

The New Church and modern Christianity

by George DeCharms

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KEY TO REFERENCES TO THE WRITINGS OF THE NEW CHURCH

AC Arcana Coelestia

CL Conjugial Love

DP Divine Providence

L Doctrine of the Lord

TCR True Christian Religion

PREFACE

In substance, what appears in the folio wing pages was presented as a series of lectures to the Bryn Athyn Church in the spring of 1949. The original manuscript has been revised and adapted to publication in book form, with the addition of one or two quotations from more modern sources to bring the treatment up to date.

The work is designed to bring before the members of the New Church the teaching of the Theological Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg concerning the state of the Christian world, and to show that that teaching is by no means obsolete, but applies with equal force, though in a somewhat modified form, to our own day and time.

If what is here presented serves to bring into sharp outline and relief the basic difference between the religious faith of the New Church and that of the modern Christian world it will have accomplished the purpose for which it has been written.

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CHAPTER I - THE STATE OF THE MODERN CHRISTIAN WORLD

Intelligent Newchurchmanship demands some definite and reliable insight into the state of the Christian world in the midst of which we live. Such insight can be derived only from Divine revelation. We are therefore profoundly impressed with the importance of the teaching given on this subject in the Theological Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg.

Some have held that what Swedenborg wrote in the eighteenth century no longer applies. It is true that many of the doctrines against which he inveighed have been openly repudiated, or neglected as irrelevant, or reinterpreted in more modern terms by the present-day leaders of Christian thought. The Writings of Swedenborg have been widely distributed. Many of the ministers and teachers of the Christian churches are quite familiar with them. In subtle but striking ways they have affected the interpretation of Christian doctrine. There is a strong appearance that the Christian world has been drawing progressively closer to the basic concepts of the New Church.

This fact makes it all the more imperative that the fundamental difference between the New Church and the sects of modern Christianity should be clearly seen.

Because the state of the Christian Church does change, the teaching of the Writings must be examined anew by the men of every rising generation, in order that it may be seen in its relation to their own day. Modes of expressing that relation which were valid in the past tend to lose their meaning, and to leave the mind uncertain and confused. Yet no one can truly understand the teaching of the New Church without seeing clearly how it differs from the religious teaching of other Christian churches. Nor is this as simple as might be supposed, because in outward form the two often appear to be very much alike. When we tell others what our church teaches, they often say: That is what we also believe. Yet the truth is that they do not really understand what we mean, and it is frequently difficult to make our meaning clear.

The truth is that we can have no distinct understanding of anything in the world apart from comparison and contrast. Any object, to be seen, must stand out against a background. It must have definite boundaries marking it off from its surroundings. It must possess shape, form and color to distinguish it from other objects.

It must differ from other objects in substance, structure and organization. Only by these things taken together, compared, and contrasted with similar qualities in other objects, can we perceive the special quality of any thing, or appreciate its particular use and value. It is in this way that we distinguish a chair from a table, a house from a barn, an animal from a bird, a mountain from a plain, or a man from a statue. Shades of color that are very similar must be seen together in order to be distinguished. Length and breadth, volume, weight, or time must be measured by comparison with these characteristics as found in other things, or by reference to some recognized standard of measurement.

This same law applies to the perception of abstract ideas. These, too, must be seen against a background of thought. Unless the mind has been prepared by experience, by education, or by specific

instruction, to perceive them, ideas have no meaning whatever. They must be clearly defined, and thus set apart from other similar ideas. They must be distinguished, not only in form but also in substance. Love is the substance of all spiritual things, while thought is their form. The love determines the purpose, the use, and the end behind the thought. It not only lends color to the thought but deeply qualifies it.

Therefore, to see any spiritual object clearly, we must know and perceive the particular love from which it springs. We must perceive not only the superficial shape of the idea, the words by which it is expressed, but also its inner form and organization as this is produced and determined by love. We must judge of an idea by comparing it with other ideas that may be similarly expressed and yet are inwardly very different because directed to a totally different purpose. Only in this way can we learn to appreciate the intrinsic value or the characteristic quality of any abstract idea. Nothing, in fact, can be understood rationally all by itself. Rationality is the perception of relations, of similarities and differences that set things apart from one another. A rational faith, therefore, is one that is seen in its relation to other faiths; one that is understood because of its distinguishing characteristics as these are clearly visualized.

For this reason we can have no clear understanding of our own religion unless we see it in its actual setting, in its relation to the world of religious ideas and mental attitudes in the midst of which it must exist and grow. We must see it sharply defined against a background of contrasting spiritual form and color, organization and substance. Only in this way can our adherence to it be a matter of intelligent choice and preference.

We cannot otherwise be armed to defend it against the attacks of those who oppose it. Nor can we be otherwise prepared to meet with sympathetic understanding those who, learning of the New Church for the first time, may be favorably disposed toward it, and yet are troubled by many doubts and difficulties imposed by their traditional faith. More important still, without accurate knowledge we cannot recognize the states and the attitudes of the modern Christian world as they arise in ourselves, for we are part of that world. We are born into it, even though our parents and our grandparents may have belonged to the New Church. By heredity, through many generations, we are imbued with the same tendencies of thought and affection. For that reason we are readily swayed by the currents of religious thought and emotion that are active in the world about us.

Although the need for wide knowledge, for careful investigation, and for discriminating judgment is well recognized in other fields of human learning, many fail to see the necessity for it in the realm of religion. Most people deeply resent any criticism of the faith they profess. We all are aware that unfavorable comment about any particular religion tends to rouse indignant protest, as implying an uncharitable attitude toward others.

There is widespread feeling that in regard to religious beliefs, comparisons are odious. This is a half-truth which, when mistaken for the whole, becomes a dangerous falsity. It is true of course that whatever is regarded by another as sacred should be treated with deep respect and consideration. A sincere faith implanted in childhood, however mistaken it may be, is the seed from which alone spiritual life can spring. The history of religion demonstrates with what infinite patience and profound tenderness these precious remains of affection and loyalty are protected by the Lord in His providence - this because they are the only means to man's individual salvation. We should therefore have the

same concern for their protection, recognizing that it is a sin to ridicule another's faith or to detract from it by statements that are false. On the other hand, if we are really searching for the truth of religion we must be willing to face the truth in any religion, including our own. We must be willing to examine religion itself, wherever it may be found, in the light of Divine revelation, and measure it thereby. We must learn to do this impersonally, without rancor, in no spirit of condemnation, but solely from a love of truth. This is not only right, it is a positive duty; for otherwise, whatever our traditional faith may be, we will never discover its defects.

Without examination, every one merely follows blindly what he has been taught or what he has formulated out of his own thinking. Ready satisfaction with any religion in which one may happen to have been brought up, or which seems to offer temporary advantages, without careful analysis, is one of the greatest faults of modern Christianity. It is a symptom of indifference to religious truth.

For this very reason, an attitude of critical analysis is pre-eminently important at this time when the Lord has come with a new Divine revelation. In this new truth lies the only hope for the ultimate redemption of the human race. If the New Church is ever to be established widely among the nations of the earth, men must be roused to a realization that the prime requisite of a genuine religious faith is the love of spiritual truth, and an irresistible urge to discover it. By spiritual truth we mean the truth concerning God, concerning the life after death, and concerning the primal causes that lie behind all the phenomena of the material universe. It is not enough to probe outer space or to delve into the microscopic and submicroscopic worlds. It is imperative that we learn where this physical environment came from, how it was first created, how it is constantly preserved and renewed, and for what Divine purpose it is intended.

Lacking this, our knowledge will have no power to uplift and save. And for this deeper knowledge we are dependent upon Divine revelation. Because this knowledge is desperately needed, the Lord has brought it within our grasp. The love of spiritual truth leads us to the Writings, where alone the answer to our anxious questioning may be found. But if we are to live our faith, it leads us also to seek a correct idea of the world of nature, for here it is that religious truth must be applied to life, in daily association with those of other faiths.

We must, then, examine the state of modern Christianity. But how can we do so when we are clearly taught that the interior states of men and of churches lie too deep for human discovery, and can be known only to the Lord?

We can judge the states of men only superficially, as they are reflected in external speech and action, in forms of worship and modes of life, and in outward professions of faith. These may be extremely deceptive. They may be quite contrary to the deeper states of love and faith which are concealed from our view. They may be adopted merely from habit, without thought or realization of their true import. The real state of the Christian world, therefore, is known only to the Lord, and it can be revealed by Him only in His Word.

It has been revealed for our instruction in the Heavenly Doctrine. Yet, as we have noted, many have held that this revelation is applicable only to the state of Christianity as it existed in Swedenborg's day. It is obvious that radical changes have taken place since that time in the ideas of Christians concerning their own religion. Among the more learned, many of the medieval doctrines have been either

reinterpreted or discarded altogether. Certainly, violent insistence upon sectarian creeds is no longer the dominant temper of the times. This has given place to an ever-increasing emphasis upon mutual tolerance. Also, the doctrine of salvation by faith alone, against which the Writings speak so vehemently, has been superseded largely by a primary concern for the good of life. How, then, can it be said that the Writings give us a true picture of the state of the Christian world as it exists today?

In answer to this we would point out that the Writings are more than the work of the man Swedenborg. They are, in truth, a Divine revelation immediately from the Lord. Because of this they are not written merely for one generation, but contain a truth that is eternal. What they say about the state of the Christian Church must apply to that church not only as it existed in Swedenborgs day but equally to the states of that church which it was foreseen would inevitably follow.

As the states of the world change in process of time, our understanding of the Writings must also progress. The Writings are eternal, but our understanding of them is limited, both by our individual capacity and by the times in which we live. This human understanding must be modified continually if we are to see the application of the Writings to the ever-changing states of the world, and of the church. For this reason our accustomed ideas concerning the state of the Christian Church must be re-examined, and reappraised periodically. The statements our fathers adopted to describe it may, in fact, be out of date. The analysis of it preserved for us in that first great publication of the Academy, WORDS FOR THE NEW CHURCH, does unquestionably need some revision today. To say this is not in any way to invalidate the Divine teaching so carefully studied and so accurately quoted in that publication. Nevertheless, we must endeavor to see the teaching of the Writings on the subject of the state of the Christian Church, as on every other subject, in direct application to the world of our own day.

Furthermore, it is obvious to any candid observer that while there have been noticeable modifications of view in deference to the advance of scientific knowledge, the basic doctrines of the Christian Church have not changed in the least since Swedenborgs time.

In spite of a shift in emphasis, a large percentage of present-day Christians affirm the fundamental creeds as confidently as ever. This applies especially to the less educated, who hold to their traditional concepts with a blind allegiance born of deep affectional ties. An increasing number, it is true, have forsaken the old doctrines. They are completely ignored by many; hut nothing is put in their place. A positive knowledge of God, of heaven, of the life after death, and of all that transcends the material universe is admittedly lacking. Moral philosophy has arisen to fill the vacuum left by religious ideas that are no longer acceptable to the educated mind. Yet whatever of Christian faith has survived the intervening centuries is in no essential way different from that faith of which the Writings speak. The difference lies in the fact that these doctrines are so widely by-passed. Most Christians no longer know what they are because they are not taught, either from the pulpit or in Sunday school. When they are questioned about them, the answer most frequently given is that they are a mystery into which it is not permissible to probe.

More and more they are being regarded as things unknowable which it is fruitless to explore - things no longer to be taken seriously in our more enlightened age.

Our chief concern lies with that far-flung realm of present-day religious philosophy wherein these doctrines still lie concealed under new forms of thought and expression. We are concerned with the

prevailing temper of religious thinking as it subtly dominates our universities, permeates our schools, our books and magazines, the screen, radio and television; for this is what most powerfully, though secretly, influences our minds and our lives. This is the intellectual climate in which we live. We are immersed in it every day, and there is an imperative need to form some practical judgment as to its quality in relation to the plain teaching of the Writings.

That is why we must inquire into the state of the Christian world if our life is to be governed by the truth of revelation rather than by the opinions and the emotional impulses of those who constitute the society in which we live. Such an inquiry must be made in no spirit of smug self-satisfaction, with no sense of superiority, and with no contempt for others in our hearts. It must be prompted solely by a love of truth, by a desire to understand the teaching of the Heavenly Doctrine in its application to the actual conditions of life in which we find ourselves.

It should be directed primarily to an examination of the state of the world as it exists within us, in our own natural propensities, in the thoughts and emotions roused in us by the tides of religious thought and emotion that constantly beat upon the shores of our minds from our environment. And second, it should be inspired by a sincere desire for a sympathetic understanding of those with whom we come in contact outside of our church, of all with whom we are associated in business and in the promotion of all the external uses of society. Without such an understanding we can hardly exercise true charity toward them; nor can we help those who may be seeking religious truth by leading them to the Lord in His second coming.

CHAPTER II - THE DIVINITY OF JESUS CHRIST

[1]

In our attempt to analyze the state of the modern Christian world we must remember, of course, that there are many shades of religious opinion, and there is great variety as to ritual, government and modes of life in the Christian Church. No statement could be made, therefore, that would have universal application. But the state of the church, as defined in the Writings, is determined by its dominant affection or love, and thus by the governing spirit that animates it and by the prevailing opinions that arise therefrom. In every church, as in every individual mind, love determines the center of interest, and that which is regarded as of supreme importance. Upon this the whole attention is focused, and with reference to it everything else is oriented. Ideas, opinions, modes of action, all are so ordered as to satisfy this highest love and to accomplish its purpose. Therefore the key to the state of the church lies in that upon which attention is most widely centered by those who are the accepted leaders of thought, the recognized authorities to whom the generality of people look for guidance and direction.

Our question therefore is, has there been a significant shift in this center of interest in the Christian Church, especially since the days of the early Academy? If so, what is that change? How does it affect our understanding of what the Writings teach about the state of the Christian world? And how does it modify the relation of the New Church to present-day Christianity?

