

# Faith and Falsity

A Series of Doctrinal Classes by Hugo Lj. Odhner

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# I - THE ONE TRUE FAITH

The purpose of this series of essays is to consider the importance, yea, the necessity, of a true faith, a true doctrine concerning God, concerning life and concerning the soul. Only a fool would maintain that one should put ones faith in what is not true. Common sense holds it self-evident that in worldly matters, when one is deluded by some falsity, misled by some deceptive appearance, or held in ignorance, one is courting disaster. In recent centuries there has been a feverish search for natural truth, for a better knowledge of the physical environment in which our lives are placed. In every generation, the process of technical education has been lengthened to keep pace with the widening horizons of experienced knowledge, it is known, gives power, a power needed in the competitive uses of society.

But in matters that concern man's ultimate destinies, that concern his relation to the Source of all life, or that concern his immortal life, his soul and the final objective of existence, a great lassitude has crept war men's minds. Despite much preaching from untold pulpits, there is a perceptible atmosphere of spiritual disillusionment overhanging the modern world. On the whole, people are seemingly satisfied with a life which looks no further then to the comforts of the body and the satisfactions of natural curiosity and social ambitions.

But whether he will admit it or not, man has a soul, He cannot entirely quench what some have called the religious instinct - the sense of fear before the unknown. And, if he - in his freedom refuses to acknowledge the true God, he will unconsciously raise up idols made more nearly in his own image, and bow before them or he will persuade himself that he himself is a god and a law unto himself.

The Writings reveal that there is a universal influx into the souls of men, predisposing them to accept the truth that there is a God and that He is one (@TCR 8). This influx into the soul does not teach man this truth. Religious truths must come, like all other knowledge, through instruction - through the senses of hearing and sight. Influx, is always according to reception. When the influx through the Soul descends into the realm of mans conscious mind, its effect is varied according to the knowledge and belief with which man is imbued. If it meets with forms which are not correspondent, it cannot become articulate, but is refracted like sunlight in a dark cloud.

It is also revealed that there is a general influx from the spiritual world which is the cause of mans intuition of God as a Divine Human or a Divine Person. Even where God is thought of as a trine of Persons, or as many gods, this idea of the human form is dominant. And it is notable that Christians loudly maintain in face of all logic that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, having the same Divine essence, are One God; and that pagan philosophers, without denying the many gods of popular worship, argued that above them all there was an indivisible and unknowable Divine, supreme God (@AE 955[e]; @TCR 90).

But no acknowledgment of God can be attained without revelation: God must reveal Himself to man; man cannot search out his Creator. An acknowledgment of the Lord as the Divine Human - as Jesus Christ in whom dwelleth all the fullness of Divinity bodily is not attainable except from the Word which is the crown of revelations (@TCR 11). Not even the smatterings of religious knowledge which are found in the ancient nations and among primitive peoples, were evolved by the human race. The

natural man cannot perceive and apply to himself the things of God, but only the things of the world (Ibid). Those religions derived their echoes of truth from a primeval revelation which pervaded all the world and which the natural man perverted in various ways.

It was through these perversions that the history of our erring race is filled with tragic dissensions, dreadful heresies and shocking desecrations, with schisms and persecutions and fanaticisms. The world is divided as to religious beliefs as if by a confusion of tongues. The very purpose of religion has been reversed and rival sects and churches have cultivated subtle hatreds instead of the charity and mutual love to which revealed religion is intended to guide mankind. We are faced with the strange fact that religious tolerance seems to be possible only where there is so little interest in religious truth that there is an utter indifference as to what the neighbor believes and a silent consensus that religious faith has after all no efficacy for salvation.

There are still militant religions which claim that no human soul can be saved unless he is, during earth life, received into that particular communion and indoctrinated in that particular confession. There are also sects and races who believe themselves a people chosen by God and favored above others with promises of temporal blessings. Such movements are usually filled with evangelistic ardor, or at least with zeal and enthusiasm for their own special group. But they usually are marked by a thinly veiled contempt for those who are outside of their communion and a secret pride in their own states in their assured salvation. They ridicule and condemn the veriest truths, if in any other church than their own... (@AC 5432). And they are persuaded to the point of bigotry in the truth of their own faith, even though it may contain beliefs that outrage sound reason and lead to practices that scandalize decent minds.

