



OTHER WORLD EFFECT ON THIS WORLD

DR MICHAEL STANLEY

After earning his PhD in physics, Michael Stanley enjoyed a successful career in America as a solid-state physicist before becoming Principal of a Swedenborg training college in Manchester, UK. He has delivered many popular lectures around the world and written several books on Emanuel Swedenborg's work. His particular interest is in applying spiritual principles to personal growth. For an audio copy of this lecture please visit www.swedenborg.com.au/talking-books-and-audio-talks



Last week I outlined some of the laws and conditions that apply in the spiritual world, that's to say, to all those persons who have left behind the veil of the physical body. Now in this, my last lecture in this series, I'm going to outline some of the fascinating effects which this spiritual world has upon us here who are still clothed in the veil of a physical body.

But first let us consider the world of animals. Let's think for a moment about a sheep. Now, a sheep has a certain nature, and within certain narrow limits, one sheep is not very much different from another and we do not expect the character or nature of that sheep to vary very much at all throughout its lifespan. Now, where does that nature come from? Does it arise out of the particular molecular structure of its body, or does it come from some other source? There are only two different kinds of explanation that can be given. One is that the nature of that sheep has come about by chance, having somehow evolved out of atoms and molecules. The other is that the nature of that sheep must derive in some way from a higher source or being.

Now, the first of those two answers, that the nature of a sheep has come about by chance, is what I would call a non-answer; a non-answer because it doesn't answer or explain anything and is the great weakness which is behind the whole atheistic position which is still maintained, I'm sad to say, by a large number of scientists and by many scientific establishments.

So, a sheep has a certain nature which it derives from above, let's say, call it for the moment, and a nature which does not vary very much at all throughout its lifespan. If we now consider a wolf — a wolf has a different nature to a sheep, but again the nature of a wolf does not vary very much throughout its lifespan. And so we could go throughout the whole of the animal creation, finding in each case a different nature



which doesn't change very much. From one species to another there may be a change — you may have cats and dogs and different species may show different characteristics but they don't change very much.

But if we now think of a young child, how different the situation is. Isn't it fantastic how a young child can one moment be so angelic in its character that it is a wonderful source of inspiration to us adults and can warm and melt even the stoniest hearts on occasions and yet in the next moment or the next day, that child has become little devil and is an absolute pain in the neck and then switching back again? What an enormous difference there is between a child's nature and that of any animal. Does this child receive both aspects of this nature, good and bad, from the same source?

Now let's consider a creative artist. Let's consider a Mozart — how we notice that a full melody can spring into the artist's mind. Where has this fully formed melody come from? Or take a great scientist, making a great discovery, which is called a heuristic leap, because all scientific discoveries, they are not made by logical deduction — that is a common fallacy which non-scientists often believe in. All discoveries come out of the blue, like for instance the famous one we've probably heard of at school of Archimedes, who shouted "Eureka!" and leapt out of his bath when he hit on the principle of displacement. Or another famous instance is that of Kekulé in the 19th century, who had a vision of the molecular structure of the benzene molecule, which came to him in the form of a snake chasing its tail, and immediately he knew he had the answer to the problem that he was working on. Where do these scientific discoveries come from?

Or take an arch criminal with a fantastically cunning and subtle plan to subvert some government — fiendish, but so clever, so intricate, so worked out. Where does that come from?

But of course we don't need to have to consider necessarily the great artists and the great criminals. We can look at ourselves and begin to notice how thoughts and feelings so frequently spring ready-formed into our minds, apparently out of nowhere — some good and some bad. Do they all have the same source? The answer is a sort of yes and no. Yes, they do have the same source, but by the time they reach us, they have become more than one source. There has to be something that can bring about a change or distortion in the inflowing life from the ultimate source of life before it reaches us so that sometimes what was originally good by the time it reaches us has become distorted and bad.