We are told in the Heavenly Doctrine that there are three essentials which together determine the quality of any religion. First, there is the idea of God that prevails therein; second, there is the concept of Divine Law, or what God requires of man for his salvation; and third, there is a life from conscience according to that which is regarded as the law of God. With reference to the New Church, these three essentials are said to be: the acknowledgment of the Divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ, the acknowledgment of the holiness of the Word, and the life that is called charity, which arises out of these prior acknowledgments.(@DP 259) These, therefore, are the things we would first examine, as they are found in modern Christianity, and we would begin by directing attention to the idea of God which is most prevalent therein.

There can be no doubt that the prevailing concept of God which is characteristic of educated Christian leadership today is a far cry from the simple faith of the Apostles, and of those who immediately followed them in the Primitive Church. The cornerstone of original Christian faith was a belief in the Divinity of Jesus Christ. By this was meant that in some mysterious way Jesus Christ was one with God Himself. The Apostles did not clearly understand how this could be, but at first they did not reason about it. They accepted it as a self-evident truth, fully attested by the Lord's own teaching, by His miraculous power, by His Divine conception, and by His resurrection. They believed implicitly in the testimony of Mary and of Joseph in regard to the manner of His birth. Their discovery of the empty tomb, and their vision of the risen Lord convinced them beyond all doubt that He was indeed a Divine Being. They spoke of Him as the Son of God, but in all simplicity, they believed Him when He said: I and My Father are one.(John 10:30) He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.(John 14:9) I am in the Father, and the Father in Me.

The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of Myself: but the Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works.(John 14:10) They made no attempt to distinguish between the Father and the Son, fully believing that although Jesus Christ appeared as a man like other men, yet He was in truth God Himself come down to earth in human form. Therefore they prayed to Him, looked to Him, and worshiped Him as very God.

Yet from the very first this faith in the Lords Divine nature came under severe attack, both from the Jews and from the Gentiles to whom the Gospel was preached. To defend it against the prevailing thought of the day, and especially against the highly developed and widespread philosophy of Greece, the Apostles and their followers had to search for some rational explanation of this mystery. They were confronted by questions which were extremely difficult to answer. How could an all-wise Creator, the Ruler of the universe, be born an ignorant babe who had to learn slowly by way of experience and instruction, as all children do? If He were one with the Father, how could He pray to Him as if to another? How could God have suffered on the cross? With these, and many similar questions, the church wrestled through centuries of bitter controversy.

Fantastic solutions were proposed, and dissident sects were founded upon them. Councils of church leaders were called to judge these heretical beliefs, and to define the orthodox faith of the church. We cannot here enter into all the theological subtleties whereby these leaders sought to defend the Divinity of Jesus Christ. They have but little bearing upon the thought of modern Christianity. Few, aside from special scholars and antiquarians, even know what they are. What we are concerned with is the outcome of the struggle.

Failing in his own mind to reconcile the human limitations of Jesus Christ as He appeared on earth with the infinite qualities that must be ascribed to God, Arius, and later Socinius, cut the Gordian knot by frankly denying that Jesus Christ was God. They held that He was altogether human, similar in all respects to other men, except that He was blessed with a greater wisdom and a deeper insight than others. He was said to be Divinely inspired; yet His inspiration differed from that of other men, not in kind, but only in degree. Because He was a chosen instrument through whom the invisible God was made known more fully than ever before, He could be rightly called the Son of God; but this term would apply in lesser degree to every prophet, every seer, and every religious leader in the history of the world who had contributed in some measure to the perfection of mans thought concerning God.

This was the precursor of the modern Unitarian view.

The early church repudiated this denial of the Lords Divinity; and in the effort to overcome the philosophic difficulties involved in the acknowledgment of that Divinity they reached the following conclusions at the Council of Nice in the year 325 A. D.:

a) There are three eternal and coequal Persons in the Godhead-the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Each of these by Himself is God, yet they are one in essence and in substance.

b) Jesus Christ was the Son born from eternity who came into the world by a virgin birth. He had, however, two natures, one Divine and the other Human. It was the Human nature, and not the Divine one, that suffered on the cross.

c) This Human nature the Lord retained after His resurrection. Such is the faith established by the Athanasian Creed, which is officially acknowledged by all Christian Churches to this day, both Catholic and Protestant. On it is based the doctrine of the vicarious atonement by the blood of Christ, and a long chain of tenets that hang from this supporting hook.

This idea of atonement by the sacrifice of the cross would be impossible apart from the concept of the Son as a person distinct from the Father. The creed of Athanasius, therefore, can never be reconciled with a mental picture of one God. Yet many people, even to the present day, accept it without analysis, still clinging to the thought that God is one. We are told it was so written in Divine Providence that this might be so; and this creed was permitted to prevail over the doctrine of Arius in order that some belief in the real Divinity of Jesus Christ might be preserved.

At the time of Swedenborg the dominant thought of the church was focused upon this Trinitarian belief. This was the doctrine, taught everywhere as orthodox Christianity. Swedenborg, in the Writings, openly opposed this idea of three persons in God. He demonstrated at great length that there is no scriptural foundation for it. With unassailable logic he showed that it is contrary to reason and incompatible with a belief in one God. There can be only one who is infinite, who is all-wise, who has all power, and who is everywhere present. These qualities of God cannot be divided. They cannot be shared by distinct persons, each of whom by Himself is God. A Son of God, born from eternity, is a contradiction; for to be born implies a beginning, while eternity has no beginning.

In the Writings this untenable concept of God as three persons is replaced by the idea of a trine in the one person of Jesus Christ. In Him, what the Scriptures call Father, Son and Holy Spirit are related as are soul, body and operation in every man. We are taught that Jesus Christ was similar in all respects to other men with one exception, namely, that His soul was infinite, while the soul of every other human being is finite. The human soul is defined as an inmost vessel receptive of life from God. (@CL 315[11].) Every such vessel has a distinct individual form; and although the inflowing life is infinite, it can move or animate the vessel only according to its characteristic form. We might compare this inflowing Life to electricity, which is relatively infinite, unbounded, and capable of exercising force in innumerable ways. But when it is received by a machine its activity is channeled, circumscribed, limited to the particular motions of which the machine is capable. Thus it may turn a wheel, move a piston, press a lever, or light a bulb, all according to the way in which the machine is constructed. The vessel called the human soul is a form designed to react to a particular love - the love of an individual use in the Grand Man of heaven.

It is this love that builds the body in the womb, and forms the mind, determines the interests, and imparts the abilities that are characteristic of the man. It is this that gives him his personality, his individuality - that which sets him apart as being distinct from all other human beings.

In the case of Jesus Christ, however, because there was no human father, there was no such limiting vessel. It was the Divine love itself that formed the body in the womb of Mary. It was the love, not of a particular use, but of the complex of all uses - a love of the whole human race and of a heaven to be formed and eternally perfected from the human race. This is the love of God Himself, the love that brought the entire universe into being, that preserves it and governs it continually. It was this love that ordered the mind of the Lord, progressively penetrating the appearances of the senses, removing the fallacies, the errors, the falsities that darkened the minds of men. From this love the Lord spoke with

wisdom such as no man had ever known. From it He acted with power to heal, to cast out devils, to raise from the dead. Thus God Himself spoke and acted in Him and through Him. As errors were removed gradually throughout His life on earth, His mind became a body of Divine truth, completely one with the Divine love itself; and this Divine body, which was not only conceived but also born of Jehovah, became the Divine Human which is now revealed in its fullness in the Heavenly Doctrine.

It is through this body of revealed truth that God Himself may now be seen and known as He truly is - an infinite Divine Man, the risen and glorified Savior, Jesus Christ.

This new and entirely different explanation of the Trinity, so far from accepting the alternative offered by Arius of denying the Divinity of Jesus Christ, exalted Him as the one person in whom, and through whom alone, God may be known and worshiped, both in heaven and on earth. But because they rejected the traditionally established doctrine of the Christian Church, the Writings of Swedenborg were violently attacked by the ecclesiastical leaders of his day, and their attacks culminated in the Gothenburg trial for heresy, brought against certain members of the Swedish clergy who had espoused the cause of the New Church.

About a hundred years later, when the Academy was first established, the Athanasian doctrine was still held to be the very cornerstone of Christian faith. It was not only universally accepted but was widely and consistently taught. In consequence, it was a central point of difference between the teaching of the New Church and the active religious conviction of the average Christian.

It was natural, therefore, for those who wrote the WORDS FOR THE NEW CHURCH to focus attention upon this all-important doctrinal difference between the traditional faith of the church and the teaching of the Writings. But this is no longer the case. The Athanasian Creed is still the professed belief of all the main Christian sects. Priests and ministers at their ordination confess allegiance to it. Although it has been sublimated by many theological thinkers in an attempt to explain it, it has never been essentially changed. It appears prominently in the well-known hymns and rituals used in public worship. It is markedly implied in the usual form of prayer, which is addressed to God the Father, pleading that He show mercy for the sake of His Son. Yet this doctrine of three persons in God is no longer at the center of popular interest or of widespread concern. A public lecture advertised as defending the doctrine of a tripersonal God, or one proposing to overthrow that doctrine, would not draw a full house today, as it did in the middle of the last century. Certainly, among educated people, this question does not now occupy the same position of great importance it held in former days. The doctrine remains intact, but it has become merely a sort of intellectual ground on which the Christian Church stands, and over which it walks, while its attention and interest are centered elsewhere.

There are many indeed, taken collectively, who still believe that there are three persons in God, and who cling to that belief as earnestly as ever; and with those of whom this is the case, the teaching of the Writings concerning that doctrine applies as cogently as it did in Swedenborg's day. But those who still stress this belief as a prime essential of their faith are no longer in the main current of religious thought. They have been left stranded on the shore by the receding tide of Christian opinion. Indeed, this is the case, not only in regard to this doctrine, but also to many other doctrines which were once regarded as of prime importance. The prevailing attitude may best be described as one of increasing indifference to all theological speculation. This is true in spite of the recent resurgence of active interest on the part of many in some form of religious faith.

CHAPTER III - THE DIVINITY OF JESUS CHRIST

[2]

As appears from the expressed opinion of leading proponents of Christian thought, the change which has been taking place gradually since the early days of the Academy in regard to the doctrine concerning the Divine nature of Jesus Christ has been in the direction of emphasizing His humanity, and detracting from His Divinity. The unmistakable trend has been toward the adoption of the Arian solution to the problem of the Lords incarnation in place of the doctrine of three persons in the Godhead, as set forth in the Athanasian Creed.

That this would be the tendency is definitely foretold in the Writings. The primitive or Apostolic church, we read, never could have divined ... that an Arius would lift up his head, and when he was dead would rise again, and secretly rule even to the end.(@TCR 638.) Referring to his own day, Swedenborg. states that Socinianism and Arianism reign in more hearts than you believe.(@DP 262.) Faith, he says, is both spurious and adulterous with those who regard the Lord not as God but merely as a man.

The truth of this is very evident from the two abominable heresies, Arianism and Socinianism, which have been anathematized in, and excommunicated from, the Christian Church, and this because they deny the Lords Divinity, and climb up some other way. But I fear that those abominations lie concealed at this day in the general spirit of the men of the church.(@TCR 380.) Because it was foreseen, therefore the change that has taken place is not one that invalidates the teaching of the Writings in regard to the state of the Christian world, but rather serves to confirm what was clearly implied as to the future development of that church.

This tendency to deny the Lords Divinity is, of course, not universal. Many people, although subtly affected by its influence, are quite unaware of what has taken place. The influence of Arianism is least noticeable in the Catholic Church, which officially and boldly upholds the tripersonal doctrine. Yet even there the great emphasis that is placed on the crucifixion, with the image of the crucified Lord held ever before the mind; the idea that Christ needs a vicar on earth in the person of the Pope; the idea that the Lord gave to Peter the power to forgive sins, and to open or close heaven to men, and that this power is shared by all who have apostolic succession; and finally, the idea that Divine revelation, equal in authority to that of the Scripture, is given through the excathedra pronouncements of the Pope, and through the decisions of the church councils - all this reveals a concept of Jesus Christ as a human being with definite limitations, rather than as the infinite Creator and Preserver of the universe.

The influence of Arianism, however, is most obvious in the liberal branch of the Protestant churches. This branch, we would point out, is most closely integrated with the scientific thought of the day. The opinions it sponsors in regard to religion are based primarily on a scientific approach to the subject. They are in harmony with the opinions held by the intellectual leaders in our universities, who exercise a profound influence on the entire educational system. For this reason the ideas which are insinuated widely into the public mind through education dispose people to accept readily the religious ideas held by the more liberal Christian thinkers. In this way, the tendency toward the doubt,

and at last the denial, of the Lords Divinity becomes the unconscious but increasingly influential heritage of each rising generation.

A predisposition to question the Divinity of Jesus Christ appears in the concerted effort that is made by many to cast doubt upon, and explain away, all the supposedly supernatural implications of the Sacred Scripture.

The faith in these as having any historic foundation has been very widely undermined by biblical criticism. It is generally supposed that such things have been introduced into the sacred narrative at a later date, as the result of gradually accumulating traditions. These traditions are thought to have no foundation in fact, but to have been invented because of a strong desire on the part of the early Christians to idealize the Founder of their faith. They are therefore relegated to the realm of imagination and religious symbolism. Included among the supernatural elements of the story that are thus to be regarded as non-factual are both the account of the virgin birth of the Lord and the testimony concerning His resurrection. These are held to be imaginary embroideries of the Gospels. They need not be believed in order to think of Jesus Christ as Divine, because His Divinity is said to depend, not on any factual incidents connected with His life, but purely on the exalted nature of His moral teaching. At the same time, while discrediting everything that savors of the supernatural, modern thinkers lay great stress on the idea that Christian faith must be based on an accurate knowledge of the historic Jesus.

The Gospels must be judged in the light of scientific discoveries concerning contemporary events and the situation of the world at the time they were written. The accounts that have come down to us of the incidents and the teachings connected with the Lords life must be interpreted critically in accord with their historic setting. As they have been reported by the Evangelists we need not accept them as literally true, but rather as the way things appeared to the writers of the Gospels, as a normal product of their day and time. Thus they represent a passing phase in the progressive development of human knowledge and understanding. Behind this, of course, is the idea that Jesus Christ, in common with other prophets and all the great thinkers of every age, was merely expressing the best formulation of moral truth that could be conceived in His own time. This best could not fail to be superseded as the knowledge of the race increased through succeeding centuries.

