

As from Self and the Two Essentials of the Church

By Erik Sandstrom - 1983

One might say that reception, the existence of love, is the life of our love, or from our love, which we feel as if it were our own, though both our love itself and all the lifeforms from it, are and exist solely from the Lord, by touch.

Summing up this section we therefore conclude: That what is received, namely life inflowing from the Lord, is Divine; but that the recipient (or that which receives the Lord's life by contiguity and not by continuity), thus the esse or love of man, is created and finite; and that reception, since it is the existence of that esse (or the coming forth of that love) is created and finite also. The recipient itself, and the reception itself, are together what is called "the life of man."

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Influx and efflux

As we all well know, "it is a universal law that influx adjusts itself to efflux" (AC 5828, see also TCR 814).

We need not stay for long with this point, yet should note that efflux is the "life of man;" and that it is to this life of man that influx, which is the Divine life, adjusts itself. It is of mercy that it is thus, and not the reverse. The reverse would be that man's life (thus efflux) would adjust itself to the Lord's life (thus influx); but this would force all into heaven, in fact would force all into the Divine, and would destroy all human freedom.

The as-from-self and the Visible God

WARNING

Here we build a little further on what was said in the section "Definitions." *indicating this as only a segment of the work*

Bearing in mind that by the name "the Lord" is meant our God as visible, we should now note that in the Lord and because of Him, the whole Divine Trinity is at this day visible, not only the Divine Body, or the Divine Human. The Divine soul too is visible, not by itself, but in and by means of the Human. "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). This should be interpreted to mean: he who has seen the Lord truly has seen Him as Father. Philip had not so seen Him when he asked his question (John 14:8). In the Church it is a matter of perceiving the love and goodness in the Lord, as well as the truth, or law, that comes from Him. And the Holy Spirit, or the Divine operation, is visible, because it goes forth from the Lord's glorified Human. "I shall send Him to you from the Father" (John 16:26); "He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you" (John 16:14).

This visibility is because of the Word, especially in the Writings; but because of the Writings the Lord is in our day visible in the previous forms of the Word as well. The meaning of this is that it is in the Word and because of the Word, that we can see the Lord's mercy and love, longsuffering, compassion, and forgiveness, and so forth; and it is in and because of the Word we can see the mode whereby the Lord operates both as Creator and as Savior; for both the laws of creation and the laws of Providence have been set forth.

A teaching in the True Christian Religion gives what is perhaps the fullest statement anywhere in the Writings as to what the asfromself with man truly is; and apart from everything else I think there is also a special message in the Lord being spoken of as the Word in that statement. I think too that the immediate reason why the statement can be meaningfully made in our day and for our and future generations, is because the Lord is the Word in the Writings, that is, because the Lord is the Essence in the Writings.

We read: "When the Word is in any degree of fulness in the internal of man, then man speaks and acts of himself from the Word, and not the Word through him. It is similar with the Lord because He is the Word, that is, He is the Divine truth and the Divine good therein; the Lord out of Himself (ex Se) or out of the Word (ex Verbo) acts in man and into him, but not through him, because man acts and speaks freely from the Lord when he does so from the Word" (TCR 154:5). All the prepositions in this statement are of the essence, and also the negative which strengthens the doctrine by emphasizing

what is not the case. I am convinced that much of the power of this teaching is lost, unless we are explicitly aware that the Word in our day is to us what it is, because of the Writings. I would therefore read "... When the Writings, and because of them the total Word, are in any degree of fulness in the internal man, then man acts and speaks of himself from the total Word, and not that total Word through him" and so with the rest of the teaching. Not, of course, that we would change the wording when we quote, but that we should understand and bear in mind that by "the Word" is meant the Word as now revealed in fulness.

And the Word is "in some degree of fulness in the internal man," when it is in his conscience. Conscience is the Lord's with man, for the Lord alone has built it. Conscience is made up out of truths and goodness from the Word. The Lord therefore operates out of the conscience that is with man in his rational and into it, so that man out of his rational (meaning, in his own freedom according to his own reason) may speak and act from the Lord.

The above is the gist of the teaching as I see it. However, I would not here miss the opportunity to comment also, though but briefly, on the fact that on a few occasions there is an apparent contradiction in the Writings with regard to the preposition "through." I am referring to a sentence in the Faith of the New Heaven and the New Church, where we read: "These (goods) should be done by man as by himself, but it should be believed that they are from the Lord with him and through him (apud illum et per illum)" (TCR 3; CL 82; BE 43, 117). There is also the case in Canons, where we find the following teaching: "The Holy which is meant by the Holy Spirit is not transferred from man to man, but from the Lord through man to man (per hominem in hominem)" (Canons Holy Spirit IV:5).