Mankind being such as it is, it is of Divine permission that there should be a variety, yea, a contrariety, of religions. This creates an equilibrium or power amongst them a spiritual balance in the world of human minds. And this in spite of the fact that each of the dominant religions is actually the remnant of a falsified, corrupted and consummated church. For while each insists on its own characterizing falsity, it also opposes and neutralizes other falsities represented in other churches.

The terse statement is made in the Writings that the churches after the time of the apostles fell away into so many heresies that at the present day there are none other than false churches. For them it is impossible to see a single genuine truth from the Word except what is encompassed with falsities, or stepped in falsities, or coherent with falsities (Inv. 38). This is given as a reason why someone had to be commissioned by the Lord to be introduced into the spiritual world and derive from the mouth of the Lord genuine truth out of the Word, for the sake of the New Church that was to be established in place of the former.

Because the man-made dogmas of the former Christian churches will not stand rational scrutiny, it becomes a common saying that the understanding is to be kept under obedience to the creed of these Churches. But in the New Church this is to be reversed: in this it is lawful by the understanding to enter and penetrate into all its secrets and also to confirm them by the Word; the reason being that its doctrinals are truths continuous from the Lord, laid open through the Word (@TCR 508). The faith of the New Church is not to be blind faith, but its truths are to open the understanding into the light of heaven more and more. These truths of the Word, one and all, are so many mirrors of the Lord. But this compound mirror has been shattered into fragments which are scattered over the world in

countless sects, religions, churches. The pieces have been distorted, disordered, or lost. The original truths have been pasted together in diverse ways, according to fickle human fancies, to present not an image of God but a parody, a Deity made in the image of men.

This was the reason for the Lord's second advent for the giving of the Heavenly Doctrine, a doctrine of genuine truths. The mirror was to be restored, to reflect the entire Truth, the organic aspect of the Divine; to display the Divine Human and the entirety of the Divine purpose.

The New Church teaching, revealed by the Lord in His second advent, is that there is and can be only one true faith, and that every faith which recedes from this is to that extent spurious. There can be only one faith, because truth cannot be divided and remain the truth. Faith indeed consists of innumerable truths, for it is complex. Yet all these truths make a one, like so many members of the same body, which all act as a unit, having the same governing soul and life.

In the True Christian Religion we find a brief statement of this one true faith: It is in the Lord God the Savior Jesus Christ, and is with those who believe Him to be the Son of God, the God of heaven and earth, and one with the Father (379). It is also said, that Saving faith is to believe in Him (3).

But still the Heavenly Doctrine repeatedly explains that every man can if he will be saved. It is of the Lord's Divine Providence that every nation has some religion; and the primary thing in every religion is to acknowledge that there is a God; otherwise it is not called a religion. And every nation that lives according to its religion, by refraining from doing evil because it is contrary to its god, receives something of the spiritual in its natural. Here the Writings appeal to common perception: When one hears some gentile say that he is unwilling to do this or that evil because it is contrary to his god, does one not say to oneself, Is not this man saved? It seems as if it could not be otherwise. Sound reason declares this to him (@DP 322). And Swedenborg testifies, I have learned from much experience that men of every religion are saved, provided that by a life of charity they have received remains of good and of apparent truth.... The life of charity consists in thinking kindly of another, in wishing him well, and in perceiving joy in oneself from the fact that others also are saved (@AC 2284).

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It may appear that we are here faced with something of a paradox. On the one hand, there is only one saving faith, but this faith has perished in Christendom so that now there are none but false churches, in which there is no genuine truth remaining, and hence nothing but a blind faith. On the other hand which is a matter of great rejoicing all men from every religion can be saved. And the questions then arise, How are they saved? and if they can be saved as easily as those who are in true faith what is the great and urgent need for the true faith? Why should it be written in the Canons of the New Church that through the faith of the church of the present day there is no conjunction with God and thence no salvation? and that unless a New Church exist, which shall abolish the faith of the Old Church ... no flesh can be saved? (Can., Trin. x.).

To the informed New Church man the answers to these questions are simple, for they are directly given in the Writings in various forms. No man is ever saved from the evils of hell by a false faith. Falsities always tend to lead to evil. It is true that men can be saved, whatever religious creed they may have professed, whether pagan or Christian, Mohammedan or Jewish; but only if the falsities of these

religions were not received interiorly in their spirits. Similarly it is true that no one is saved by what the Writings proclaim as the one true faith unless that faith be the faith of his heart and spirit, and not merely an intellectual vanity.