If, then, Divinity is the same thing as moral insight, it is certainly not a unique attribute of Jesus Christ. He may have possessed this Divinity in greater degree than others; but He obviously must be regarded as sharing it, not only with the profound thinkers who have contributed significantly to the moral standards of the race, but also in some small degree with all men who have any moral insight whatsoever.

If, because He was Divine in this sense, we can say that Jesus Christ is God, then in the same sense it can be said of all men who possess moral insight that they, too, although in lesser degree, are gods. This mode of thought is responsible for the idea, very widespread at the present day, that by what is called the imitation of Jesus we may all become Christlike, and therefore may partake of the Divinity which Jesus Christ exemplified in an eminent degree.

This was by no means what the Apostles meant by the Divinity of Jesus Christ. The profound difference illustrates the importance of understanding the terms that are used. When a modern Christian of the

liberal school says, I believe with you that Jesus is God, we must inquire just what he means by God. And when he says, I fully accept the Divinity of Christ, although not the historic authenticity of the virgin birth and the resurrection, we must ask just what the term Divinity implies in his mind. But we should let the liberal leaders of modern Christian thought speak for themselves.

We have therefore selected excerpts from a few well-known and highly regarded exponents of this new version of Christian faith.

The Rev. Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick, in his book, *The Modern Use of the Bible*, puts it this way: The central struggle of the early church was not to get people to believe in the Divine origin of Jesus. Rather, after the church achieved power and Jesus was exalted as Lord, current philosophy made it comparatively easy to believe that He came from the supernal realm, that He was the influx of the Divine into the world. It was much more difficult then to believe that at the same time He possessed a genuinely human life. The difference between the early centuries and our own in this regard is sharp and clear. They started with the certainty that Jesus came from the Divine realm and then wondered how He could be truly man; we start from the certainty that He was genuinely man and then wonder in what sense He can be God.... It is not for an instant doubtful that Jesus must be considered as man in the full sense of the term, and that anything Divine may be sought in Him only under the condition that His humanity is not put in question. This is the most inevitable attitude for any modern mind when it approaches the personality of Jesus. (Pages 255, 256.) Whenever you look at the underlying presuppositions of men's thinking about God today you find, not the old dualism against which the ancient church had so long and fierce a conflict, but a gladly recognized affinity between God and man.

In our theology no longer are the Divine and human like oil and water that cannot mix; rather, all the best in us is God in us. This makes faith in the Divine Christ infinitely easier than it was under the old regime. (*The Modern Use Of The Bible* (The Macmillan Company, New York), pages 266, 267. Copyright 1924, extended.)

The idea that the Divinity of Jesus Christ is something of which all men may, and indeed should, partake in some degree, is clearly expressed by the Rev. Dr. J. D. Smart, Pastor, of St. Pauls Presbyterian Church, Peterborough, Ontario, Canada, in his book, *What A Man Can Believe*. He says: Only as men are brought face to face with the reality of Jesus Christ in Christian people does there come to them any comprehension of what is meant by the words Jesus Christ in the Gospels. (Page 123.)

There is a life which man cannot know until he finds it in Christ, a life which is Christ being born again in us by faith and by the indwelling of the Spirit of God. (Page 189.)

The intention of Jesus was certainly that in His followers should dwell the same power of forgiving sins that dwelt in Him. (*What A Man Can Believe*, by James D. Smart (The Westminster Press), page 217. Copyright 1943.)

Jesus Christ is placed in the same category as other men, as but one of the outstanding prophets and leaders who have appeared in the course of human history, by Vergilius Ferm, in his book, *What Can We Believe?* In the same context he identifies God with man's innate sense of moral values. We must say, he writes, that there is a God. Why? Because this is the only way to make things come out morally

right.... This is undoubtedly why Jesus and others of the great religious prophets have caught the imagination of their followers. Not because of their reasoned considerations but because they have made out a moral cause for human existence.... So far as Jesus was concerned - and in this He followed the Jewish line of prophets and is akin to the greater prophets of other religions - nothing quite matters to man so much as this: that this universe is fundamentally akin to his thundering sense of moral worth and moral meaning.(What Can We Believe? by Vergilius Ferm, The Philosophical Library, 15 East 40th Street, New York, N. Y., page 114. Copyright 1948.)

It might be supposed that we have chosen unfortunately to quote from a few isolated and iconoclastic thinkers who do not represent the general trend of Christian opinion.

Yet in the presumably conservative Church of England, and among its most outstanding representatives, we find the same opinions forcefully presented. In the Report of the Commission on Christian Doctrine, appointed in 1922 by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, the adherents of this modern liberal view were so numerous and influential that it was necessary to make a dual statement - one presenting the traditional belief, and the other setting forth the liberal conviction. The Report states: Many of us hold ... that belief in the Word made flesh is integrally bound up with belief in the Virgin Birth, and that this will increasingly be recognized. There are, however, some among us who hold that a full belief in the historical Incarnation is more consistent with the supposition that our Lords birth took place under the normal conditions of human generation. In their minds the notion of a Virgin Birth tends to mar the completeness of the belief that in the Incarnation God revealed Himself at every point in and through human nature.... We also recognize that both the views outlined above are held by members of the Church, as of the Commission, who fully accept the reality of our Lords Incarnation, which is the central truth of the Christian faith.(Page 82.)

And in regard to the resurrection, the Report continues: Belief that the dead would rise again with their bodies at the last day had established itself in Judaism, though not universally, for some two centuries before the Crucifixion. It is possible, therefore, that antecedent beliefs as to the resurrection of the dead have played some part in shaping the tradition of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, even as that is recorded in the New Testament. This consideration, combined with others of a more general sort, inclines some of us to the belief that the connexion made in the New Testament between the emptiness of a tomb and the appearances of the Risen Lord belongs rather to the sphere of religious symbolism than to that of historical fact.(Doctrine In The Church Of England (The Macmillan Company) New York, 1938, page 86.)

Quite apart from this Report, however, all of us are aware that modes of expression which imply that Jesus Christ was a mere man are used constantly in modern Christian literature - in the newspapers, in radio and television, in books and magazines. This would not be the case if the concept of the incarnation and of the resurrection proposed by Arius were not generally accepted, and regarded with favor.

There are, of course, some thinkers who oppose this view, and who clearly see some of the logical consequences that flow from it. But these do not exercise the wide influence of the liberals. In opposing Arius they are compelled to resort to the tripersonal doctrine of Athanasius as the only alternative.

In this connection we would quote from The Virginia Birth Of Christ by the Rev. Dr. Gresham Machen,

as follows:

What is this religion that is founded upon a historical Jesus, and yet is independent of events like the virgin birth? Is it not still a religion whose fundamental tenet is the ability of man to save himself? Jesus attained to sonship with God, say the adherents of this religion in effect, and we, if we will only follow Him, can attain to that sonship too. Certainly men who think thus will not be much interested in the fact of the virgin birth. Indeed, if they are interested in it at all, they can be interested only in rejecting it. The fundamental notion of their religion is that Jesus showed us what man can do; but if so it is important for our encouragement that He should be thought to have begun where we too must begin. If He was born of a virgin He had an advantage which we do not possess; how, then, can we in that case be sure that we, who were not virgin-born, can do what He did?

We can all be Christs if we will only follow Christs example - that is the essence of this religion of the imitation of Jesus. (*The Virgin Birth Of Christ by J. Gresham Machen, D. D., Litt.D. (Harper & Brothers Publishers, New York), page 385. Copyright 1930.*)

What we have here set forth should be sufficient to demonstrate that if we picture the modern Christian world as one that still bases its faith primarily upon the doctrine of three persons in God, we will often find ourselves fighting a straw man. The modern emancipated Christian is not vitally concerned about that doctrine. The real point of difference between present-day Christianity and the New Church in regard to the concept of the Lord Jesus Christ, is the question as to whether He is really God, or whether He was an historic character who, together with other religious leaders, contributed to mans understanding of moral truth. The acknowledgment that the Lord Jesus Christ, in His Divine Human, is the one God of heaven and earth, one in person and in essence - this is the distinctive teaching of the New Church. Wherefore we read in the Preface to the Apocalypse Revealed, that after the Last Judgment, which was accomplished in the spiritual world in the year 1757 ... there was formed a New Heaven from Christians; but from those only who could receive [the truth that] the Lord ... [is] the God of heaven and earth....

From this heaven ... is descending and will descend the New Church on earth. [And] this Church will acknowledge the Lord alone.... Those who ... entertained no other idea of the Lords Human than as of the human of another man, could not receive the faith of the New Church,... which is that the Lord is the only God, in whom is the trinity. In the Doctrine Of The New Jerusalem Concerning The Lord this faith is more fully stated as follows That the Lord from Eternity is Jehovah, is known from the Word; for the Lord said to the Jews, Verily I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am. (John 8:58) And He says in another place, Glorify Thou Me, O Father, with the glory that I had with Thee before the world was. (John 17:5)

That the Lord from eternity, or Jehovah, assumed the Human to save men ... is evident from passages in the Word where it is said that he went forth from the Father, descended from heaven, and was sent into the world. As from these: I went out from the Father and am come into the world. (John 16:28).... The Father loveth you, because ye have believed that I came out from God. (John 16:27).... That the Lord made His Human Divine from the Divine in Himself is evident from ... [the following]:

The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand. (John 3:35). All things that the Father hath are mine (John 16:15). All power ... is given unto Me in heaven and on earth. (Matthew

In these and all other passages where the Father is mentioned, there is meant the Divine which was in the Lord from conception, and which, according to the doctrine of faith of the Christian world, was circumstanced as is the soul in the body with man. The Human itself from this Divine is the Son of God. Now as this Human was made Divine, therefore, in order to prevent man from approaching the Father only, and ... separating the Father from the Lord in whom the Father is, after the Lord had taught that He and the Father are one; that the Father is in Him, and He in the Father; that all should abide in Him; and that no one cometh to the Father but by Him, He taught also that we must believe in Him, and that man is saved by a faith directed to Him. Many in Christendom can form no idea of the fact that the Human in the Lord was made Divine, the chief reason of which is that they think of a man from his material body, and not from his spiritual body.(L 30-32.)

CHAPTER IV - THE HOLINESS OF THE WORD

Just as the Christian Church has receded from its first acknowledgment of the Divinity of the Lord, and has accepted the Arian doctrine that He was merely a man, so also it has departed from the faith of the Apostolic age in the Bible as the source of authoritative truth. In the minds of the early Christians there was not the slightest doubt that God had dictated the Sacred Scripture through the medium of the prophets and the evangelists. Thus they believed it to be eternal and infallible truth. Many, especially among those who are less educated, still clung to this idea, and accept every word of the Scripture as literally true. But biblical scholars have found this concept to be untenable. They find contradictions, gross inaccuracies and palpable errors in the sacred text. They have therefore been compelled to abandon the idea of literal infallibility. Although they continue to call the Bible the Word of God, and to speak of it as Divine Revelation, they now use these terms in quite a different sense. They now profess to believe rather in the self-revelation of God in history, by which they mean a gradual unfolding of a progressively more satisfying concept of morality, as mankind climbs painfully to an ever higher level of intellectual achievement.

In this process there is no Divine dictation. New and more acceptable ideas of right and wrong are thought to have arisen out of bitter experience. They have been forged upon the anvil of human needs, which, with the advancement of civilization, have become increasingly complex. In times of crisis, it is said, the perceptive powers of certain leading minds, faced with great responsibilities, rise to unusual heights, and express truths never before so clearly seen. This is regarded as the secret of moral evolution; and although it is conceded that the new perceptions of moral truth are God-given, they are by no means perfect. They exercised great and beneficent power at the time, but they possess no authority that should be binding on us today. We should honor those who have contributed to this development of moral concepts, for we owe them a great debt. Among them we find the deep intellectual thinkers of all time, and of these Jesus Christ is but one outstanding example. In this same category are placed, not only the prophets and evangelists through whom the Bible was given, but also the Greek and Roman philosophers, the writers of the sacred books of the East, and many of the more modern leaders of thought throughout the world.

We should accept these valued gifts of the past with gratitude; but we must judge them in the superior light of our own day, selecting from them only that which is in accord with our vast accumulation of scientific knowledge, and that which is found to be acceptable to our modern mechanized society. We must, therefore, understand these moral teachings in terms of their historic setting, interpreting them, not according to what they mean to us, but according to what they meant to those who wrote them. We can understand them truly only if we put them into the framework of thought that was characteristic of their time, and see them in relation to the economic, social and cultural conditions then prevailing. In this respect the Bible is no different from other ancient literature, and must be subjected to the same critical analysis.

This historical approach to the Bible robs it of all Divine authority. In spite of this fact the Bible is still called Divine, although its Divinity is not recognized throughout, but only in spots, in bits and pieces where exalted ideas of morality are openly expressed or clearly implied. The rest is looked upon as obsolete, and as possessing no more than antiquarian value. The selection of the parts to be regarded as Divine is purely a matter of human judgment, and it is therefore on mans authority - the authority

of individual insight - that any Divinity is ascribed to them.

Even those portions of the Scripture which are acknowledged to be Divinely inspired are by no means regarded as absolute truth, but merely as reflecting the level of cultural advancement to which the race had attained at the time they were written. They may need to be radically modified in accommodation to the vastly more sophisticated concepts of our modern day.

It should be clearly understood that if we confine our thought to its moral content, there is much in this attitude toward the Bible with which we would agree. Moral concepts and customs, after all, are but the outer garments of religion, and like garments they may, and indeed should be changed in adaptation to changing conditions. What is morally right under one set of circumstances may be wrong under another set. Standards of right and wrong that have become matters of conscience in any particular part of the world, at any time, or with any set of people, may not be right for others. Modes of life that are binding in one generation may be modified, or entirely rejected in the next. For instance, the requirements of the Mosaic Law in regard to ritual observances and forms of worship were rightly abrogated by the Christian Church.