I'd like to illustrate this first of all with a very simple analogy, that of money. Money is like a power or a force because it enables us to do things, to get things done, to make things happen. Now, if we consider two people, A and B, who are both paid by



the same company and through the same bank. Person A, when he receives his money, spends it on drink and beating up his wife. Person B spends his money wisely on his family and friends and charity. The same power — money — as it passes through two different media, emerges quite differently in its effects.

Let's consider another analogy which is slightly more complex but therefore slightly nearer to the truth. Let's consider two radio receivers. One of these receivers is a marvellous, up-to-date specimen that is able to transmit the incoming signal perfectly. The other is a very old, poor, battered model, and the signal, when it comes out of the loudspeaker, is harsh and distorted and muffled. The same signal coming into those two radio receivers, by the time it comes out at the other end, in the one case it could be beautiful, harmonious music and speech or song; in the other it could be a harsh, painful sound grating on the ears, and yet the source has been the same.

Now, we are like a third receiver that can tune to pick up either the signal coming through the good receiver or the signal coming through the bad one. In fact, we are tuned to pick up both types of signal. The region in which this change in the original life-force takes place is the world of spirit. It must be the world of spirit because the thoughts and the feelings that we receive into our hearts and minds are themselves in the realm of spirit. They are not in the realm of matter at all.

Last week, I outlined simply the structure of this spiritual world, which is in fact the world that our own mind occupies. It is formed of a series of levels, planes or layers from very high planes down to very low, distorted planes, passing through intermediate ones that we can call natural planes, the ones that we are normally familiar with. This is the spiritual world, and it is peopled by many persons who have passed beyond this world into the other, and they range from very highly developed beings that we can call angelic or angels, down to very distorted beings that we can call evil spirits, or some people would call them devils, and it is through this region, this spiritual world, that the life-force from God passes down until it reaches your and my minds. And normally we are receiving most of these signals most clearly in the intermediate, natural planes or layers of this mental or spiritual world.

Now, think about that for a moment. We are receiving two different sources: one is good, coming through angels and good spirits; the other is distorted and is coming through evil spirits and bad spirits and we are picking up, we are tuned to pick up both types. Normally we are not very attuned at all to the very high angelic signals that are coming in at a high level in our minds, nor are we very attuned to the very low, distorted signals that are coming in in the very basements of our spirits.

Let us now consider first of all the influence that we receive, or can pick up through our very highest level — the angelic levels of our minds. We have with us at all times



a number of angels or angelic beings who are endeavouring as far as possible to be an influence upon us. They are not permitted to speak from their own memory of their own life in the angelic heavens, so they are not normally talking to us about life in heaven. That is not their function. But they are talking to us about what is heavenly, and they talk at a deep or high level. They talk at the level of motivation, and normally we find it very difficult to think at the level of motivation.

We've grown up to think in terms of objects and actions, the things that we can see around us, and we have to train ourselves to go more deeply, to uncover deep motives. And so normally we cannot hear the angelic voices very directly, but indirectly they can have a tremendous influence upon us. The angels are inspiring us with good motivations and enlightening us with deep perceptions. They are also the source of those creative impulses and new forms which spring into the minds of great people on Earth. Also, angels are the source for us of those deep feelings of peace, inner peace, joy, inner happiness, contentment and so on, because angels share their own heavenly happiness with all those with whom they're in contact.

Angels also are looking inside us, not for what is bad or distorted, because we all have bad and distorted things in us, but the angels aren't interested in finding those things, which they know are there anyway, but all the time they are looking for what is best in us, and when they find what is good and beautiful in us, then it is like a young, beautiful, tender plant, and they take care of it and they encourage its growth. That is how the angels work with us.

They also help to maintain our sense of freedom. Never do they desire to force us in any way to believe or to think or to feel or to do what they do. They only want to inspire and to encourage but to leave us with a maximum freedom to make our own decisions, our own judgments and our own choices.

And lastly, angels are sometimes used as special media for revelation. There have been times in the past, particularly we know of a number of occasions in the Bible when angels have been used to bring special revelation at special times for special purposes to certain special individuals, but not normally.

