Doc. II*: I: 629n).
 179 Swedenborg to Bergstrom (*Doc. II*: I: 631D).
 180 *Doc. II*: I: 629.
 181 Jung-Stilling in *Doc. II*: I: 630B.
 182 Shearsmith to Provo in 1792 (NCM (1885): 380).
 183 *Ibid.*, 380–381.
 184 *Doc. II*: I: 545: ¶ 9.
 185 *Doc. I*: 32: ¶ 3. Cf. *Doc. I*: 33: ¶ 7: “he had never any definite time for sleeping.”
 186 NCM (1885): 379.
 187 *Doc. II*: I: 446: ¶ 7; cf. *Doc. I*: 33: ¶ 7.
 188 NCM (1885): 385, 386.
 189 *Doc. II*: I: 482F.
 190 JD: 40, 45, 51.
 191 More than 10 hours (JD 140), 11 hours (JD 100, 105, 174, 177); 12 hours (JD 127).
 192 JD 197e, 215e. *Doc. II*: I: 194: ¶ 137e, 200: ¶ 151e.
 193 Cf. *Doc. II*: I: 587: ¶ 1; JD 197e; *Doc. II*: I: 194: ¶ 137e. It is Mathesius who supplied the name to Wesley. From James Hutton's memoirs, cf. endnote 79, we learn, “John Senniff, Shoe Maker, [born at Worms in Germany, January, 1688. He was Warden of the German congregation at London in 1744, died May 2, 1752, and was buried in the burial ground near Bloomsbury.]” NCM (1914): 36–37.
 194 NCM (1914): 81.
 195 Acton (1927): 68. For 1748 see SD 722, 1166, 3963. Cf. also SD 142. For the fact it wasn't until 1763 that people had an inkling that Swedenborg was undergoing extraordinary experiences, Acton appeals to Swedenborg being named as the author of AC; *Earths in the Universe* (hereinafter EU); HH; *Last Judgment* (hereinafter LJ); *New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine* (hereinafter HD); *White Horse* (hereinafter WH); in a Swedish book by S. J. Alnander. (*Doc. II*: II: 977). However, how many people knew that it was the angels who told Swedenborg that there was a fire raging in Stockholm in July 1759? See endnote 173 How soon had Queen Louisa Ulrica of Sweden's commissioning of Swedenborg to find out information from her deceased brother, Prince Augustus William of Prussia, in November 1761, become public knowledge? (*Doc. II*: I: 618–620, 647–666) Baron Daniel Tilas knew some time before 16th March 1760 (*Doc. II*: I: 396–396), possibly “the winter of 1759” (*Doc. I*: 59n).
 196 JD 80. *Doc. II*: I: 166: ¶ 46.
 197 WE 3347; cf. also WE 475, 943.

198 *Doc. II: I: 587* (Wesley in 1781); *JD 202e. Doc. II: I: 196:¶ 142*. Initially as a Lutheran he may have been quite comfortable with the Moravians, but towards the middle of October 1744, Swedenborg realises that the Moravians aren't really for him. *JD 264. Doc. II: I: 214: ¶¶ 192*. On *Doc. II: 1087–1088 Tafel* refers us to *AC 3904, JD 264, 266, 267; Doc. II: I: 214 : ¶¶ 192, 194, 195.*

199 *NCM (1914): 86.*

200 *JD 206. Doc. II: I: 197: ¶ 145.*

201 *NCL (1914): 235.*

202 *Doc. II: I: 609–610: ¶ 2; White (1867): I: 233.*

203 *JD 12:9; 14; 112; 174; cf. 199.*

204 *JD 44e; 112; 127; 156; cf. 48; 199.*

205 *JD 282.*

206 *WE 541.*

207 *WE 1351*. Compare *WE 1144*: “visions are such as are seen in time of wakefulness when the mind is removed from the senses and from the animus,” or everyday temperament or disposition, “take place in midday and in full wakefulness.” For some physical causes of swoons, see *Divine Wisdom* (hereinafter *WI*): xi: 6a; *Divine Love and Wisdom* (hereinafter *DLW*): 390:2 ; *WI* iii: 5, vii: 4:2, x: 7; 407:2; also *WI* vi: e. For spiritual causes see e.g. *SD(M)* 4686. Also *AC 6195, 6321, HH 932, 490e, TR 119, 607.*

208 *WE 1353.*

209 *NCM (1885): 382*. In fact Swedenborg used to send Shearsmith to help himself. *Doc. II: I: 556: ¶ 10.*

210 *NCM (1885): 385.*

211 *Ibid.*, 381. Cf. *Doc. II: I: 549: ¶ 7.*

212 *Doc. II: I: 588: ¶ 6; White (1867): I: 222*. Also *White (1868): 130.*

213 *White (1867): I: 225*. Also *White (1868): 132–133.*

214 E.g. *John 6:56; 15:4–7; 17:23, 26; 1 John 2:24; 3:24; 4:15.*

215 *WE 510*. Swedenborg supports this statement by appealing to *Acts 17:28* and “the saying that God is the All in all.”