Many of the accepted moral concepts of the Jews were openly rejected by the Lord. The law of retaliation, an eye for an eye, and hate thine enemies, were replaced by the golden rule and the admonition of resist not evil, and to love thine enemies. Forms of moral conduct are largely dictated by the needs and requirements of human society. They are not fixed for all time or upon all people by Divine dictation. They are actually worked out by men exercising human judgment under the spur of necessity, or prompted by the responsibility to preserve social order and promote the public welfare. Such is the source of many man-made laws, and these are formulated in the light of past experience. This has always been the case, and only by an historical approach can we attain to a just estimate of their value. This applies to the moral injunctions of the Bible as well as to those found in other literature. To this extent we agree with the modern insistence upon a scholarly and judicial appraisal of the literal Scripture.

We differ sharply, however, in holding that the Word is not given as a Divine revelation of moral truth, except as this may embody and reflect spiritual truth - that is, the truth concerning God, and heaven and eternal life.

This truth is unchanging from age to age, however it may be clothed in the external forms of morality. It underlies all morality, qualifies it, gives it life, soul and real significance. Spiritual truth alone discloses the unifying principles that should govern in the development of moral ideas. It should direct the modification of customs, rituals, and mores in accord with varying circumstances. Indeed, the whole purpose of morality is to serve mans spiritual needs - to express and embody the spirit of religion, the spirit of love to the Lord, and genuine charity toward the neighbor. These are the constant factors, the eternal and unchanging things, in the midst of all human change. The true quality of these things man cannot discover for himself. They must be learned from the Word. The Lord alone can teach them. Their application to life will vary with circumstances; but in themselves they occupy a realm above all the shifting conditions of human life, a realm whence they can descend to order, dispose, control and govern all possible conditions, thus bringing mans external life into harmony with the eternal Divine law and under obedience to the will of God. Unless this spiritual truth is known, and from it man derives a just idea of what is involved in love to the Lord and charity toward the neighbor,

there is no guide to the discovery, under any circumstances, of what is truly moral, of what is really right, or of what will actually promote mans eternal welfare.

Apart from this, morality becomes no more than a temporary expedient, a way of adapting ones self to the demands of the society in which one lives. When this kind of morality is mistaken for truth itself, it frequently produces a false or a spurious conscience. Undue importance is ascribed to trivial things, and matters of small consequence are proclaimed to be mortal sins. Such modes of life may become a tool of wickedness, a source of pride and contempt for others, as well as a shield of virtue.

Here is the real issue between modern Christianity and the New Church in regard to the nature of the Sacred Scripture. Men have lost sight of the spiritual truth concealed within the letter of the Word, and they look to the Bible only for its moral content. Failing to find there any fixed or permanent code of morality - any code that holds good universally, and under all conditions - they are compelled to fall back upon human judgment as the final authority concerning what is morally right. It is true that the moral injunctions of the Bible in large part no longer apply. Indeed, what applied to the Jews during their wanderings in the wilderness ceased to have practical application after they had entered the land of Canaan.

What then came to be regarded as of vital importance lost its meaning after the conquest of Jerusalem. Because of this, men conclude that the Bible, after all, is not infallible, but merely records what men have thought and what they have practiced through the ages in regard to the life of religion. This conviction has grown progressively through the centuries; but in recent times it has become the dominant factor in Christian thought concerning the interpretation of the Bible.

In the early Christian Church there was a perceptive realization that the Word must contain a deep spiritual meaning. It was seen that God, speaking to men, must reveal Himself, and so doing make known the Divine laws of life, the Divine end and purpose in creation, and the eternal destiny toward which, in providence, He is leading both the individual and the race. This being true, the Word could not be regarded as treating merely of ephemeral affairs, of passing events, of times, places and persons which are constantly changing, although in outward form it appears to do so. Men sought therefore to discover a deeper meaning in the sacred text. They tried to interpret it everywhere in terms of parable, allegory and religious symbolism.

However, because they lacked a rational revelation of spiritual truth, in this endeavor they found themselves without guide or compass. Their unbridled imagination opened the way to wild, fantastic, and often trivial interpretations. As long as they clung steadfastly to what the Writings call the doctrine of genuine truth in the Word; that is, as long as they carefully observed those portions of the Scripture in which the internal sense plainly shines through the letter, their teaching was vital and spiritually instructive. But when they tried to unveil dark sayings, or to give a higher meaning to the literal stories of the Word, they often strayed far from the truth and fell prey to mere sentimentality. As the church declined, its thought became more and more immersed in external things. The interests of men became centered in worldly ambitions of wealth or power. As this came to pass, the tendency to error in interpretation increased apace, and led to greater and greater confusion of ideas in regard to religion. To halt this indulgence of vain imagination, the Catholic Church ruled that the right of biblical interpretation was the sole prerogative of the clergy, and was to be exercised by them with due restraint in accord with the creeds and the decisions of the church councils.

By this ruling the Word was denied to the people, who in consequence were compelled to accept uncritically the official teaching of the church. In time, however, religious reformers rose in revolt against this claim of ecclesiastical authority. Huss, Wycliffe, Luther, Calvin and others contended that God should be permitted to speak directly to every man, and that each one should be free to draw his own conclusions from the sacred text. Yet they too were constrained to place some check upon the ill-considered exercise of imagination in matters of exegesis. This was to apply to clergy and laity alike. To accomplish this, they repudiated the whole idea of allegorical interpretation, demanding that the Scripture should be understood literally, in accord with the plain and open meaning of every passage. This has been the universal rule, in theory if not always in practice, with the Protestant churches ever since. It has produced a deep prejudice against any idea that the Sacred Scripture contains an internal sense.

When this literalistic mode is honestly pursued, however, it is found that the teaching of the Scripture is not everywhere in harmony with the orthodox creeds. It is inconsistent with itself, being full of apparent contradictions that cannot be reconciled by any literal interpretation; and it is in many respects contrary to the laws of nature as they have been discovered by modern scientific scholarship.

For these reasons, the unavoidable conclusion is virtually forced upon the mind that the Bible is by no means infallible. It can be regarded only as a reflection of the inadequate knowledge, the primitive superstitions, the childish fancies that prevailed with men at the time when it was written. Only in quite recent times could it be said, however, that this view of the Bible has been openly espoused so as to become the predominant or widely prevailing view of Christianity.

In the days of the early Academy most Christians still looked upon the Bible as an authoritative Divine revelation. References to it and quotations from it were regarded with deep reverence and implicit faith. This is far less the case today. At least with those who are educated in the scientific tradition of our time, doctrinal arguments based on the Scripture no longer command the attention or make the impression that they did when Words For The New Church, was published. We call no longer prove the validity of the Writings by quoting the Bible in their support. The central issue between the New Church and the Christian world today is not whether the Writings are borne out by the Old and New Testaments, but whether, either in the former Scriptures or in the Writings, God has ever spoken to man with a voice of authority.

Of course we all are aware that once the true nature of spiritual truth is clearly seen, and once the law of correspondence as given in the Writings opens to view the marvelous structure of that internal sense of the Word which lies concealed in the Old and New Testaments, the obstacles that have prevented men from acknowledging the holiness of the Word and its Divine authority are removed. An interpretation of Scripture, not by imaginative allegory but in accord with disciplined spiritual reason, becomes not only possible but imperative. We are no longer compelled to choose between an insistence upon the scientific accuracy of the letter of the Word - in the face of obvious proof to the contrary - and the conclusion that the teaching of the Bible is without authority. Nor must we insist that the moral concepts resulting from the perverted conditions existent in the Jewish Church must be regarded literally as eternal truths in order to sustain that authority. It is the pearl of great price - the truth concerning the Lord, His incarnation, His glorification, and His redemption of the race; the truth concerning the spiritual world, heaven, and the life after death; the truth concerning Divine creation,

Divine Providence, and the preservation of spiritual life with man - this it is, buried in the field of the literal Scriptures, that imparts to that field its holiness, its power, and its immeasurable value; for this is what makes it to be the Word of God. This is the precious gift that is offered to the world by the Lord at His second coming in the Writings of the New Church. And (to change the metaphor) nothing but a vision of this internal and spiritual sense of the Word as the inner garment of the Lord - a garment woven without seam - nothing at our day but this vision can restore to man a real and reasonable faith in the Divine authority of the Word.

CHAPTER V - THE SCIENTIFIC ATTITUDE OF MIND

No just estimate of the state of the modern Christian world is possible apart from a clear understanding of what is involved in the scientific attitude of mind. In fact, the development of this attitude is largely responsible for the change in the whole concept of religion that has gradually come about since Swedenborgs day. It is this that makes it increasingly difficult for men to believe in the real Divinity of Jesus Christ. It is this also that has progressively weakened the faith of the Christian Church in the Divine authority of the Sacred Scripture. And it is under the influence of this scientific approach to all learning that religion itself has come more and more to be regarded as nothing but the expression of mans insatiable longing for immortality. It is important to note, however, that these effects, so destructive of spiritual faith, are not due to anything that is inherent in the scientific method itself, but rather to a wrong interpretation of it.

The scientific method of investigation is essential to the discovery of truth, both natural and spiritual.

It is entirely responsible for the rapid progress of our western civilization in modern times. It was not only adopted by Swedenborg, but was highly commended by him in his scientific and philosophical works. It would be a great mistake, therefore, to condemn the scientific method, rightly understood, simply because a misapplication of it has proved so injurious to the cause of spiritual religion. We believe, indeed, that it is the foundation upon which all spiritual and rational faith must be built. The immanent presence of the Lord, and the immediate operation of His providence in all things of life, are now to be seen in and by means of the laws of nature. This is the Divine Natural which the Lord assumed at His second coming, and which is revealed in the Writings. The Heavenly Doctrine is a rational revelation because it makes known the interrelation between God and man, between the spiritual world and the natural world, between the truth of religion and the facts of natural science. We believe, therefore, that men have been led - Divinely, although quite unconsciously - to develop the natural sciences as ultimates for the sake of their imperative need as a means for the preservation and perpetuation of spiritual faith and life.

In a rational age, when men insist upon the investigation and discovery of natures inmost secrets, their paramount need is a religion that explains this new-found knowledge in its relation to God and to the laws of spiritual life. Nothing less than this can long preserve the innocent faith of childhood, and make it effective in moulding human character in accord with the Divine will. We must therefore examine this scientific attitude of mind judiciously that we may distinguish between what is right and what is wrong with it, as it is understood and practiced in our day.

Expressed in simplest terms, the scientific attitude is nothing but a profound conviction that human imagination and human reason are both unreliable, and are constantly subject to error. In any search for truth, both of these human faculties may offer invaluable suggestions without which progress would be impossible. Without them we could discover nothing. But they are so readily influenced by individual emotions, by personal ambitions, by traditional ideas, and by group feelings that we cannot depend upon them as a sure guide to truth. While therefore we may, and indeed must, adopt some opinion as a working hypothesis, we are forbidden to make up our mind irrevocably that such an

opinion is true until after we have carefully and systematically examined the facts relative to it.

For this reason our primary assumptions must be checked again and again by the testimony of experience, by a long series of tests, and by controlled experiments whereby they may be either proved or disproved. In this process we must avoid the natural human tendency to confirm a preconceived idea by gathering together the evidence which appears to support it, while ignoring or explaining away the evidence that tends to contradict it. The temptation to do this arises from the pride of our own intelligence, and the desire to claim the truth as our personal discovery. We can overcome it only by an attitude of intellectual humility, by the recognition that truth lies not in our own minds but in nature herself, the product of Divine creation. Our supreme objective must be, not to establish our personal opinion, but to discover the truth. The great men of science are those who have been inspired with a love of truth for its own sake; that is, for the sake of use, and who have subjected their minds, without reservation, to its guidance. There have been many such men, and their self-effacing labors have brought untold natural benefits to mankind.

Thus far the scientific attitude of mind is right. It is the indispensable mode of approach to natural truth, and it is this attitude that Swedenborg commends. But in our modern age another element - an element that is altogether wrong - has been introduced into this concept of the scientific method.

This subversive principle which has turned modern science against religion is the unwarranted scientific assumption that the only kind of truth to which we can attain, or of which we can have any positive knowledge, is that which can be subjected to sensual proof. This itself is a preconceived idea which ignores the testimony of history and of all human experience to the effect that there is a higher truth. The abstract idea of cause and effect, without which the facts of nature could never be understood or turned to useful purposes; the faculty of generalization, which leads to the concept of law whereby alone knowledge can be organized and ordered for use; the idea of use itself, without which mere knowledge has no meaning or significance - these are not tangible things capable of analysis by the bodily senses, yet they underlie all scientific truth. The human mind is created to grasp these intangible things. The very human - that which distinguishes man from animal - is the ability to understand and utilize abstract concepts. The idea of cause leads inevitably to the idea of a First Cause. The idea of law implies the existence of a universal law. The idea of use requires that there should be an all-embracing use, a unifying and harmonizing Divine end and purpose, which alone can give meaning to all the rest.

This being true, it follows that there must be an omnipresent and all-wise government directing the entire universe. For this reason, the mind of man, in accepting the reality of cause, of law, and of use is thereby committed to the acknowledgment of the real existence of a God and of all the truth of religion that ensues therefrom.

It is essential to realize, however, that man cannot attain to a sure knowledge of this higher spiritual truth by means of his imagination or by means of his unaided reason, any more than he can attain by the same means to a sure knowledge of scientific truth. His ideas concerning spiritual things cannot be checked nor proved by any evidence of the bodily senses because these things are invisible and intangible. Yet if we are to be assured that our idea of them is correct it must be checked against something fixed, something independent of the human mind. The very first step toward a true religion upon which we can rely with confidence is to realize and acknowledge that there is such a fixed

ultimate. This is what is lacking in the modern scientific attitude of mind. It is universally recognized that nature is the fixed ultimate whereby ideas of natural things may be tested and confirmed: this because in nature we see God, the Divine Creator, manifestly working, doing wonders openly before our very eyes.