Now, below the level of angels, we have what we can loosely call good spirits. Good spirits are people like you and me who are on their way upwards. They're in the spiritual world now but they're not yet fully angelic. And therefore, their thinking and feeling, although it is good, it is not at such a deep level. We have a number of good spirits very closely associated with us at all times, and through them we get those natural, good thoughts and feelings which pop into our heads, the ones that we can be very consciously aware of because they're at a level that we can attune to and understand so much more easily because we're much nearer in development to good spirits than we are to angels.



Now, below good spirits, we have a number of spirits who are neither as yet particularly good or bad, who are very close in their development to ordinary people like you and me in this world, and we have at all times with us a number of these spirits that we can call, following Emanuel Swedenborg, 'subject spirits'. Now, these subject spirits who are more close to us than any other of these spirits, they are, if you like, almost the very last, or they are the last link in the chain of influx from God down through the heavenly levels, down into our minds. These subject spirits enter into our memory.

Now, this is a very, very striking and interesting phenomenon, and I'd like you to listen very carefully to this because there has been recent striking confirmation of this particular phenomenon. We all of us have a memory bank which contains within it every single incident and image that has occurred to us in our life. This record is 100 percent complete. Every single thing that our eyes have fallen upon, whether or not at the time we noticed what we were looking at, is recorded in this memory bank. It was in the 1940s that a scientist, a neurophysiologist named Wilder Penfield discovered by using electric probes in the brain that a perfect recall could be made in a patient of an earlier time of his life. By stimulating a certain part of the brain, the patient would begin to recount every single detail that happened 10, 15 years ago. These details are totally insignificant, quite meaningless, just ordinary little things of no consequence that were happening at the time.

And so we know that we carry with us this perfect memory bank. But what you may not realise is that this memory bank is not totally private to ourselves alone. It can be dipped into and it can be drawn upon by others. In particular, these subject spirits that we have with us, they normally are unable to recall anything of their past Earth memory. That memory has become, generally speaking, quiescent, and they live from what we call an interior memory. That is a memory of our thoughts and feelings and decisions, the things that really matter. You see, we're not really our outer memories. The outer incidents that have happened to us have no real importance. What is of importance to us and what we carry with us to eternity are our reactions to the things that have happened in our life.

Now, these subject spirits, they normally are living from their interior memory, which is their own, it's the one that they have developed through their choices and decisions and reactions, particularly when they lived on Earth and continuing into the spiritual world. But for a period, they are closely associated with a man or woman on Earth, and they enter into the memory bank of that person on Earth. Whilst they do so, they are not aware that they have entered into the memory bank of someone else. Because they have temporarily forgotten their own Earth memory, they believe that they are that particular person whose memory they have entered into, and they form the last link in the chain of life or influx that comes from God down into men and women here on Earth.



Now because these subject spirits normally have no recollection of their former Earth memory, but are using our memory, we and they are not aware of this peculiarly close association.

But you may have noticed from time to time, I certainly have, how funny memories pop into my mind of the past for no reason at all, they have no obvious linkage with anything I'm thinking about at the time. These are a reflection of what the spirit with us, the subject spirit, is himself drawing out because he is able to use our memory, and he may draw on something that we have not chosen to remember particularly at the time.

But conversely, occasionally, the situation becomes reversed and a subject spirit recalls some facet or part of his earlier Earth life, and because we are so closely associated with them, it means that what flashes into our mind is a memory of a former life, giving the appearance as if we have lived before.

Now, this situation, which might strike you as a little bizarre and perhaps a bit hard to really swallow, has received perfect confirmation in recent times, due to a new technique developed which is called hypnotic regression. In hypnotic regression, a patient is taken by a hypnotist back into former regions of his life, but the hypnotist can take the person back to his childhood, to his infancy, back into the womb and then apparently after a sudden leap or jump, back into an apparently former life or existence. And at first, these hypnotic regressions were such as to make many people, in fact still do make many people feel that here is proof of reincarnation, but in fact the situation is the reverse. Far from being proof of reincarnation, it turns out that here we have confirmation of the phenomenon of subject spirits, which was described so fully by Emanuel Swedenborg over 200 years ago.