That there is only one faith that saves, is stated tersely in the Canons: No one can hereafter come into heaven unless he be in the doctrine of the New Church as to faith and life. The reason is, that the new heaven which is now being established by the Lord is in faith and life according to that doctrine (Can., Trin., x. 7). The True Christian Religion explains the matter further, saying that no one who comes into the other world from Christendom and is unable to receive the faith in the Lord as God and Savior, can enter heaven; and the reason is that such a spirit has confirmed himself in falses because of his wickedness of life. Yet gentiles who have not known about the Lord, are saved if they have believed (in their spirits) in one God and have lived according to the precepts of their religion (@TCR 108, 107).

It thus appears that the ability to accept the Lord as the Divine Human, or to believe in God, is dependent on man's willingness to live a good life or to learn to do so. It is faith that saves and introduces into heaven; but that faith is only the means which charity seeks out and accepts in order to enlighten its life and adjust it to the whole order of creation and to the universal kingdom of the Lord, the Grand Man of heavenly uses.

We are treating here of universal laws of life. To say that all men who have lived aright according to their religion, will receive the truths of faith in the other life and come to acknowledge the Lord: this is to imply that truth is the logical partner of good; that wherever there is good, truth will eventually be given. It further implies that the principal truth to which good leads is the truth about the visible God, the Divine Man.

We must necessarily conclude from this that the worship of God as a Divine Human is not confined to Christians nor limited to the people of this planet, but must be universal among races on the uncounted earths in the vast starry heavens. To this Swedenborg was allowed to bear testimony from actual experience. For in his spiritual contacts with the inhabitants of other earths he found that they adore the Divine, not as invisible but as visible. When the Divine appears to them He appears in a human form, i. e. in an angelic form, in the manner that He appeared to the ancients on this planet. And God under the human form is the Lord (EU 121, 118, 7, 98, 40, 170, 91). Therefore, when they are told of God's becoming incarnate on our earth, they soon accede to it and see why it should have been so for the sake of the salvation of the human race (EU 8; @AC 9361).

God cannot be comprehended except in human form, which is the only form that can manifest love and wisdom. Without being determined to the human form, the idea of the Divine would dissipate into a bleak infinity devoid of quality, as when the eye looks into space. And thus the thought would sink into nature and substitute its interior forces for God. Such a formless God cannot be worshiped or loved, for He would be invisible, and inconceivable except as an unknown power, bare and mechanical, without soul or purpose, without pity or compassion, love or wisdom (EU 7 and references).

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But why is it that the idea of a God and indeed a God Man is so inseparable from good that no good is

genuine apart from the acknowledgment of God? Why is it that the Writings say that all those are evil who deny God (@TCR 382), and that the charity of atheists is not merely spurious or hypocritical but non-existent, even if they live a life of philanthropy and conspicuous moral virtue? The good works of atheists is compared to bread made of ashes or fruit made of wax. They cannot be called charity, it is explained, because there is nothing of faith adjoined to it (@TCR 453).

We might answer this question by a doctrinal phrase that good and truth must be conjoined if good is to be good or truth is to be true. But in fact we find that atheists are often found amongst the most learned who have an abundance of knowledge (@SD 4727[e]). And Swedenborg was shocked at the great number of atheists who come from the Christian world where the Lord is known and outwardly acknowledged. Truth must become faith, not mere knowledge or profession, before it can qualify good and make it genuine.

But no intricate philosophy is needed for us to see that good becomes genuine only when man takes no credit for it. So long as one is persuaded that the good he does is his own, or self-derived, his works are deeds of pride and self-satisfaction which smugly wait for praise and reward. Such self-esteem or conscious merit breeds envy and hatred and calculates its self-advantage in all it does. It is unable to forget self. Even an animal acting unreflectingly from the mere instinct of its breed, has a purer good than a man who maintains that the credit for what he does belongs to himself alone.

Man, in his freedom, must indeed feel that he acts of himself and bear responsibility for how he uses the powers entrusted to him. But the essence of evil comes into being when he persuades himself that he is responsible only to himself, or that his life with its many endowments is self-derived.