But there are millions of things being done secretly that are beyond the range of the physical senses - things that nevertheless are essential to any real understanding of natural phenomena. Of these things we cannot learn by experiment or by sensual examination. We can know of them, not by what God does, but only by what He says. The Word of the Lord, Divine revelation, is given to explain to our finite minds those spiritual verities of which we can otherwise have no knowledge whatever. It is a fixed ultimate against which our human ideas of religion may be checked, just as our ideas of natural truth may be checked by reference to nature. But this being the case, we must adopt the same attitude of intellectual humility toward the Word that we find it necessary to adopt toward the testimony of nature. We must permit our minds to be led by a love of spiritual truth, just as the true scientist must commit his mind to the guidance of the love of natural truth.

Starting from the assumption that nature is the only fixed ultimate against which human opinions may be checked, the mistaken conclusion is drawn that spiritual things, supernatural things, are merely the products of the human mind, having no independent or objective existence; or if perchance they do have independent existence, that they lie beyond the realm of positive knowledge, and therefore can never be affirmed nor believed with certainty.

Based upon this assumption is the accepted principle of modern scientific thought, that we must leave these questionable, unproved ideas out of consideration, and must confine our efforts strictly to the discovery of the truth that lies within the bounds of nature; and further, that we must seek to explain all things - even the things of the mind, if we consider them at all - in terms of scientific facts and the mechanical laws of nature.

It is this erroneous interpretation of the scientific attitude that has undermined all confidence in the Sacred Scripture as a source of dependable truth. So doing, it has deprived religious faith of any sure foundation, reducing it to the category of things unknown, and at present at least, unknowable.

We consider, therefore, that the essential difference between a right attitude toward science, and a wrong one, hinges upon this: whether we begin with the premise that there is a God, and a higher kind of truth which He can make known to us by means of His Word, or whether we begin by the assumption that there is no other truth than that which can be demonstrated scientifically.

Swedenborg lived at the dawn of our modern era, when the scientific approach to truth, now so universally accepted, was in process of being formulated. It had already roused the violent opposition of the church. Those who sponsored it had been subjected to persecution and martyrdom: this because it was supposed that in casting doubt upon the established dogmas of theology they were seeking the overthrow of all religion. Swedenborg recognized at once that the scientific method of inquiry was right, and indeed was the only way by which men might attain to an understanding of natural truth. Yet he started with the assumption that there is a God who created the universe, who sustains it perpetually, and who governs all things. He believed that God, in creating the universe, acted with definite purpose, and that His wisdom orders all things for the achievement of that purpose. He

believed that the inmost end of the Divine creation was to provide for the truest happiness and well-being of mankind and that everything in nature was intended to promote this supreme objective. As an undeniable consequence of these premises, he believed that the laws of nature and the laws of human life, which are the same as the laws of religion, so far from contradicting one another, must be in perfect harmony, each complementing the other, and both working together for the attainment of a single goal.

In assuming these postulates, Swedenborg was no less scientific than were those who assumed their opposites. In fact, Swedenborg foresaw that if science is regarded - as some thinkers already began to regard it - as the avowed enemy of religion, it could not fail in time to destroy all spiritual faith. His whole effort, therefore, as a scientific philosopher, was to demonstrate that there was no such antagonism between the two. From the very beginning of his studies he set out, not merely to amass facts, but to search out causes, and to trace an unbroken chain of causes all the way back from the ultimates of nature to God as the First Cause and origin of all things. With this end in view he focused his attention not upon the facts themselves but upon a rational explanation of them seeking to discover the use in all things, the Divine purpose in all creation.

Inspired by the desire to establish the faith of mankind in God, not by a blind allegiance to the formulas of theology, but by rational conviction supported by factual evidence, Swedenborg traversed the whole gamut of human learning as far as it was available in his day.

He studied systematically, critically, and with complete devotion to the facts, the practical arts and sciences, but always from the standpoint of their use. Metallurgy, geology, mathematics, physics, chemistry, cosmogony, anatomy, physiology and psychology - all these came under his scrutiny. To each he brought a fresh point of view, a new insight, both practical and theoretical. These studies, directed by a supreme love of use, yielded marvelous results. They led to the discovery of many facts far in advance of the knowledge of his day-facts that were substantiated only later by investigators armed with more powerful microscopes and with more exact methods of experimentation. Yet he was not satisfied. The final answer to his questioning mind continued to elude him. At last he turned from the contemplation of nature to the study of the Word, convinced that the deeper secrets of life could be revealed only by the Lord Himself. It was only then, after a long period of preparation, after acquiring a background of scientific knowledge and philosophic thought, that the internal sense of the Word could be imparted to him, the spiritual truth that alone can give meaning and rational understanding to all the rest. This truth alone can complete the chain of causes, disclosing that portion of the chain which transcends the bodily senses.

This truth alone can demonstrate the immanent presence of God in nature, the perpetual operation of His Providence in and through the laws of nature, and thus the universal government of His love and wisdom in all creation.

This spiritual truth, now made manifest in the Writings, revolutionizes man's whole concept of the Word, discloses its marvelous unity, relates all things in it to the Lord, to His work of salvation, and to the spiritual life of man. This truth could not possibly be the product of Swedenborg's mind. It is infinite in scope, eternal in its application, and perfect in its harmony with the plain teachings of the former Scriptures. So closely knit is it that the acceptance of any part of it leads inevitably to the acceptance of all the rest. Even as it transforms and illuminates our understanding of the Word, so also

it transforms and illuminates our understanding of scientific facts. Indeed, the more accurate our knowledge of nature, the more fully is that knowledge found to confirm and establish the truth of religion. Only as these two - the Word and nature are seen together as the products of the same Divine Being; only as it is seen that He who created, and who preserves the universe also spake the Word, and that both rightly interpreted proclaim the same Divine truth, can the Scripture be infilled in the minds of men, as expressed in the nineteenth Psalm:

"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth His handywork? Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge? There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.

The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.(Psalms 19:1-4, 7.)

CHAPTER VI - THE SOCIAL GOSPEL

As a direct result of the scientific attitude of mind the Christian Church has been accepting ever more widely what has come to be known as the "Social Gospel." This gospel arose as a revolt against the other-worldly attitude of medieval religious thought. The early Christians looked forward with immediate expectation to the life after death. They had but a vague and indefinite idea as to the nature of that life, but it was very real to them. It was associated in their minds with the second advent of Jesus Christ; and this they anticipated in the immediate future. They interpreted literally the Lord's words: "Then shall they see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And then shall He send His angels, and shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from the uttermost Part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven. Verily, I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done."(Mark 13:26, 27, 30.) And further, in John: "In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so I would have told you.

I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am there ye may be also."(John 14:5 3.)

The confident belief of these early Christians in an imminent resurrection to new life, enabled them to meet martyrdom with gladness and singing, to the great astonishment of their persecutors. At that time they did not think of a material resurrection, but of new life in a spiritual world, and in a spiritual body, as Paul had taught them, saying: "There are also celestial bodies and bodies terrestrial.... So also is the resurrection of the dead ... it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body."(I Corinthians 15:40, 42, 44.) And in the same epistle: "Behold I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.... For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality ... then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory."(Ibid.15:51, 53, 54.) They did not know what the spiritual world was like. They pictured it as a perfect natural world.

Yet they believed that it was in some strange way different from this world in that it was incorruptible, and thus that life there would be eternal. So strong was their faith in this future life, and so sure were they that it was near at hand, that they lived solely for the sake of that life, regarding the things of earth with something of contempt, as being of small importance in comparison. As time passed the expected coming of Jesus Christ was unaccountably delayed. Yet they continued to look for it in the near future, and all through the dark ages the eyes of simple Christians were kept fixed upon the life after death. Man's sojourn on earth was viewed merely as a necessary preparation, a period of probation, an introduction to the life everlasting. Trials and sufferings endured on earth were regarded as Divine punishment for sin. They could be removed only as sin was overcome. Until mankind was fully redeemed, therefore, physical ills must be accepted with patience as the inescapable lot of a fallen race. There was little or no thought of removing them or of alleviating them by natural means.

Furthermore, the doctrine of salvation by faith alone, as introduced at the time of the Reformation, emphasized the idea that nothing but a true faith could bring forgiveness from sin, and therefore that the prime essential of religion is purity of doctrine.

Since, according to this idea, no one could be saved who had not a true faith, both the Gentiles who were ignorant of the truth, and heretics who openly denied the truth, were doomed to spiritual death. This made it a matter of the highest importance to carry the Gospel to the Gentiles, who had to be conquered and converted to Christianity, even if, in the process they had to be cruelly enslaved and exploited. Their sufferings were excused as being of small consequence when compared to the eternal blessings imparted to them by their Christian faith. Also, the need to combat heresy within the church led to internecine strife, to personal animosities against those who held conflicting views of religion. This led to schism, and to deep sectarian bitterness, by which Christianity was torn to pieces.

So long as such an other-worldly attitude prevailed, men gave little heed to earthly things. Scientific knowledge, to be acquired only by a careful investigation of nature, was largely neglected. The active pursuit of a trade or business was held in low esteem. Only the military profession, whereby the heathen might be conquered and converted, was regarded as honorable and worthy of intelligent laymen. Those, however, who devoted their lives to the contemplation of spiritual things, who were learned in theology, who studied the Sacred Scriptures and subjected their teachings to deep reflection and analysis - these were the ones who received the greatest reverence and acclaim.

But when men began to probe the secrets of nature their discoveries wrought a tremendous change in man's whole outlook upon life. It was found that mechanical forces could be utilized to ease man's burdens, to relieve his sufferings, and to improve greatly the conditions of human society here on earth. It found that hardships, trials, inconveniences, were not, as had been supposed, unavoidable ills to be borne with cheerful patience for the eternal good of the soul. It was discovered that they could be alleviated, or even removed entirely by persistent application to the study of their natural causes and their practical remedies. Suddenly it was realized that while men had been idly sitting by, speculating upon the future life, thousands were suffering from diseases that could be cured; thousands were dying of famine that was preventable; thousands were held in bondage, doomed to life-long poverty and misery from which they could be liberated by a little knowledge. Surely to discover scientific truth, whereby he might gain the power to conquer these natural ills that constantly plague human society - surely this is man's paramount duty.

Of course scientific research is a secular responsibility and the practical application of its findings is the immediate concern of those who are engaged in business, in all branches of industry, and in the professions. But in the measure that men came to regard scientific truth as the real savior of mankind, and in consequence focused their attention upon earthly rather than upon heavenly things, the appeal of the church to consider the importance of preparing for a life after death became less and less effective. It sounded more and more like a call to ignore the ills we have while worrying needlessly about how to avoid future ills we know not of. It came to be regarded very largely as a foolish demand that society return to those conditions of natural ignorance and consequent misery from which it was just learning how to escape. Under the increasing pressure of public opinion, therefore, the Christian Church, ever since the middle of the last century, has found it necessary to concentrate its teaching and its energies more and more upon the solution of social problems, placing less and less emphasis upon doctrinal ideas, or upon any attempt to Interpret the Scripture spiritually. The leaders of the church have joined with the leaders of scientific thought in seeking to promote an earthly kingdom of human well-being and happiness here and now, rather than a spiritual kingdom of heaven after death.

The spirit of religion, they say, should lead to peace and harmony, and brotherhood among men. It should express itself in an attitude of charity, of tolerance, of mercy and generosity, of justice and fair dealing, of concern for the freedom and the equality of opportunity for all men. To encourage the exercise of these virtues is the real field of religious activity, rather than to haggle over the philosophic abstractions of theology. Here is the vital work of the church, a work that looks to immediate and tangible results - a work that promises eventually to overcome the dread evils of society that lead to war, to enslavement, to injustice, to unbearable conditions of labor. As these economic and social conditions that drive men to desperate measures are removed, it is believed that the minds of men will be set free, untold opportunities will open before them for spiritual progress, and mankind will reap a rich harvest of happiness and peace.

This is the essence of the "Social Gospel" which has profoundly influenced religious thought, and has turned the course of Christian development in modern times in an entirely new direction. The change is not a local one, but it affects Christianity as a whole.

As John Herman Randall, Jr. writes in *The Annals Of The American Academy Of Political And Social Science* for March 1948: "During the progressive decade (1903-1913) this social Christianity received official recognition in all the major churches." (Page 162.) He proceeds to recite chapter and verse. The idea that Christianity is a religion of social reform has become well nigh universal in our day, and the reason is forcefully stated by the Rev. Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick, as follows:

"The late war violated everything Jesus ever taught, and pouring the whole world into almost irremediable confusion, has brought widespread impatience with purely theological speculations about Christ. The Jesus who challenges thoughtful men today is crying, 'Why call ye Me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?' Many people therefore, growing impatient with the church's worship of the theological Christ, have been saying: 'Give us Jesus the teacher of righteousness, brotherhood, and peace, the proclaimer of principles on which alone civilization can endure.' For nearly twenty centuries you have been praising your theological Christ, and yet child labor takes our little ones and grinds them like grist in our mills, while the real Christ says, 'It is not the will of your Father that one of these little ones should perish.'

For nearly twenty centuries you have been explaining your theological Christ, yet racial hatreds still well up bitterly in men, while the real Christ said, 'One is your Teacher, and all ye are brethren.' For nearly twenty centuries you have been forming creeds about your theological Christ, yet industrial despotism still grinds its victims with a hard heel, while the real Christ said, 'Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, even so do ye also to them.' For nearly twenty centuries you have been controversially debating your theological Christ, but war still curses men, dragging in its evil train all the abominations that man is heir to, while the real Christ said, 'Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the sons of God.' Have done with your theological Christ, and give us back Jesus the ethical teacher." "I do not see," the writer continues, "how any one who knows the Master and cares for Him, can fail to sympathize with this movement of thought, and to welcome all its positive and constructive elements. The last thing that the Master could endure would be to be the object of great creeds, great anthems, great rituals, in a world which did not do what He said." (*The Modern Use Of The Bible*, by Harry Emerson Fosdick, D. D. (The Macmillan Company, New York, 1945), pages 244, 245. Copyright 1924 extended.)