216 *Beatson (1791): 93n–94n.*

217 E.g. *Exodus 5:1; 7:17; 8:1, 16; 1 Samuel 15:10; 2 Samuel 7:4; 1 Kings 6:11; and particularly throughout the prophetic books of the Old Testament.*

218 E.g. *Genesis 32:4; Exodus 5:10; Numbers 20:14, 22:16.*

219 *IR (1867): 264*. *White* quotes these words of Swedenborg's on the authority of Goyder's *Life of Swedenborg*, p. xxxviii. *White (1867): II: 301*. Also *White (1868): 481.*

220 *Doc. II: I: 545: ¶ 6.*

221 *NCM (1885): 383.*

222 *Doc. I: I: 547: ¶ 14*. Cf. *Robsahm, Doc. I: 34: ¶ 12; Pernety, Doc. I: 57: ¶6; Cuno, Doc. II: I: 445: ¶5; Hindmarsh from Pernety, Doc. II: I: 550–551.*

223 *Doc. II: I: 550: ¶ 9.*

224 *Doc. I: 34: ¶ 12.*

225 *Doc. II: I: 548: ¶ 3*. Also *White (1867): II: 575*. Also *White (1868): 664.*

226 *Doc. II: I: 549: ¶ 4.*

227 *Doc. II: I: 549: ¶ 6, II: I: 578.*

228 *Doc. II: I: 588: ¶ 6, 593: ¶6; White (1867): I: 222*. Also *White (1868): 129–130*. Swedenborg needs Brockmer to be his spokesman to the Jews because of his speech impediment.

229 *TR 779*, cf. *SD 1647, 4034, Divine Providence* (hereinafter *DP*) 135, *Invitation to the New Church* (hereinafter *NC*) 38, *AR (Pref.)4, SS(P) (De Verbo) 29, NC (Pref.) VII, Coronis* (hereinafter *CO*) 18, 20. These references are taken from a list drawn up by Rt. Rev. Peter Buss in “The Word of God” part 2 in *NCL (March 1996):112–113.*

230 White (1868):163. White takes great pains to argue that Swedenborg like other “Divine instruments” was not “impeccable and infallible” (ibid., x). After all the LORD comes to every humble, sincere listener to His voice or reader of His revelations (e.g. AC 3900:9, 4060:5, 8427:4, AR 944:1, AE 482:2), a state of mind sometimes symbolized by “morning” (e.g. AE 179:10). Cuno thought “that Swedenborg as a philosopher is quite modest and unassuming, but as a theologian more than arrogant.” *Doc. II: I: 478–479: ¶ 4*. Oetinger regards Swedenborg as “presumptuous” because he diminishes “the force of the sense of the letter” of the Bible (*Doc. II: II: 1060*).

231 White (1868):140, 163. Cf. endnotes 12 & 13.

232 White (1868): 143–144, 151.

233 Ibid., 160.

234 Ibid., 154 citing *Doctrine of Faith* 4. Cf. also TR 110: 2.

235 Ibid., 155.

236 Cf. SD 3034^{1/2}; 3317; 3320; 3464:2. Cf. Larsen (1980): 26–33; also Larsen (1988): 192a–194b. Toksvig (1983): 126, 129, 130, 218–219 lists also *Economy of the Animal Kingdom II: 10:42; The Fibre* (edited by Alfred Acton): 525ff; SD 402, 1612–1615. SD 402 is fascinating because some spirits from “the Indies” “induced a like respiration upon me that I might know this from experience.” Both Toksvig and Larsen draw parallels with yogic techniques.

237 White (1868): 150–151.

238 Ibid., 152.

239 Ibid., 158–159.

240 Ibid., 159. White quotes AC 1410 in support of this, but AC 904 might have been a better proof text, which he quotes on page 162.