Let me just describe just one or two very striking instances and bear in mind that we carry this perfect memory bank with us of everything that our eyes and ears and senses have lighted upon. In 1906, Lowes Dickenson investigated a case for the Society for Psychical Research of a girl called Cynthia. Now, Cynthia was beginning to speak on occasions as a person called Blanche Poynings, who purported to be a friend of the Countess of Salisbury who lived in the reign of Richard II, and this Blanche Poynings came out with all sorts of details about the life of her mistress, the Countess of Salisbury, and these details seemed to be generally along the right lines.

And Lowes Dickenson, investigating this particular girl, Cynthia, found that eventually, by using the planchette, the personality of Blanche Poynings came through directly and on questioning, Blanche Poynings said that you will find confirmation of all these details in a book which is called *Countess Maud* by Emily Holt. And indeed, the book was eventually found, and as Blanche Poynings had said,



all the details that she had been given were to be found confirmed in this particular book.

So what Lowes Dickenson did was, under hypnotic regression, he took Cynthia back to the time when she had come across this particular book and it turned out that she was 12 years old at the time and simply flipping through the pages without taking much notice because she didn't find it too interesting, but she had flipped through the pages of this particular book called *Countess Maud* by Emily Holt. That's a case from 1906.

There's another very striking case that comes in the 1960s, a case of a girl called Nicky studied by a Finnish researcher called Dr Reima Kampman. He found that under hypnotic regression, Nicky began to speak as a girl called Dorothy who purported to have lived in the 13th century in England, and during this interview, this regression, Dorothy began to sing this song, which was called the *Summer Song*. Dr Kampman was very intrigued by this and in another regression session, he took Nicky back to the time when she had come across the source of this material. And indeed, it turned out that at the age of 13, she was in a library turning over the pages of a music book by Britten and Holst and her eyes lit upon this particular song called the *Summer Song*, which was in Medieval English.

So, we see that these apparent cases of former lives can frequently be found to have the source of the details in books which have been written and read but not really observed by people in former times, but there's got to be an actor involved, and so, like Blanche Poynings, there is someone who is now living in the other world who is able to draw on this memory bank and relive facets either from the memory of what has been read, or it is possible that in some cases, the subject spirit involved in the case is able to relive something of his or her former life, and that comes through into the consciousness of the person here on Earth.

There are many other ways of confirming this particular interpretation of hypnotic regression, but that would take me off the general subject that I have tonight, but this is one of the fascinating areas of the effect of the spiritual world upon us here in this world.

Now let's turn to the other side of the attunement to the spiritual world — the evil side. We all have with us a certain number of evil spirits and they work in exactly the opposite way to the angelic spirits. They are simply a distortion of the life force that everyone receives from God. And instead of inspiring and enlightening us, evil spirits are doing the reverse. They are pumping us full of their own selfish desires, their own fears, their own jealousies and envies and so on. They are putting destructive impulses into us instead of creative ones. They are looking not for what is good in us because selfish people don't do that. Selfish people are always looking for what is



bad in other people, that's why selfish people get so cynical, because all they can discover in those around them is what is bad or not to be trusted. And so the evil spirits are stirring up in us thoughts such as, "I'm no good", "I'm rotten", "I'm utterly selfish", "I've been out for myself all the time", "I'm just thinking of myself" and so on and so on.

Evil spirits are dragging us down to their level and I'm sure all of you here in this room as have I, have sometimes succumbed for a while to that particular pressure or influence and have noticed how difficult it can be to break free. You might in a sense be aware of what's happening to you, that there is an influx into you which is not you, but have you noticed how difficult it is to cut off that influx and switch to a better one? And that is where we need guidance and techniques and group help to begin to learn how to cope with that kind of situation which comes to all of us from time to time in life.