We can indeed sympathize with a shift from a religion of faith alone to a religion of life. That there should be a revival of emphasis upon the actual practice of moral virtues at a time when this last outpost of liberty and social order is in imminent danger of destruction by the apostles of brute force - this is surely a matter of Divine Providence. We can be profoundly grateful that, although the light of spiritual truth has flickered and died, there remains in the Christian world an ideal of natural freedom, a goal of tolerance, of civil justice, and of mutual co-operation and good will among men for which to strive. Because spiritual insight is lacking, men often seek to achieve these goals in ways that are misguided and unwise. In consequence the results are largely disappointing. What is apparently achieved in times of great national danger, the spirit of self-sacrifice, of co-operation, singleness of purpose, and united devotion to a common cause - all this seems to evaporate as soon as the pressure of impending peril is lifted. Yet it is a great thing for the future of the race that in times of crisis so many people spontaneously rally to the defense of these moral ideals. Motives are always mixed, and there is much that savors of self-interest and of self-merit concealed within both the profession and the actual doing of moral good.

But the cynic who would condemn it all as hypocritical forgets that there is a substratum of simple sincerity in the hearts of many, however spiritually unenlightened they may be. It is this foundation of a simple faith in justice, honor, honesty and uprightness that sustains the whole structure of civilized society. Where this is undermined and destroyed, nothing remains except cruel tyranny on the one hand, or utter chaos on the other. Therefore the Lord protects and preserves this simple faith in morality even where there is no understanding of spiritual truth; and by it He maintains the conditions of natural order and civil freedom in which alone, as the nourishing soil, the seeds of a new spiritual faith and life may take root and grow. Unless this were done it would indeed be all over with the human race; for as the Scripture says: "Except the Lord of Hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah."(Isaiah 1:9)

However, although we sympathize with the struggle to maintain moral ideals, seeing in this the Protective providence of the Lord guarding and nurturing the New Church in its tender beginnings, yet we cannot regard this struggle as modern Christian thinkers do, as the all-sufficient means for the redemption of mankind.

Natural charity without spiritual truth cannot save any more than faith alone apart from deeds of charity can save. In spiritual things truth is just as important, just as necessary, as in earthly things. Men do not succeed in conquering disease by good will and kindness apart from medical knowledge and skill. Nor can they expect to cure spiritual diseases by spiritual ignorance, however inspired they may be by charity. Natural charity that is spiritually blind may remove evils temporarily from the outer life of men, but not from their inmost heart and love. Only the spiritual truth of the Word can penetrate the inner recesses of the human heart to combat and overcome the evil affections that lurk there unseen. As long as these remain they will repeatedly break through every barrier that is erected by men to hold them in check. Nothing will suffice except the Lord's own teaching to show man how these evils may permanently be driven out. Wherefore it is written, "Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain."(Psalms 127:1)

The fault we have to find with the modern attitude of Christianity is not that it is a religion of life, or that it is devoted to the actual performance of those deeds of charity which constitute morality.

Our objection is that it is a religion of external life divorced from all concern for spiritual truth, and thus cut off from the guidance of the Lord and His Word. It is a morality founded on human intelligence alone, looking only to this world, ignoring the issues of eternal life. Man is a living spirit as well as a body; and if the spirit be separated from the body, only a corpse remains. By the same token, a man lives in a dual world - a spiritual as well as a material world. A religion based on the health of the material body and the well-being of natural society alone, to the total neglect of spiritual things, is a body of religion without its soul. We hold no brief for an other-worldly attitude that ignores the practical duties and responsibilities that confront us here on earth; but neither can we agree with a this-worldly attitude that ignores the deeper responsibilities placed upon us as spiritual beings, destined for life in a spiritual world after death. The medieval Christians were right in regarding the spirit of man - his duty to the Lord and his allegiance to the Divine truth of the Word - as paramount. Their error lay not in this, but in the failure to realize that men can receive this spiritual truth in heart as well as in faith, and can come to understand it truly, only by living according to it - by applying it to the practical problems, the external uses they are called upon to perform here on earth.

If men today loved spiritual truth as they have learned to love the truth of nature; if they sought it out from the pages of revelation with the same care and devotion as that which they expend on the discovery of scientific truth; if they applied it to the removal of evil loves and false ideas in their own minds, as well as to the removal of the outward effects of these things in human society, and this with the same persistent endeavor as that wherewith they apply natural truth to the cure of physical diseases, to the lightening of human labor, and to the satisfaction of man's worldly desires; then would we see real progress toward the establishment of the Lord's kingdom on the earth. For then they would be acting, not from self, but from the Lord, and under His Divine instruction and guidance. To bring this about is the real purpose for which Divine revelation is given. It is the real work of the church - a work which is completely disregarded by those who so enthusiastically profess the "Social Gospel" of modern Christianity.

CHAPTER VII - SECTARIANISM AND RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE

Since the leaders of Christian thought have placed increasing emphasis upon the "Social Gospel" we note in the modern world a rapidly growing spirit of impatience with sectarian strife. In the degree that the doctrine of salvation by faith alone is relinquished in favor of the idea that the prime essential of religion is a moral life, theological belief loses much of its traditional importance. Because those of widely differing faiths proclaim the same ideals of moral conduct there seems no reason why they should not work together to promote the moral uplift of society. For this task widespread co-operation is necessary, and to all who regard social uplift as the real mission of the church, it appears to be nothing short of criminal that mere doctrinal differences should be allowed to prevent it. For this reason the advocates of liberal Christianity have stressed the supreme importance of universal fellowship, and the spirit of tolerance toward all religious faiths, both Christian and non-Christian.

Under the impulse of this new attitude there has been a growing tendency toward unity and co-operation among churches that was quite unheard of a century ago. Sects that had long maintained separate and rival organizations, have in a number of instances reunited. As early as 1908 the Presbyterian Church in the United States was formed from a merger of the parent body with an offshoot known as the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. Complete unity was not attained, however, because several congregations refused to join the new organization. Later the Evangelical Synod of North America, and the Reformed Church in the United States, united to establish the Evangelical and Reformed Church. In Canada, the Methodist, the Presbyterian and the Congregational churches united in 1935 to form the United Church of Canada. There have since been numerous other examples of similar mergers. Yet, in many quarters, loyalty to established beliefs and practices is so strong, and long-felt antagonisms are so deep that the effort to achieve unity has met with almost impassable barriers, and the ultimate goal of a single Christian brotherhood still lies in the distant future.

On the other hand, the movement toward co-operation for the purpose of promoting a common social program, without disturbing the faith or the independent status of any participating body, has proved far easier.

Out of this has come the World Council of Churches, organized just before the outbreak of World War II, with head-quarters in Geneva, Switzerland. Connected with this we now have the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America, which includes twenty-five different sects and denominations, and brings together in mutual co-operation an estimated number of 27,749,000 members. This represents, of course, a strictly Protestant movement from which the Catholic Church holds aloof. But quite recently, under the leadership of the late Pope John XXIII, there appears to be a serious effort to bring the two great divisions of the Christian Church into closer co-operation. Such co-operative action greatly increases the influence of the church upon world affairs. It is the only means of implementing the "Social Gospel" on a world-wide scale. It has undoubtedly helped to mobilize the forces of morality against the threat of communism.

The spirit of religious toleration that springs from a regard for spiritual freedom, and from charity toward the neighbor, is something devoutly to be desired. The sectarian antagonisms that have torn

the Christian Church to shreds, and have led to hatreds, cruelties, injustices and wars among those who profess to be brethren, the children of one Heavenly Father - these certainly are to be deplored.

They are a complete negation of the spirit of the Gospels. We cannot but sympathize with those who are struggling to overcome these obvious evils, and to win men back to a spirit of fellowship and good will. Because we profoundly believe that all men should be free to think, and above all to worship, each according to his own conscience, we have more sympathy with the idea of co-operation among those of different faiths than we have for the urge toward organic unity. External unity that does not represent internal harmony of thought and affection inevitably becomes oppressive and destroys freedom. It is true, and by the more candid thinkers it is admitted, that the differences which divide the Christian sects are for the most part non-essential. All are united in acknowledging the basic creeds. Their doctrinal differences are largely matters of emphasis. In many cases these sects are separated chiefly in regard to forms of government, modes of organization and ritualistic practices. That these need not interfere with co-operation in a common endeavor to promote moral ideals which all hold in common is obvious. That they need not lead to personal bitterness and mutual recrimination is equally clear.

The Writings plainly teach that in matters of religion there will always be varieties of interpretation, and that this is not only right but necessary to the perfection of the Lord's kingdom both on earth and in the heavens.

In God, infinite things are distinctly one, but in creation innumerable things are necessarily various because each is finite and thus limited. Among finite things the Infinite can be represented only by harmony in variety, and while truths are various, they are reduced into order and thus are brought into harmony by charity. In regard to this we read:

"As regards the Lord's kingdom on earth, that is, His church, the case is, that inasmuch as it has its doctrinal things from the literal sense of the Word, it cannot but be various and diverse in respect to these doctrinal things; that is to say, one society will profess one thing to be a truth of faith because it is so said in the Word, and another society will profess another thing, also because it is so said; and so on. Consequently, as the Lord's church has its doctrinal things from the literal sense of the Word, it will everywhere differ, and this not only as to societies, but sometimes as to the individuals in a society. Nevertheless a difference in the doctrinal things of faith does not prevent the church from being one, provided there is unanimity as to willing well and doing well."(@AC 3451.)

Here we note that the harmony among varieties of faith arises from the fact that all differences of faith are drawn from the Word as a common source that is universally recognized. Also that it is the spirit of charity, the endeavor to live according to the truth from good-will toward the neighbor that conjoins into one those who would otherwise be divided, and constitutes of them all one church. Many differences of faith existed in the Ancient Church, even in its prime, which nevertheless did not lead to mutual antagonisms, for we read:

"The doctrine of charity was the doctrine in the ancient churches, and ... this doctrine conjoined all the churches, and so made one out of many; for they acknowledged as men of the church all who lived in the good of charity, and called them brethren, however greatly they might be at variance in the truths which at this day are called the truths of faith. In these, one instructed another, and this was among

their works of charity; nor were they indignant if one did not accede to the opinion of another, knowing that everyone receives truth in proportion as he is in good."(@AC 6628.)

This should be the case also in the Christian Church, as is taught in the following number: "In the Christian world it is doctrinal matters that distinguish churches, and from them men call themselves Roman Catholics, Lutherans, and Calvinists, or the Reformed and Evangelical, and by other names.

It is from what is doctrinal alone that they are so called, which would never be if they would make love to the Lord and charity toward the neighbor the principal of faith. Doctrinal matters would then be only varieties of opinion concerning the mysteries of faith, which truly Christian men would leave to every one to hold in accordance with his conscience, and would say in their hearts that a man is truly a Christian when he lives as a Christian, that is, as the Lord teaches. Thus from all the differing churches there would be made one church; and all the dissensions that come forth from doctrine alone would vanish; yea, all hatreds of one against another would be dissipated in a moment, and the Lord's kingdom would come upon the earth."(@AC 1799.)

The same applies to those who are not Christians, as is evident from the following: "Those who are outside the church and yet acknowledge one God, and live according to their religion in a kind of charity toward the neighbor, are in communion with those who are of the church, because no one is condemned who believes in God and lives well. From this it is evident that the Lord's church is everywhere in the whole world, although specifically it is where the Lord is acknowledged, and where the Word is."(@AC 10765.)

From all this it might appear that the modern movement toward intersectarian co-operation is entirely in accord with the teaching of the Writings, and that it foreshadows a genuine revival of true Christianity. But a vital element is lacking, namely, a knowledge of what true charity is - that kind of charity which alone has power to bring varieties of faith into internal unity. Men suppose that charity consists in works looking toward the external welfare of society. They identify it with what is done from friendship, amiability, kindness; from politeness and civility; from pity and compassion toward those who are in need, or who are suffering. Yet we are taught that all these may exist where there is no charity, but only the thought of self, of merit, of reward, often so subtly concealed as to be quite unrecognized, even by one's self. Such natural charity may be entirely sincere with those who mistake it for charity itself, as is the case with children and with many of the simple good in the Christian world. But it has not the power to bring men into internal harmony, or to establish permanent peace among them; and this because, however sincere, it lacks the knowledge and thus the wisdom necessary to achieve its purpose?

We read concerning it that "friendship is not charity, and still less is politeness charity - these are degrees below charity; and the more they derive from charity the more sincere they are."(@AC 1158.) Even naturally it is evident that we must know how to be of real benefit to the neighbor. One who does not know this may, even from the deepest and the most sincere friendship, act so ill-advisedly as to do injury to the neighbor instead of the good which he intended. Real good can be accomplished only by one who is well informed, and who acts intelligently at the same time as he exercises mercy. This is equally true if we have in view the permanent benefit of society. Whatever is permanent has to do with the spirit, the inner life of man, and not merely with his physical or material well-being. It is not only possible, but altogether probable, that a social uplift of society, having regard to the natural world

alone, so far from ministering to the permanent welfare of mankind, may do it injury. This is true even on the moral plane, for material benefits which discourage initiative, deprive men of responsibility, render them dependent and satisfied to receive without giving adequate return - such benefits weaken man's moral fiber, even while they improve his physical welfare.

The spiritual truth of the Word alone teaches men what genuine charity is. It teaches us that true charity is not from man, but solely from the Lord. It is nothing but the Lord's love received in human hearts - the Lord's love for the eternal salvation of all men. Thus it is love of the neighbor that looks first of all to his spiritual welfare, and to his natural welfare not as an end in itself, but merely as a means to his eternal salvation. It is therefore other-worldly, having spiritual ends in view. And since we can have no knowledge of spiritual things except from Divine revelation spiritually understood, it is a spirit of charity that looks to the Lord for guidance, to the Word for instruction, and especially to the internal, the spiritual meaning of the Word, wherein alone can be found the laws of spiritual life. Without a knowledge of these laws our efforts to promote the real welfare of society, however sincere, are sure to be misguided, and therefore to fall short of their mark. For this reason, the very essence of true charity is a love of spiritual truth. That is why we are taught that there are three essentials of the church, namely, "an acknowledgment of the Divinity of the Lord, the acknowledgment of the holiness of the Word, and the life which is called charity.