241 Ibid., 160–161 quoting AE 114:1, 1341; TR 28.

242 Ibid., 160–161 quoting AC 8760:2; LW 130; DP 31e. For Swedenborg himself cf. DP 135e; DLW 131.

243 Ibid., 161–162 quoting AC 49:1, 1245, 1341(?), 1573:7, 1745:3, 1894:2, 1925:1–4; DP 96:6. For Swedenborg himself, cf. AC 1925:2; AE 78:3.

244 HH 52, 55e; AR 465, 938:1; cf. AC 8865, 8949 (also EU 98), 9359 (also EU 121), 9694 (also EU 130). TR 691: 2; AE 412: 16.

245 White (1868) quoting DLW 137; AC 904, 2253, etc.

246 Ibid., 162. White alludes to Acts 6:15, 7:55.

247 AC 5; cf. AC 67.

248 *Invitation to the New Church* (NC) 59.

249 NC 39; cf. SD 1677, 3623.

250 NC 43.

251 AC 5, 69, 1880 4; cf. SD 564(1), 740, 1166; WE 475.

252 AC 1970; HH 76, 171; WE 475, 1694e.

253 AC 5121:2 “Scarcely anyone receives such [internal “Revelation from perception”] at the present day.”

AC 9396:2 “...heaven nowadays is closed, for scarcely any one at the present time speaks with angels and spirits.” Cf. AC 9438:3 (also EU 193:3), 9503: 1, 10751 (also EU 160); HH 249; DP 135; EU 1; AE 53: 2e; *Doc. II: I: 537: ¶ 2; Doc. II: I: 559: ¶ 8; WE 1351:1*.

254 AC 1696e.

255 TR 851:3e. (Also CL 26e).

256 JD 243.

257 SD 2021, 2541–2542.

258 *The New Philosophy* (1976):499–432 and NCL (1977): 41–42, 202–204.

259 Larsen (1980): 8. Also Larsen (1988): 186a.

260 The title of this section was taken from the title of Regamey (1966).

261 Rose (1966): 36, lists Toksvig, Dr. Enoch Pond, and W. C. Irvine. Pond's original book *Swedenborgianism Reviewed* was critically assessed by T. Parsons in the *New Jerusalem Magazine* (Boston: October 1846): 57–78, and it was A. E. Penn who wrote a reply to W. C. Irvine called *Heresies Exposed Exposed* (Bombay: British India Press, 1935).

262 Hallengren (1994): 29, 30–31 & nn. 9–10, 42 explains his actual position. An accountant doesn't strike me as being as impressive as Tafel's depiction him as "the treasurer." (*Doc. I*: 620, n. 19)

263 As well as endnote 27, see Tafel (1877) *Doc. II*: II: 1118–1127 and Woofenden (1974): 3, who believes "the transition began about October, 1743, and was completed by June, 1747."

264 *Doc. I*: 35–36: ¶ 15. Tafel (*Doc. I*: 622, n. 21) refers the reader to *Adversaria* (hereinafter AD): II: 1956, 1957 (WE 3557) and AD I: 1003 (WE 1003).

265 Regamey (1966): 39. Horn (1987): 24 believes that Robsham putting the account in the first person is a sign of plausibility. Cf. endnote 301.

266 Regamey (1966): 37. It's a shame that Regamey doesn't elucidate what Swedenborg says about "the nature and character of a Divine Revelation."

267 *Doc. I*: 52.

268 *Doc. I*: 68: ¶ 32.

269 *Doc. II*: I: 426: ¶ 3.

270 *Doc. I*: 69: ¶ 32.

271 For a Swedenborgian discussion of what Swedenborg meant when he said that angels or spirits dictated information to him, see Woofenden (1985): 57–60. Cf. endnote 18 and *Doc. I*: 62: ¶15, and Tafel's footnote.

272 *Doc. I*: 70: ¶ 33. Cf. *Doc. II*: I: 426: ¶ 3. This dinner party took place in July 1765. Acton (1955) in L & M 604, cf. endnote 106, who recalls Councillor Wenngren's summary of Beyer's attitude to Swedenborg at the time:

During his [Swedenborg's] stay at Gottenburg, Dr. Beyer accidentally met him in company, and entertaining, from report, the same sentiments with many others in that country, with respect to his being a madman, on account of his assertion, that he had communication with the spiritual world, he was surprised when he observed that Swedenborg spoke very sensibly, without discovering any marks of that infirmity of which he was suspected, he therefore invited Swedenborg to dine with him the day following in company with Dr. Rosen (*Doc. II*: II: 699).