We are in a state of equilibrium between these two forces or influxes. Both come from God, but one passing through the heavenly realms of our mind and the other passing through the hellish realms, and so we get the two different kinds of impulses and thoughts but we have the freedom as to which we want to identify with and to link to, even though sometimes it might be difficult to make the switch that we want to make, but nevertheless it's our choice to want to try to make the switch if we choose to.

Now, I want to give you a simple further analysis of these two streams of influx, one good and one bad. Each of them can be divided into two parts: one part flows into the heart, or our will, and affects our feelings, and affections, desires and motivations; and the other flows into our mind or our understanding and affects our thoughts and our perceptions.

Now, there are many people who are endeavouring to attune to the good influx that is coming through the spiritual world, but who are tending to attune to only one half of this influx, to the detriment of the other. There are those, for instance, who are attuning almost solely to the influx that comes into the mind and not into the heart, and these are persons who make a great study of their religion or faith and they work it out and their belief system is very strong and very clear but relatively they seem to be rather cold as people because they have only been drawing on one half of the good influx that is available to them through the heavenly levels of their mind.

Conversely, there are those who are drawing almost entirely on the heart side of this influx, and here we have particularly emotional types of Christians who are full of spirit and warmth but they are relatively blind; they do not understand and they can often fall and trip and stumble in life because their faith is blind and unreasoned and they are relying purely on an emotional response to Christ or God or whatever is the



particular religious source upon which they rely. And so we learn a lesson here of the great need to balance the influx we draw upon through the heavenly realms of our mind. We need to balance the heart and the mind if we are to be truly whole persons, and this particularly is one of the aspects that Swedenborg himself was at pains to stress — the need for both heart and mind to be balanced in its response to God and its response to life.

Now, the thought might have occurred to you that perhaps sometimes there may be big happenings in the spiritual world that would have in some way a big effect upon life in this world if the two worlds are so closely connected and so interact, and this is indeed the case. The most striking case that we know of is what happened 2000 years ago which caused a major event to take place on the religious scene — that is the incarnation of God as Jesus Christ, or into Jesus Christ. Now, what is not clearly recognised because it is not spelt out in so many words in the Bible, because the Bible doesn't uncover all the heavenly mysteries; Jesus himself was at pains to point out that only his inner circle would have the inner mysteries revealed to them, that the crowds would only have the parables. But 2000 years ago, we have a situation developing in the spiritual world which caused a block and caused God to have to take a more drastic action than normal in his relationship with mankind.

Normally, when people are dying and entering into the spiritual world, they enter into this intermediate realm called the world of spirits, which acts as a kind of clearing house because gradually our inner natures become revealed and we allow ourselves to be drawn either upwards or downwards and this intermediate realm of the spiritual world is clearing itself, it's not a permanent place of residence, but there have been a few occasions in the history of mankind when hypocrisy in the Church has risen to such an extent that you have masses and masses of religious people passing into the spiritual world in a highly hypocritical frame of heart and mind, having around them a religion which is very, very external — an empty shell of outward goodness and outward propriety but inwardly no love for God and no love for the neighbour.

Now, we know of the effect of this situation on Earth through the gospels, where we read again and again of the Pharisees, the persons whom Jesus Christ had to struggle against so much. It wasn't the tax collectors and the sinners that provided the problem for Jesus, it was the Pharisees because the Pharisees had developed this hypocritical form of religion and they were carrying this with them into the spiritual world and there they could not be sorted out because outwardly their lives were good; angelic, if you like, on the outside but inwardly they were thinking only of themselves. And the whole spiritual world began to become blocked by a false superficial religion, which was blocking the true light that was coming down through the heavens, and should be reaching men's minds on Earth, and that situation was becoming critical and would have become totally disastrous for mankind's spiritual future, unless God had taken steps to break through the what you might call dark



clouds developing in the spiritual world, and producing dark clouds in the minds of men and women in the Church on Earth. And he broke through by creating a new channel through to the human form that we call Jesus Christ.