According to the life which is charity, every one has faith; from the Word is the knowledge of what the life should be; and from the Lord are reformation and salvation. If these three had been held as essentials of the church, intellectual dissensions would not have divided but only varied it, as light varies colors in beautiful objects, and as various gems give beauty in the crown of a king."(@DP 259.) Here the three essentials of the church are given in the order of their importance. First comes an acknowledgment of the Divinity of the Lord. From this arises the acknowledgment of the holiness of the Word; and from these two together comes that kind of charity which brings internal unity, internal harmony, among varieties of faith.

Now we have seen that in the modern Christian world the Divinity of the Lord is increasingly questioned or denied. The holiness of the Word, and thence the Divine authority of the Word, are increasingly called into question. There is little or no interest in spiritual truth, the truth, that is, concerning God, and heaven, and eternal life. The charity that is sought is a charity that looks to the external world alone, that seeks to improve the social and economic conditions of earthly society, and this by the exercise of human intelligence apart from Divine guidance or instruction.

It is a charity, therefore, that is based, not on a common love of spiritual truth; not on a mutual desire to learn, to understand, and to live according to spiritual laws; but rather on a common attitude of indifference to the inner meaning of the Sacred Scripture, and upon a general agreement to disregard any consideration of the spiritual world and the life after death. For this reason, while we have religious conscience in every variety of sincere faith and worship; while we heartily approve of mutual co-operation and fellowship among the sects of Christendom which have been so long and so bitterly divided; while indeed we see in this movement the hand of providence, preserving external freedom and protecting the foundations of justice, of order, and of morality on which alone a new spiritual religion can be built; still we see in it only a temporary palliative and not a permanent cure of the deep-seated ills that afflict our fallen race. More than this is needed if the high hopes of those who so

enthusiastically support the "Social Gospel are to be fulfilled.

Men must come to see that the first duty of the church is not to promote the economic, or even the moral welfare of mankind. Social uplift is not its real mission. The function of the church is to open for men the spiritual meaning of the Word; to teach them the spiritual laws of life; to turn their eyes toward heaven, and toward the Lord, that they may learn how to serve Him, how to keep His law and do His will. The Lord alone can teach men how to love one another, and thus how to exercise genuine charity toward one another. He alone can form the hearts of men together in unity, and guide their steps in the way of peace. Therefore charity must be inspired by a love of spiritual truth, and unity must be based on a common endeavor to understand that truth, and to live according to it. This is the ideal given us in the Writings. It is the goal toward which the New Church must strive. For only out of this love and this endeavor can the Lord raise up a new spirit of charity in the hearts of men, a spirit of charity that looks to what is eternal, that is intelligent from the Word, that has power to bring varieties of faith and of religious life into real internal harmony, and thus that makes the church in every land and with every people spiritually one.

CHAPTER VIII - TOLERANCE IN THE NEW CHURCH

The Writings everywhere point to unity in the New Church as an ideal for which we should strive unceasingly. The teaching is that wherever genuine charity exists it brings unity with it, and this spontaneously, without fail, inevitable consequence? Conversely, if there be not unity it is a sure sign and indication that charity is lacking. Since the very essential of the church is charity; since the church is spiritually alive only as far as the spirit of charity is active in it, it follows that to strive for unity, to labor for its attainment and for its preservation is the same thing as to strive and labor for the establishment of the church itself. It should be clearly understood, however, that the unity here meant, the unity to which genuine charity leads, is not external organic unity in one world-wide organization. It is not unity under a single ecclesiastical government? It is a unity of the spirit, of internal affection that is based on a universal acknowledgment of the Lord as He is revealed in the Heavenly Doctrine. It is one that springs from the acknowledgment that the Lord alone has power to build the church, that He alone can teach men and lead them by means of His Word.

The Heavenly Doctrine itself is the very essential church, and wherever men receive this doctrine in love and faith, wherever they sincerely strive to live according to their best understanding of its teachings, there the New Church exists.

Among those who are at one in regard to this acknowledgment there may be wide variety of doctrinal interpretation, of ritual observance and of religious custom. There may be many independent organizations, each performing a distinct use. But if charity prevails, all these together can still make one church, united by internal bonds. There can be among them mutual sympathy, co-operation in common uses, and an interchange of benefits, all contributing to the universal end of establishing, spreading and perfecting the kingdom of the Lord on earth. The ideal of the General Church from its inception has been that, in every country, and with every race and nationality, the church should have complete freedom to develop from the Writings themselves in accord with the form of mind, the native customs and modes of life that are characteristic of each locality, with no shadow of coercion from any alien source, nor from any central organization.

The government of the General Church today extends to many distant parts of the world, but only because the beginnings of the church in those parts are not yet ready or able to sustain their own ecclesiastical organizations. We look forward to the time when there will be completely independent bodies of the New Church in every land, all nevertheless being united by a common acknowledgment of the Heavenly Doctrine as the Divine law of life. The fact that our body is at present so widespread emphasizes the need for a broad tolerance toward differences of view, toward varieties of doctrinal interpretation and application to life. Such differences actually exist, due to national and racial characteristics, and also to various degrees of instruction in the Heavenly Doctrine. But in so far as these modes of thought and life are adopted with sincere conviction that they are supported by the Writings, they give no occasion for concern, and still less for separation. We are impressed most of all, not by the minor and superficial differences we find, but by the remarkable unity that exists among all our General Church societies - a unity of purpose and of fundamental loyalty to the plain teaching of the Writings that makes them internally one in deep spiritual affection and mutual sympathy.

As we are aware, there are differences of doctrinal opinion among us in our own country, and in the Bryn Athyn Society. Yet because there is a spirit of charity arising from a common love of the Writings, and of loyalty to their teaching, these differences do not divide us. On the contrary, such differences all contribute to the broader and more perfect understanding of the Writings with each one of us. This is because they stimulate individual thought, study and reflection. They stress the importance of rational judgment and critical analysis on the part of each member of the church. They help us to avoid falling into a persuasive faith that rests upon what we are told, rather than upon what we clearly see for ourselves, directly from the Writings. This will continue to be the case as long as we recognize the freedom of others to think and will according to their own conscience, in order that each one may be led and taught immediately by the Lord. It will continue as long as there is a spirit of internal humility that makes us willing to listen with patience to opposing views, and to give them calm consideration, while at the same time it restrains us from any attempt to force our personal opinions upon others. Where there is real freedom of thought, of speech and of life, charity will order these varieties of view into harmonious co-operation for the furtherance of those uses which we all love in common, and for the promotion of which we continually need one another's help.

Furthermore, if all of those holding various views are constantly going back to the Writings to examine and correct their opinions, differences are bound to grow less as knowledge, understanding and insight increase. All this is generally recognized among us, and the history of our body of the church bears testimony to an earnest endeavor to make this spirit a reality, in spite of the severe temptations to which, from time to time, the church has been subjected. Indeed, it is not in times of peace, so much as in times of stress, that charity is put to the test. This is one reason why, in providence, the church is called upon to pass through trials and conflicts by which alone its hidden weaknesses may come into view, and its spirit be roused to overcome them.

So far we have been considering unity among those of the church who fully recognize the Divinity and the supreme authority of the Heavenly Doctrine. Where this common acknowledgment exists it constitutes a deep uniting bond. But there are other bodies of the church with whom this bond is lacking. All do not see in the same light the intrinsic nature and status of the Writings.

This is not surprising because in them the Lord speaks to men in such an utterly new and unaccustomed way. He gives His Word in a different form, and one that could not possibly have been foreseen or anticipated before the event. Men have long-established ideas concerning the Word, how it must be given, and what it must be like, and these ideas cannot easily be dislodged. This fact places very real difficulties in the way of a complete recognition of the Writings as the Word of God. In consequence we find many shades of opinion concerning them. Some have regarded them as no more than a remarkably enlightened commentary on the Bible, a commentary that is limited in authority to the knowledge and the insight of which Emanuel Swedenborg was capable. Others have acknowledged them to be Divinely inspired and authoritative in part, but in part human and fallible. Others again have held that they are a Divine revelation while at the same time denying that they are the Word, or that they are in any way equal in authority to the Old and New Testaments. And still others, while proclaiming them to be the Word, contend that their authority resides, not in their plain and literal statements, but in these together with an "internal sense," perceived and infallibly understood by regenerating men.

The Academy, and its successor the General Church, were founded on the belief that the Writings are the Word of the Lord to the New Church, and that their plain teachings are the only final authority in all matters of doctrine and of religious life. To us this has meant that the Writings themselves are the church in its very essence, and in its Divine perfection; the church as the Lord sees it in potency, and as He wills it to become in actuality with men and angels. It has meant that the church comes into existence in the minds and hearts of men as far as the teaching of the Writings is received in faith and life. The church in its widest aspect, composed of many organizations among which there is internal unity, consists of all who are in the sincere desire, and thus in the constant endeavor, to learn the Heavenly Doctrine, and to receive it as the Divine law of their life. We have believed that every phase, every activity of human life, should be under this Divine law. So believing, we have sought for principles in the Writings to guide us in the development of church government and organization, of worship and ritual, of education and social life, of marriage and the home, of civil and business relationships, as well as in the development of individual character and in personal regeneration. In fact, we have believed that regeneration cannot be effected apart from these more external responsibilities, but solely by meeting them in the way that the Lord Himself directs, from love to Him, from charity toward the neighbor, and from a desire to obey the precepts of His Word.

This attitude toward the Writings has been the distinguishing characteristic of the Academy, and later of the General church. It has opened before us a vision of uses to be performed uses that have appeared to us as immediate, pressing, and essential to the permanent establishment of the New Church on the earth. We have seen the performance of these uses as our plain duty, Divinely enjoined upon us. To perform them then becomes a matter of conscience which we can neither evade nor ignore. The pursuit of these uses has, in consequence, determined in large policies of our church.

Had freedom been granted to follow these policies, and to perform these uses, there need have been no separation, in spite of the wide differences of opinion that existed in the church in regard to the nature of the Writings. But unfortunately (although quite naturally), those who hold fundamentally different views of the Writings have widely divergent ideas as to what will best promote the growth of the church. Each seeks, therefore, to lead the church in a different direction.

Where leadership of an organization is divided, disorder and confusion inevitably result, and freedom is inhibited or destroyed in order that each may be free to follow the path his own conscience dictates, independent organizations become necessary?

When this situation arises, separation, grievous as it is, and causing as it does suffering from deep wounds that take long to heal, still cannot be avoided. It is, then, right and of order that separation should take place, because freedom of thought, of will and of action, in all matters of religion is of paramount importance. Without it the church cannot grow. Nor can there be freedom without order. These two things must be preserved at all cost, even if, in order to do so we are compelled to relinquish our treasured unity. Organic unity is desirable, but more precious still is an internal unity based on a common acceptance of the Writings as our only source of Divine instruction and guidance. But most essential of all is spiritual freedom. And let us be clear in recognizing that even among bodies of the church that differ basically as to their concept of the Writings, there may still be internal unity if genuine charity prevails. It cannot produce as close or as intimate a relationship as that which exists with those of the same fundamental faith, because divergent beliefs look in different directions and

strive for different objectives.

Nevertheless, where there is a sincere acceptance of the Writings as in some measure or degree a source of Divine instruction, there is the seed of the New Church. There the Lord is present to enlighten and to lead. Charity prompts us to recognize His presence, and to protect the seed because a blessing is in it.

The charity that can and should exist among widely divergent bodies of the New Church is not such as to condone what is false. It is not one that should ignore differences and indiscriminately mingle opposites that cannot be reconciled. It is a charity that clearly recognizes distinctions, and that, without malice or recrimination, provides for freedom, and this from a deep regard for the freedom of others as well as for our own. It is a charity that springs from internal humility, from an acknowledgment of our own weakness, our own proneness to error, and from an acknowledgment that the Lord in His providence alone can build His church, and that He does so often in ways far beyond our human understanding. He must build it in accord with the free choice of men, and in adaptation to their states. He has power to build it in spite of their errors, by a gentle and merciful leading.

If it were not so we also would be without hope of salvation, and our labors for the establishment of the church would be in vain. None of us can avoid errors. None of us can attain to a perfect understanding of the Writings. None of us is immune from the blindness that is induced by ignorance, by proprial affections, or by the pressure of the world about us? True charity, therefore, withholds us from making internal judgments concerning either the individuals or the bodies of the church that differ from us in matters of doctrine. Men may honestly come to opposite conclusions, even with regard to the nature of the Writings, and still sincerely believe that in doing so they are loyally following the teachings of the Lord given therein. I know people who find it unthinkable to call the Writings the Word, because the books of the Word are listed in the Writings themselves with no mention of that which the Lord has revealed in His second coming. I have no doubt that many accept the authority of derived doctrine as final because they believe, quite sincerely, that the Writings can and must be authoritatively interpreted by regenerating men. Charity demands that we attribute sincerity of purpose to those who disagree with us, and we must take such sincerity for granted unless overt acts and open declarations prove it to be otherwise.

Even then we are justified in judging only the acts and the speech, but not the inmost intentions from which they arise.

If all the bodies of the New Church are inspired by this kind of charity their differences of doctrine will not stand in the way of friendly relations, co-operation in most general uses, or the interchange of benefits that will, in the Lord's providence be made to minister to the real and eventual good of the New Church. In this case there will be no desire to hinder one another in the performance of their several distinct uses. There will be no policy of silence, but all will be glad to have the teachings of the others fully known, and openly subjected to examination and comparison, in order that every one may have a basis for rational judgment and free choice as to where he will place his allegiance. There will be no effort to proselytize by persuasion, especially among children and young people who are not prepared to form an independent judgment. There will be no bitterness of personal feeling, no mutual recrimination, no spirit of accusation or of condemnation of individuals. Yet there should be complete freedom for each body to maintain and defend zealously what it regards as the essential truth of the

church. There will be whole-hearted recognition of the uses that other bodies perform which contribute to the welfare of the church.