273 SD 397. Cf. JD p. 187 "drank a little more than I ought; which is not of the spirit, but of the flesh, and thus sinful."

274 WE 3557, cf. Revelation 16:13. In WE 1003 Swedenborg could indicate that it happened in "the middle of April 1745."

275 Toksvig (1948, 1983): 152.

276 Regamey (1966): 38, 39. Cf. endnote 278.

277 Regamey (1966): 38.

278 JD 53–65; also *Doc. II*: I: 158–162: ¶ 27–34.

279 Horn (1987): 24–27.

280 SD 397 n. 1, and WE 3557 n. 4.

281 SD 377; cf. SD 384–385 also for "mice."

282 SD 387.

283 SD 378.

284 Cf. what Swedenborg says about angels' clothes (e.g. HH 178–179, 181–182), homes and surroundings (e.g. HH 183, 186, 188–190).

285 Horn (1987): 24.

286 Horn (1987): 26b.

287 Horn (1987): 26a.

288 Horn (1987): 27a.

289 Horn (1987): 25a.

290 E.g. HH 74–77, CL 28–33; cf. Zechariah 5:9, Mark 16:5, Luke 24:4, etc.

291 JD 50–55. Also *Doc. II: I: 157–160*: ¶ 26–27. In a similar experience nearly 3 months later, he feels the back of “a holy angel,” but is not thrown on his face. JD 209–210. Also *Doc. II: I: 198*: ¶ 147.

292 JD 120–122. Also *Doc. II: I: 177–178*: ¶72e [untranslated]–73).

293 JD 168. Also *Doc. II: I: 188*: ¶112.

294 JD 276. *Doc. II: I: 217*: ¶202.

295 Horn (1987): 27b.

296 SD 2990. Cf. HH 55.

297 Talbot (1990): 12, 14–15, in which I quote AC 2588:7, 5115:3, AE 706:3 (for dreams) and AC 1970; HH 76; AE 53:1, 1037: 1; DL 52; AR 36; CL 26; TCR 851:2 (for visions).

298 Hallengren (1994): 28. Hallengren (1994): 42 talks about “the powerful von Goerres came up against the simple authenticity of the call vision.”

299 Hallengren (1994): 42

300 *Ibid.*, 43

301 Woofenden (1974): 7; cf. endnote 265.

302 Keith (1990): 950–951 who has a useful bibliography on p. 368.

303 CL 1. (as in TCR 851:1); see also TCR 777:2, 779; NC 43, 52. Some of these passages have already been mentioned by White. Cf. endnote 232.

304 NC 43, 52.

305 *Doc. II: I: 404*: ¶5.

306 *Doc. II: I: 249, 253*.

307 L & M 679; cf. endnote 106. Also *Small Theological Works and Letters* (hereinafter STWL) 313.

308 TCR 4:1, 108e, 791.

309 SD 2472.

310 SD 2990; cf. endnotes 243, 244.

311 TCR 777:2; cf. endnote 297.

312 SD 3010, 3249.

313 AR 926:4, *Brief Exposition* 118:4; TR 187:4.

314 SD(M) 4791.

315 EU 40:2, AC 7173, SD 3292, 1446.

316 EU 170:2 . Also AC 10809, and SD 5513a: b.

317 DW 131, HH 85, DP 135, *Interaction of Soul and Body* 4; cf. HH 143.

318 AC 1531.

319 HH 118.

320 Five Memorabilia 18.

321 E.g. AC 8443, 8644, 8783, DP 202:3, TR 150.

322 E.g. HH 20–50, 265–283.

323 AE 78:2, 3.

324 Talbot (1990): 13; cf. endnote 297, in which I quote AR 945e, SD 284, AC 1625.

325 *Doc. I: 43*: ¶ 36. Cf. Tafel's evaluation in *Doc. I: 628–630 n 27*, and *Doc. II: I: 437*: ¶18.

326 *Doc. I: 42*: ¶ 34. Cf. Tafel's evaluation in *Doc. I: 620 n. 19*.