I think two explanations are applicable here. One is that the preposition per, which means both "through" and "by means of," is sometimes better translated in the one way and sometimes in the other. The context would have to determine which translation is to be preferred. The problem, or part of the problem, may go away through this approach. In both the TCR and the Canons passages above, I would suggest that the intention of the teachings comes out better if we translate "by means of." "... are from the Lord with him and by means of him." "... transferred from the Lord by means of man to man."

But there is also the aspect of appearance, perhaps especially in the TCR passage. As it is legitimate for us to speak according to the appearance in many cases, so the Writings themselves occasionally so speak. In the particular cases under discussion the work on Divine Providence comes to our aid. We read: "If from the Lord there proceeds what is finite, as is the case in many things with man, it does not proceed from the Lord but from man; and it can be said to be from the Lord through man, because it so appears" (DP 219:2). First, then: Finite things can proceed only from man. Finite things are created by the Lord, but do not proceed from Him. And second: When finite things proceed from finite man, as when thoughts and then uses proceed from the love that is his life, then there is an appearance that those finite things proceed from the Lord through man. But it is but an appearance, for the actual case is that the proceeding from the Lord is "in man and into him, but not through him."

Image and Likeness

The "likeness" of God in man is man's ability "to receive and reproduce those things that proceed into him from God"; and the "image" of God in him is "his acting and thinking in spiritual things as of

himself" (Coro 26).

This is more beautiful than may first meet the eye; for what man is called upon to "reproduce" is that which proceeds into him from the Lord. TCR 43 gives in a summary what that proceeding is. We say this because what proceeds from the Lord is life from the Lord, the essence of which is Divine love. Now it is the nature of the Divine love that TCR 43 sets forth: "There are three things that make the essence of God's love — to love others outside of itself, to desire to be one with them, and to make them happy from itself." The number adds that the same three things also make the essence of God's wisdom.

The things to be reproduced in a man's own life, therefore, are loving others outside of himself, desiring to be one with them, and making them happy (and now we must say "as from") as from himself. And what is more, he is to be wise in doing these things, for he is also called upon to "reproduce" the Lord's wisdom. In this he is a "likeness," which relates to love and motive, and at the same time an "image," which brings forth the aspect of wisdom and mode.

In the historical context the Most Ancient Church was "likeness," but the Ancient Church after it was "image." Likeness is superior, as love is interior to wisdom. That is why, when the two terms are put together, it is said "image after likeness" — "in our image, after our likeness."

"Loving others outside of himself" means doing uses to others as well as to himself; and in the end, man being willing, regeneration will take him to the point where he loves uses for others more than uses for himself. To "desire to be one with them" will take the form of striving to make common cause with others in their uses, that is, taking an interest in these and promoting them by cooperation insofar as opportunity occurs. As for the third aspect, that is perhaps best understood in light of the following: "Love consists in this, that its own should be another's; to feel the joy of another as joy in oneself, that is loving" (DLW 47).

It is very evident that everything relating to being an image after the likeness of the Lord is contained in His two words, "Follow Me." Equally it is clear that His instruction at the last supper contains it: "I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you" (John 13:15). In this context we add also the following from the Writings: "Man is a likeness of God from the fact that he feels in himself that the things which are from God are in him as his own; but from this likeness he is an image of God only so far as he acknowledges that the love and wisdom or the good and truth in him are not his own and thus are not from himself, but are solely in God and thus from God" (CL 132:7).

The things that "he feels in himself from God as his own" are his love and wisdom, or his will and understanding. "Feeling them" as his own is the likeness in him. But since he can have not one whit of either love or wisdom from himself, it is incumbent on him to know and from the heart acknowledge this fact, lest he ascribe merit to himself; and in such acknowledgment he acts as an image.

And here we need only remind ourselves that it is particularly things created that are said to be "from God." And the love and wisdom, or will and understanding, of man are products, not proceedings, from the Divine; they are contiguous with the Divine influx, not continuous from it.

Proprium - love - freedom

When we say "proprium" we usually think of what is innate with man by heredity. This is evil in its general turning. But there is also the proprium that is born, "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:13). This is the proprium that is made by the Lord in man through his new birth, and it is heavenly in its nature and in its general bent.