So that is a striking example of how you can have a general effect, a block occurring in the spiritual world which produces a corresponding block in this life and means that God has to step into this world in some new way to break through the impasse.

Now, a similar situation has occurred since that particular time. It occurred, or its climax came about 200 years ago in the 18th century. The Christian Church, in its various branches, was beginning to develop distortions and hypocrisy and spiritual blindness in many different ways, so that it was getting harder and harder for the ordinary men and women in the Church to be able to receive into their hearts and minds the true gospel, or if you like, the ancient wisdom, the truth that is eternal and always has been.

And so, God's Church on Earth, instead of being a means for opening heaven to men and women was again becoming the great block, preventing men and women from being able to come close to God and close to one another because for instance, many parts of the Christian Church were beginning to preach an angry God who condemned sinners to an eternal punishment in hell and other such barbaric concepts. And so God had to act again.

Once we begin to understand the symbolic nature of the Scriptures, we can begin to realise that Christ was indeed predicting that this situation would occur and that he would have to come again, but he never said that he would come again in the flesh. That is nowhere stated. It is said by Christ that he would appear on the clouds of heaven, not on the clouds of Earth, but the clouds of heaven. And all the prophecies of his second coming are so highly symbolic that there is no way that any rational man can really try to take those prophecies literally.

We are now living in a most wonderful age because we are seeing Christianity and in fact world religions as a whole going through a wonderful transformative process, particularly in the last 50 years or so. We have seen a whole new spirit and great changes in understanding of the Scriptures taking place all over the world in different religions. True, there are still movements and sects which are very old-fashioned and backward and literalistic, but in the main, we see religion having received a kind of new birth, revitalisation, an understanding which is taking us back past the errors and the distortions that the Christian Church brought in its development and taking us back to what Christ was originally teaching to his disciples and which the earliest teachers of the Christian Church knew and had put in their own writings. And that is why we call it a new age, just as a new age dawned 2000 years ago with the coming of Christ.



We're living in a new age, and the fact that you are here tonight is a part of the manifestation of that new age. Your minds, and I'm speaking particularly of people like yourselves who have come to lectures like these — your minds are becoming freed from dogma of the past. You are beginning to search, you are beginning to question, you are beginning to look for answers that you can confirm from within yourselves rather than have dictated to you answers which you are told to accept in blind faith or trust.

And now, finally, I would like to just cover briefly the area of dreams and visions. Dreams are very interesting. Not all of you may be able to recall many of your dreams, but you may at least be fascinated by reading or hearing of some of the dreams of other people. Now, this is an enormous subject that's being opened up today and very few people are really as yet getting to the bottom of this particularly complex subject.

It's complex partly because there are so many different types of dream. We can't just simply say the explanation and the meaning of dreams is so-and-so and so-and-so because they vary so much from very simple reshuffling of the events of a previous day right down to events of enormously deep importance and transforming effect upon our lives.

But I will have to generalise for the sake of this particular lecture and I will offer you this — that our dreams are a result of spirits who are with us who are digging into and stirring up deeper feelings and emotions normally below the level of our consciousness and they are clothing or cloaking these emotions and feelings in images drawn from our memory bank, and they are, as it were, playing around with these. Sometimes it is perhaps merely playful, sometimes they may carry a message of importance for us.

But this is what we experience in our dreams. Sometimes we feel that we are a passive observer, where we feel emotionless but we are seeing a panorama take place in front of us. That is obviously a situation where our inner feelings are not being stirred but simply our memory bank is being drawn upon to create, as it were, a scenario. But sometimes we are deeply involved in our dreams and swept along by some emotion, and that might be the first time we have really experienced that emotion, and it is teaching us something about our deeper selves that we're not normally aware of.

But when we come to visions — visions are distinctly different from dreams because whereas dreams are feelings and emotions that produce an apparent chaotic jumble of images, in a vision you get a coherent picture, and we looked at this in the first lecture in the case of near-death experiences, when we came to the conclusion that



there seemed to be good grounds for accepting what the people said was that this to them was real, it was a true vision and not a hallucination.