327 Lomax (1996): 17a.

328 *Doc. II: I: 316–317*. Cf. Robsahm's story about Swedenborg being informed of the plot by a friendly Senator. Swedenborg “became very sorrowful, and going straightway into is garden, fell upon his knees and in tears prayed to the Lord, and asked Him what he should do, when he received the comforting assurance, that nothing evil should befall him—as was the case.” *Doc. I: 47*: ¶ 48. Swedenborg was saved from assassination by “a nail of a lock.” (*Doc. I: 59*: ¶ 12); cf. footnote pp. 59–60. Cf. *Doc. II: II: 1053* (Beyer to Oetinger).

329 *Doc. II: I: 563*: ¶ 1.

330 *Doc. II: I: 507–509*: ¶ 17.

331 *Doc. I: 66*: ¶27.

332 *Doc. II: I: 409* (11/5/1772).

- 333 ML (1909): 209a–210a
334 Lomax (1996): 16b, cf. endnote 327.
335 Cf. Rev. Dr. George Dole's paraphrase of the Swedenborg expression "love of dominion from the love of self" as "the need to be in control" in "The Nature of Evil Reexamined" in *The Messenger* (September 1996): 104ab.
336 Budden (1995): 9–10.
337 Cf. the case of Rev. Sven Schmidt, a Swede, who "was deprived of his office, declared insane and imprisoned because he insisted on teaching the Swedenborgian tenets." Sigstedt (1951, 1981): 408. Butterfield (1993) writes:
New Church members will no doubt be greatly relieved to learn that the highest American courts of not one but two states have held that being a Swedenborgian is not a definitive symptom of lunacy. While that means of course, that there are still forty-eight states that have yet to take a position on the issue, it seems likely that we can all rest comfortably in the presumption of sanity. Further, New Church men and women have been presumptively sane, at least in Illinois and Washington, for some time now. (pp. 114–115)
Cf. endnote 46.
338 Rose (1993): 269, which was drawn to my attention by Rev. Norman Ryder.
339 Rev. W.H. Benade's article mentioned in endnotes 110–112 was also printed in MO (1862): 95–101, which I only discovered after writing parts 1 & 2 of this treatise as it appeared in *New-Church Magazine*.
340 Charles T. Tart, ed., *Altered States of Consciousness: A Book of Readings* (New York: Wiley, 1969): 2 (unsighted); quoted in Blackmer (1991): 15; cf. 59 n. 13.
341 Stephen Larsen in his introduction to Blackmer (1991): 57 n. 16. For other articles on "Transpersonal psychology" from a Swedenborgian perspective, cf. Larsen (1980) and (1988); and Martin (1983) and (1988).
342 Larsen (1980): 10. Also Larsen (1988): 187a.
343 Larsen (1980): 10–11. Also Larsen (1988): 187a.
344 Larsen (1980): 14. Also Larsen (1988): 188a.

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Abbreviations for the Titles of Swedenborg's Writings

AC	Arcana Coelestia	LD	The Lord (De Domino)
AD	Adversaria	LI	Doctrine of Life
AE	Apocalypse Explained	LJ	Last Judgement
AR	Apocalypse Revealed	LJ(C)	Continuation of Last Judgement
AT	Athanasian Creed		
BE	Brief Exposition	LJ(P)	Last Judgement (published posthumously)
CA	Consummation of the Age		
CH	Charity	LO	Divine Love
CL	Conjugal Love	LW	Divine Love and Wisdom
CN	Canons of the New Church	MA	Marriage (De Conjugio II)
CO	Coronis	3MA	De Conjugio III
CV	Conversations with Angels	MI	Miracles
DC	Documents concerning Swedenborg edited by R.L. Tafel	MI(F)	Fragment on Miracles
		NC	Invitation to the New Church
DL	Doctrine of the Lord	NQ	Nine Questions
DP	Divine Providence	PD	Precepts of the Decalogue
EC	Ecclesiastical History of the New Church	PP	Prophets and Psalms
		RE	Reply to Ernesti
EU	Earths in the Universe	SB	Interaction of Soul and Body
FA	Doctrine of Faith	SC	Scripture Confirmations
FC	Index to "Formula Concordia"	SD	Spiritual Diary (also called Spiritual Experiences)
FM	Five Memorabilia	SD(M)	Minor Diary
HD	New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine	SS	Doctrine of the Sacred Scripture
HH	Heaven and Hell	SS(P)	Sacred Scripture (De Verbo)
IB	Index Biblicus	TR	True Christian Religion
IM	Index to Memorabilia in True Christian Religion	WE	The Word Explained = Adversaria
JD	Journal of Dreams	WH	White Horse
JU	Justification	WI	Divine Wisdom