Essentially it is a new man. Man is gradually lifted up into it insofar as he consistently compels himself to act according to conscience. In this respect act precedes willing, as shown in AC 4353:3. Conscience, of course, is there before man identifies with it, as are the remains out of which conscience is formed. But through regeneration conscience does become his will (see AC 918, 1023 et al).

Now it is the new proprium that is truly free in man. The old proprium would heatedly claim freedom for itself too, but it is a slave of its own evil, and knows not that it collides with the laws of God at every turn, and at times but all too rarely in our time with the laws of the land as well. True freedom is to act and speak as well as to think from love, that is, is doing these things as from self.

There are particularly two teachings to which I would call attention, that show the new proprium in relation to the as-from-self. One is in the work Divine Providence, in the context of the law that man "is to act from freedom according to reason." We read there: "Whatever a man does from freedom according to his thought is appropriated to him as his own and remains. This is because the proprium of man and his freedom make one. Man's proprium is of his life, and what a man does from (his) life he does from freedom; also, a man's proprium is what is of his love, for love is every one's life; and what a man does from his life's love he does from freedom" (DP 78).

The other is from the Arcana, and is a teaching addressed to "spirits fresh from this world (who) severely torment themselves by trying to comprehend how no one can do good of himself, or think truth of himself, but from the Lord." They thought they would be like machines, and had better let their hands hang down. "But they were told that they ought by all means to think, to will, and to do good from themselves, and that in no other way could they have a celestial proprium and celestial freedom; but that still they should acknowledge that the good and truth are not from them but from the Lord" (AC 2891).

In a word, the new proprium, the love that is the life of man, genuine freedom, and the as-from-self, make one.

To perceive, to sensate, and to acknowledge

Do we feel the Lord's life in ourselves? Yes and no. If we mean influx, the answer is No; but if we mean the effect of the influx, then the answer, rightly understood, can be Yes. We know from experience that, generally speaking, we do not feel, or sensate, the Lord's life within us. It is our own love (which if it is well, as we have noted, is from the Lord) that we feel; and since we do feel it, it seems to be from ourselves. But we may also at times experience a special sense of peace and inner joy, and in that feeling we may have an inward sense of the Lord's presence.

The Writings speak to both these points. We should, however, first note that apparently there is a general distinction in the Writings' usage of the words "perception" and "sense," or between the verbs "to perceive" and "to sensate." The former, though not exclusively, seems to refer to an intellectual awareness, and the latter more to an awareness of the will or love.

As to the negative (we do not feel the Lord's life or its activity within us), we read: "It is a law of Divine Providence that man should not perceive and feel anything of the operation of the Divine Providence, but should still know and acknowledge it" (DP 175). Again: "That from sense and perception man knows no otherwise than that life is in him, thus that it is as if it were his own, has need of no other proof than experience itself" (AE 1138:4). And we also recall the words to

Nicodemus: "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes" (John 3:8).

These words to Nicodemus involve also the cautious Yes aspect—"you hear the sound of it." The Writings explain this point, but in terms that are difficult to translate into meaningful English. The terms are *finis a quo* and *finis propter quem*. I think fair equivalents would be, for *finis a quo*, "the end from which things originate"; and for *finis propter quem*, "the end for the sake of which things are done." However, in the circumstances I think it is best to retain those two phrases in the original.

We read about this matter: "If it were not according to a Divine law that man cannot from sense and perception know otherwise than that life is in him, there could be no *finis propter quem* with him. [But] there can be this, because the *finis a quo* appears to be in him. The *finis a quo* is his love which is his life, and the *finis propter quem* is the delight of his love or life, and the effect in which the end (*finis*) presents itself is use. *Finis propter quem*, which is the delight of his life's love, is felt and perceived in man, because the *finis a quo* enables him to feel and perceive it, which end (*finis*), as has been said, is the love which is life" (AE 1138:6).

We see here the love that is man's life, having been touched and enkindled by the Divine inflowing, sensating a delight in conjunction with the Lord as it turns its love towards use. There is a trilogy here: the love itself of man (the *finis a quo*), the sense of delight from that love (*finis propter quem*), and the end product, the use.

This awareness of the Lord's presence is also described as a perception of influx "by a kind of thought." About this aspect of the awareness we read: "Man is raised up from his *proprium* when he is in the spiritual internal

And yet if such a man advances further into that state he perceives influx by a kind of thought. But he is not withheld from thinking and willing as if from himself.... " (AE 945:2).