In spite of the unavoidable suffering that separation brings, there will be no worry or anxiety as to the future of the church, because we know that its destiny is in the Lord's hands, and that His providence will protect it, and will bring it into ever greater unity if only we do our part by looking to Him, and striving sincerely to keep the precepts of His Word.

Such is the vision of spiritual charity pictured for us in the Heavenly Doctrine. It is a goal by no means easy of attainment. We can advance toward it but haltingly because of the many obstructions that are interposed by our proprial loves, and by the proprial loves of others. It can become effective as a uniting bond only to the degree that it is mutual and reciprocal. Nevertheless, it is an ideal of charity we should cherish in our hearts, and labor to achieve perpetually. For in this charity is the true spirit of the New Church, the spirit that makes the New Church living, the spirit that is enjoined upon us as followers of the Lord in His second coming, a spirit to which the Writings point on every page.

CHAPTER IX - THE NEW CHURCH IN THE CHRISTIAN WORLD

To recapitulate briefly what has thus far been established to show that the faith of modern Christianity is directly opposite at every vital point to the truth now revealed in the Writings of the New Church:

The three essentials of a true Christian faith, as stated in the Writings are: the acknowledgment of the Divinity of Jesus Christ; the acknowledgment of the Divinity, the holiness, and consequently the authority of the Word; and a life of charity that springs from these two, and that looks in all things to man's spiritual and eternal welfare.

In contrast to this, the prevailing view of the modern Christian world is that Jesus Christ was a man, similar in all respects to other men except for the fact that He was blessed with an incomparable insight into moral truth. The Sacred Scripture is regarded as a book of moral precepts which, however, possess no moral authority, but rather reflect the superstitions and primitive ideas of the times in which they were written. And charity is thought of as a moral life that is entirely independent of theological belief, and one that looks to the external welfare of human society without any concern for the life after death.

This direct opposition to the three essentials of the New Church is, as we have noted, the professed belief of liberal Protestantism; but it is so widely accepted in the present day Christian world that it is taken for granted, and is unconsciously implied in religious literature and in the public pronouncements of many popular leaders of Christian thought, regardless of their sectarian affiliation. It is manifested in the growing movement toward inter-denominational co-operation, and in the welcome acceptance of the "Social Gospel." No one can doubt, therefore, that it represents the prevailing temper of our times in regard to the faith and life of the Christian religion. What then, we may ask, should be the attitude of the New Church toward this Christian world? Is there some basis for internal unity between them? If so, what kind of charity is required to bring them into harmonious co-operation and mutual sympathy?

The Writings lead us to the definite conclusion that there is such a basis, and that a bond of charity should exist, not between opposite tenets of faith, but between the members of the New Church and all in the Christian world who are sincere and earnest in their endeavor to lead a good life to the best of their knowledge and belief.

If the teaching of the Writings is true concerning the Divinity of Jesus Christ, the holiness of the Word, and the life of charity, then the doctrine of the modern Christian Church in regard to these vital questions of theology is not true. If a life according to what the Writings teach is truly good in that it leads to the permanent spiritual welfare of mankind, then a life according to the opposite teaching cannot be truly good. It cannot lead to that same objective, even though it may appear outwardly to promote the well-being of earthly society. It must be obvious to everyone that even the infinite mercy of the Lord cannot bring two such opposites into harmonious agreement. No one can love them both, or serve them both at the same time in equal degree. No one can serve two such masters because to do so is to go at the same time in opposite directions. Choice between such opposing modes of thought and

life is imperative. In the spiritual world, those who freely choose falsity instead of truth, and the life of falsity instead of the life of truth, are separated from those who make the opposite choice. This separation is spontaneous and unavoidable because such opposites negate each other.

Wherever they come together they fight until one has conquered the other and driven it out, or has reduced it to complete subservience. That is why there is an impassable chasm, between heaven and hell, as Abraham, in the parable, said to the rich man in he11: "Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they who would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us that would come from thence."(Luke 16:26)

With men, however, as long as they live on earth, and for some time after death, there is no such separation. These two opposites exist together in every human mind, locked in a struggle for ascendancy, the outcome of which has not yet been determined. This inner conflict ceases only after men have passed through the world of spirits, and have been prepared for their final place in heaven or in hell. It can be settled only by the free choice of the man himself. Inmosty the choice is not between truth and falsity, but rather between love to the Lord, in whatever form He may appear to a man, and the love of self, which is subtly exalted by falsity and made to appear supreme.

In the natural world the issue is often obscured because falsity is mistaken for truth, and in its light evil appears as good.

For this reason men on earth cannot be judged as to their interior quality by the truth or the falsity of the faith they profess. The Lord, in His providence, assures that a right choice may be possible to those of every religion wherein there is some acknowledgment of a God, and a life from conscience according to whatever is believed to be the law of God. He provides that men may freely choose what they believe to be true, as against what they think is false; and doing so they choose what they regard as good in preference to "hat they consider to be evil. In the sight of the Lord every man is interiorly good who makes such a choice, no matter how mistaken his religious faith may be. Since some men make this choice, and others do not, it follows that in every religion there are both those who are interiorly good, and those who interiorly evil. Because this choice is made in secret it is not obvious to others; nor is it known to the man himself since no one can perceive with certainty, his deepest motives. The Lord alone knows the hearts of all the children of men.

Since the Lord judges men, not according to what they believe, but according to their intentions and ends, therefore, where the intention is to keep the commandments of God, there in His sight is the church. This church is universal, interpenetrating all religions, irrespective of their creeds.

It includes every one in the whole world who, according to his best lights, is sincere, and faithful to what he believes to be true and right. All such taken together constitute the Church Universal spoken of in the Writings. This however is a church, not in actuality, but only in potency. The true church can exist in actuality only where the Lord is known and loved, where the Word is spiritually understood, at least to some extent, and where men are striving to live according to its spiritual laws. But the church exists in potency wherever there is innocence, wherever men are willing to be taught and led, wherever the mind has not willfully been closed against the reception of Divine truth.

All who belong to this potential church, although they are scattered like sheep having no shepherd, are

nevertheless under the constant, though secret guidance of the Lord, who, with all the power of His providence, watches over them, and protects their spiritual life with infinite care and tenderness. As He Himself said in His prayer at the Last Supper; "Those that Thou gavest Me I have kept, and none of them is lost but the son of perdition." (John 17:12) By this He meant that all men have been redeemed, and no one is condemned who is willing to be saved.

Falsities of doctrine innocently believed, and evils of life springing from such doctrines, condemn no one. That alone which condemns is the deliberate rejection of the truth after it has been clearly seen, and the deliberate confirmation of evil from the loves of self and the world.

Because of this, although we can feel no sympathy for the doctrines that we know to be false, nor for a mode of life that is contrary to what we know from the Word to be good, still we can hope and believe that in the midst of the spiritual darkness which envelopes the modern Christian world, there still are many who are sincere in heart. We cannot know with certainty who they are, but, without making internal judgments of any individual, we can cultivate a spirit of charity toward the qualities of innocence and sincerity in all who manifest them openly in speech and act. With these we can have a bond of mutual sympathy, of friendship, and of wholehearted co-operation in external uses. We can wish that they might learn to know the Lord in His Divine Human and rejoice in the light of spiritual truth now revealed in the Writings. But above all, we should wish them to be led to receive this truth by the Lord Himself, in accord with their spiritual freedom, not by any pressure or persuasion on our part.

No genuine faith can be imposed upon any one against his will. That is why the Lord, with such infinite patience, protects the tender remains of religion in which innocence abides. He has primary concern for the freedom by which alone men can be led to see the truth interiorly, to acknowledge it from the heart, and to love it; wherefore it is said of Him, "A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench: He shall bring forth judgment unto truth." (Isaiah 42:3)

In this respect we should co-operate with the Lord by the exercise of patience and forbearance. Nor should there be in our spirit of charity the slightest shadow of condescension, for after all, we are not very far removed from the state of those in the Christian world who, in the midst of darkness, are struggling toward the light. We ourselves are only beginning to understand the truth of the Writings. We have the Christian world within us, as well as around us. The light of the truth that shines from the pages of the Heavenly Doctrine is largely obscured in our minds by clouds of fallacies and appearances and mistaken ideas that lie deeply imbedded in our thought, as well as by proprial affections that continue in possession of our hearts.

The truth of the Writings is not ours, even if we understand it, except to the degree that it actually governs our lives and lifts our love above the things of self and the world to the things of heaven, and supremely to the Lord. In our vacillating endeavor to make real the ideals of life which the Writings set before us, we are closely akin to those in the Church Universal who, without any knowledge of the Writings, are still striving to make their life acceptable to God and obedient to His law.

Nevertheless, the charity that constitutes a bond of internal unity between the Church Specific and the Church Universal must derive its soul from a supreme devotion to the Lord, and to His truth as revealed in the Heavenly Doctrine. The Church Universal, in the merciful providence of the Lord, can

provide for the salvation of every individual who, either here or in the life to come, is willing to be taught and led by the Lord; but it cannot provide for the establishment of the Lord's kingdom on the earth. Natural good, even if innocence be in it, has no power to overcome the interior evils that plague the human race. It has no power of judgment that can with assurance distinguish truth from falsity, or genuine good from its counterfeit. Concerning this the Writings teach:

"They who are in natural good can be as easily carried away by falsity as by truth, provided the falsity appears in the form of truth; and they can be as easily led by evil as by good, provided the evil is presented as good. They are like feathers in the wind."(@AC 7761.) The real quality of good is according to the quality of truth with which it is conjoined; and spiritual good, permanent and eternal good, can be achieved only by means of spiritual truth, that is, the truth concerning spiritual and eternal life. Without that truth, even men of good will are misled, and their efforts to serve the true welfare of human society will prove vain: this because their labors can be utilized by the evil for their own selfish purposes, and thus can be turned into evil.

If this be the case, and if the Writings actually present that spiritual truth which alone can lead to genuine good, then surely to uphold that truth, to propagate it throughout the world by every means in our power, and to lead men to accept it freely-this is the highest form of charity. Because we believe this we cannot do otherwise than recognize that our first responsibility is to the Lord. Our first duty is to the truth which He has entrusted to our care. This must take precedence over our duty to men.

We cannot conceal this truth, nor compromise it, nor ignore it, in order to conform to the ideas of charity that are prevalent in the Christian world.

Acknowledging this, our first responsibility is to perfect our own understanding of the Divine truth, and to increase our ability to apply it intelligently to the reformation of our own lives. This comes first because we cannot see to remove the mote from our brother's eye until we have removed the beam that is in our own eye. We cannot be of real service in spreading the faith of the New Church to others unless we are deeply concerned with the true establishment of that faith in our own hearts and lives. Spiritual charity, like natural charity, begins at home, and radiates thence to those around. Wherefore the church as an organization must grow as the church grows within each one. Indeed, the church itself is always within man, and the church as an organization, rightly considered, consists of those who have the church within them. Because of this, internal evangelization comes first, and external evangelization follows. By internal evangelization we mean the constant feeding and upbuilding of the understanding and life of the truth with those who are already members of the church, to the end that the church may be constantly growing in spirit, and from this, may grow in numbers.

Our second responsibility is to the children the Lord has given into our care. We must see that these children are protected from the influences which so distort the minds of the young as to make it difficult, or even impossible for them on reaching adult age to accept the teaching of the Writings. All little children delight in the stories of the Word, and respond affirmatively to teaching about the Lord and heaven. But modern education so emphasizes the imperative need for material things, so concentrates upon the acquisition of scientific knowledge, and upon the struggle for physical and mechanical skills, that religion is given but scant consideration. That kind of education insinuates such reliance upon natural truth to solve all the problems of human life, and casts such doubt upon the reliability of any spiritual teaching, that an unbiased approach to the Writings as a Divine revelation is

made extremely difficult when adult age is reached. It is our duty to see that our children, by their education, are led to the Lord, that their minds are kept open to His truth, and that their will is rendered pliable to His leading. To fulfill this responsibility we have to act contrary to the popular trend of modern education, which is to make citizenship the supreme goal of all learning, and to ignore completely the teaching of any religion.

We believe that education for life should be above all, education for citizenship in the eternal kingdom of God. So far as this goal is reached we need have no concern as to the real quality of citizenship for our country that will be instilled. But if this goal is not sought, however efficiently natural citizenship may be taught, its inner duality will by no means be assured.

Finally, our third responsibility is to see that the teaching of the Heavenly Doctrine is made available to every one in the entire world. We must seek to spread the knowledge of it by its publication in every land, and by its translation into every language. We must see that it is presented in its purity, without human persuasion, without external pressure of any kind, in order that the truth itself may build the church as far as men, in the Lord's providence, may be prepared to see it and to accept it in complete freedom. We should be inspired with a sincere missionary zeal; but our zeal should be tempered with patience. We should trust in the Lord's secret leading, and resist any desire to force His hand and by insisting from our own intelligence upon the external growth of the church, in the way, and at the rate we think is right.

As far as this spirit of charity prevails, the New Church will grow under the immediate leading of the Lord. It will develop its own distinctive life directly from the principles of the Writings as these are understood and applied to every phase of religious life. It will do so without ill-will toward those outside of the church who cannot understand; and yet without being turned aside from this paramount duty by misunderstanding and opposition from the world. It will do so in no spirit of narrowness or bigotry or contempt of others, nor with any sense of superiority over others, but solely from a desire to be true to what the Lord teaches. As far as we can make this exalted ideal of charity real in our minds and in our lives, the Lord will, in His own time and in His own day, build His church within us, and extend it to the world around us, even until the promise of His everlasting kingdom is fulfilled.