Now, visions certainly are occurring to people from time to time and by a vision, we mean an opening of the spiritual eyes that we all have from birth that are normally veiled over by our physical eyes — an unveiling of our spiritual eyes to be able to see another person or persons who is now in the spiritual world.

But we have this very clear warning from the very lengthy experience of Swedenborg and a warning that comes from many other people as well. We must be careful if we have a vision not to regard it as an authority to be taken on trust. We must not absolve ourselves from judgment on this particular vision because mischievous and bad spirits in the world of spirits have tremendous powers to be able to masquerade as anyone whom they choose and they can draw on our memory banks for all the material they need if they want to convince us that they are some fantastic person that we've been longing to see, say the Virgin Mary or Jesus Christ himself. So just because somebody claims to have a vision of Christ, it doesn't follow that they have had a true vision. It might be a false one or it might be true. How are we to judge?

Before I answer that, I would just like to broaden the point by raising the question of opening up communication with spirits in the spiritual world. As I'm sure you are all well aware, there are a lot of people who are deliberately endeavouring to make contact with spirits in the other world. Now, this is an area or territory which is a very tricky and often dangerous one for the reasons that I have given. The trouble is that our motives are rarely absolutely pure and if we are approaching the spiritual world with a motive which is not pure, we are attracting to ourselves automatically by the law of spiritual attraction, a spirit or spirits who has the similar selfish motivation that we have, but a spirit who has the powers of deception and the powers to draw on our own memory bank to convince us if we will that they are presenting truth and a true message. And so we can easily be deceived unless our hearts are pure.

But conversely, there are many cases of persons who quite without any seeking whatsoever, have received the most beautiful visions and the most beautiful messages that purport to come from higher realms of the spiritual world, and we must judge all of these things on their own merits because after all, the truth is only what is the truth for you. But if you want to know how you can find what really is the truth, I will offer you these three guidelines. Firstly, use as a standard criterion of anything you come across or any spiritual experience that you have, the two great commandments that were put forward by Christ: Love the Lord your God and love your neighbour as yourself. If you receive any message or come across any religion or philosophy which runs counter to those two, then you should have a very strong inner voice in you which says, "No, there's something wrong here because it will not fit with loving God and loving the neighbour.



The second little bit of guidance I would offer you is to begin to meditate upon the sacred scriptures, that's to say, those scriptures which have stood the test of time down the centuries and led to many saintly lives. Particularly for those of you here who were brought up in the Western tradition, the Bible is the obvious scripture to go to because it is addressed much more in the terms in which we are familiar, but do recognise that sacred scriptures are not books containing literal messages. They are books which are addressed to the human soul or spirit using the symbolism of nature around us to get this over to us. They are parables, in other words, to be interpreted spiritually.

And the third piece of guidance is this: always retain an open mind and never accept any external authority, whether it be the Church, the Pope, some great teacher, the government or some vision of Christ or other great figure or angel. You have been given the power to make a judgment for yourself. Do not abdicate that responsibility. I'm afraid it is easier to do so and many people have done that — they have abdicated to some particular church or religion or powerful charismatic figure and they have lost their rationality and their reason and they can then be led who knows where.

Always have an open mind, never be closed to anything but question everything and look at it in the light of the highest principles of truth which you already know and have accepted in your mind.

In that way, you will begin to find the truth that is within yourselves. We all have the truth within us. It is a wonderful, hidden treasure waiting to be discovered and drawn out. It is the true heaven, unlike so many false, illusory heavens that are presented to us through many false thoughts that come into our minds from the lower regions of the spiritual world.

But the true heaven exists in all of us. It is far closer to us than we often imagine. The true heaven, which is eternal, and which provides endless joy and peace is already residing in your hearts — a hidden treasure, a great pearl, just waiting to be found and drawn out. It is the love which is already there in your hearts. Draw it out, let it flower and blossom and you will begin to find heaven now and you will take that heaven with you wherever you go, even beyond the grave. Thank you.