Perhaps the previous passage and the present one can be seen to "hail each other," so to speak, if we assume that that "kind of thought" is man's reflection on the delight that he feels, and on its cause.

We are also reminded here of the general teaching that the interior cannot by itself sense the delight that is inherent in it, but only in its own exterior; and the role of the exterior is one that involves an ultimate in some form or other (as for example, the act of use).

The general conclusion, therefore, is that we do not sensibly experience the Divine touch itself, but that we are aware of the lifetrain that is set off by that touch, and first by a sense of delight. In heaven, and in a regenerate state, that delight is a feeling of supreme peace, and from this a happiness beyond telling.

The origin of man and his essence

The essential thing we need to note here is that origin is one thing, and essence another. Man does indeed have a Divine origin; but he does not have a Divine essence, nor will he ever get one. The Divine essence is of course uncreate; but man's essence is created. "There is one sole essence, one sole substance, and one sole form, from which are all essences, substances, and forms that have been created" (DP 157). Created things have had their origin from the Lord by means of His forming Divine truths, for the very forms of these things are created so that they may receive and contain what is from God (see AC 8861:2). The wonderful first things that constitute the spiritual sun are most certainly from a Divine origin, but not even they are life in themselves, but are in themselves "devoid of life" (see DLW 294; cf. AC 1999:4).

We must not allow ourselves to get entangled in the Gordian knot, so as to confuse origin and essence. The whole universe is from a Divine origin — one might perhaps say, "Divine in origin"; yet in terms of DLW 53 it does not, and nothing in it does, "possess anything Divine." Its essence, in the whole and in every part, is created; but its origin is not.

Conscience and the as-from-self

We have already to some extent placed conscience in the context of man's as-fromself. A teaching in the Spiritual Diary does so in a very explicit way: "Whoever is in charity and in true conscience may obey all the precepts of the Decalogue and know them as it were from himself, as being in all particulars impressed upon him, so that he has no need to learn them.... Moreover those who are in charity and in conscience possess as it were from themselves all the knowledges of faith.... Again they are able as it were from themselves to write whole books, and without masters to frame entire systems of doctrine; they can preach, and their preaching is in accordance with whatever is true and good" (SD 4263).

This is the man of whom Jeremiah speaks: "After those days, says the Lord, I will put My law in their inward parts, and will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (Jer. 31:33). Such a man has more of a feeling as if life was from him than any, but also more of a heartfelt acknowledgment than any that all that he has is from the Divine creative touch.

The Lord's own with man

The Lord's own can be spoken of from two viewpoints. These must not be confused. We can think of the six degrees of truth that are from Him. These are Divine truths; on every plane they are in themselves the same, but on every plane they take on a form that is adapted to those who live there. It is so with the truths in the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the Writings. In themselves these

truths are the same, on whatever plane they appear to us, but they clothe themselves in forms adapted to generations past and present. From this aspect the Lord's own with man is Divine.

But there are not only things that proceed from the Divine, but also things that are produced from it. These too are the Lord's own, but they are not Divine. For examples, take again what is said about the things that "constitute the sun of the spiritual world" (DLW 294), and those things that make up "the heaven of human internals" (AC 1999:4) — "they have no life in themselves, but are forms recipient of the Lord's life" (ibid.).

The Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge

Essentially those two trees contrast the reality and the appearance. The reality is that man lives from the Lord alone. This is the tree that must not be removed from the center of the garden of the mind. The appearance is that man lives from himself, independently of God. That appearance is in itself not evil. It was the Lord the Creator who placed the tree of knowledge in the garden, though away from the center; and it, like the other trees there, was "pleasant to the sight." Evil is to think that we actually do live from ourselves, or independently of a Creator. That is what moves the tree of life from the center, and places the tree of knowledge there (see Gen 3:3); and that is eating, or absorbing in the mind, what is false.

By so eating, man destroyed the second greatest gift of God to man. The first of the two great gifts is life itself — not life in itself, but the life itself of created man, the life that forms itself into a love distinct from all other loves in the grand man of the Lord's kingdom. But the second of these great gifts is man's ability to administer that love according to his own reason.

That is freedom; and that is the as-from-self as the Lord meant it to be.

"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me and I in him, bears much fruit; for without me you can do nothing." John 15:4, 5