The most essential acknowledgment of man is therefore this that he is only a vessel receptive of life. This is the original premise of all religion. To primitive man it came most spontaneously as a matter of course. The very fact that man must eat and drink in order to live, implies this fundamental truth. And as his body a vessel lent him from the parental flesh grows by gifts provided in nature, so also does his mind or spirit develop by the influx of new suggestions, new affections from the spiritual realm.

Gratitude for the gift of life for the riches of new thoughts and new emotions; and humility of spirit in face of the unlimited unknown the infinities to which he can never attain; these are the signs of man's recognition that all his powers for good come from a source apart from himself. Without these acknowledgments man walks alone seeking only his own good; and his hand is against every man, for every man becomes his rival, not his friend. He grasps life as his right not as a gift; defends it as something he procured by his own strength. He owns to no obligation, no fealty. He is a god in his own sight, determining good and evil. He bows to no God.

The strange fact is that in all states of evil this spirit of rebellion becomes dominant. We can easily recognize it, whenever it crops up.

Genuine good must have innocence within it. And innocence is an acceptance of the order and purpose of creation. When this order is seen and man acquiesces without resistance, then God as it were converses with man face to face as is said of the people of the most ancient church (@AC 49). For it is the pure in heart that see God. Now it is said that the most ancient people adored the infinite Existence in which is the finite (and invisible) Being or Divine Esse (@AC 4687). It is explained that the Divine



Existere before the Advent was the Lords Divine manifesting itself by passing through heaven; and that by so doing the Divine was perceived as a Divine Man because heaven which is in Divine order is a Grand Man. They recognized in the human form, which they saw as universal in creation, the existence of the infinite love (@SD 4846). It was the perception of the divine order of creation, therefore, that they knew the Lord as a Divine Human; and this although the Lord had not yet come down, by birth in the world, to reveal and glorify His Human in visible form. In a sense, the ancients worshiped an invisible God, which was yet represented in human form (@TCR 786).

Only the idea of God as Man can make Him an object of human love and worship. Only the truth of God as Divinely Human can conjoin itself to good in mans heart and make it genuine. It is in the nature of innocence to attribute all human virtues, all good, all perfection, to God as a Source of influx. The more good those of the Golden Age saw in each other, the more multiform perfections of mercy, love, and wisdom could they see in God Man, as the final Origin of this good.

Even the wicked can acknowledge a Creator, or a Divine from eternity, a First Cause. Such acknowledgment does not interfere with their self-love, for they think of this original Infinite as an abstraction which makes a one with the interior forces of nature some sort of limitless ocean of blind energy. The devils in some of the hells, from their worldly habits, speak of such a Creator invisible Divine. But all the hells unite in bitter hatred against the Lord, as the Divine Human! (Ath. Cr. 201; @AR 59).

The Arcana Coelestia states that the supreme among the doctrinals of the church is that the Lords Human is Divine: and one with the infinite Being (4687). We can understand this when we reflect that no good is good unless it is conjoined with the idea of use. No man is good unless he is good for something unless his good regards the good of the whole and fits into the pattern and purpose of the entire cosmos. This concept of good does not involve a merely utilitarian philosophy: for the purpose of creation is not mere cold efficiency, but the conjunction of love. The bruised reed and the smoking flax, the immaturities and failures, the thwarted hopes and the imperfect fulfilments, also have their place as means toward the final uses of heaven. But all good must have in view the balance between uses, the relation of the part to the whole.

If this be not so, there can be nothing good. The only genuine good must conform to the end and totality of all good must be concordant with the inmost of Divine Providence. It must indeed derive its essence from its conjunction with the Divine Good, so that its finite use is somehow incorporated in the infinite Body of God.

In the conjunction of man with God, there can be no identification or fusion of what is human and what is Divine, nor any surrender of mans individuality or finite consciousness. But what we refer to is the teaching that the Lord as to the Divine Human is order in the heavens, and that all who are regenerated are brought into that order, so that they who are in that order are in the Lord and the Lord in them (@AC 9987[e]).

However simple or primitive a man may be, he is eventually placed, in utter freedom, in the choice between good and evil. In choosing good he at the same time inwardly opens his mind to see himself as a vessel of life; to feel that he is but a tiny unit in a social organism on which he and others depend and whose uses are greater than his own; and to acknowledge that every good and every virtue which he is

enabled to feel as his, comes from a common infinite Source and must lend to a common eternal Goal, if it is not to become mere self will which ignores the uses of the common good. There could be no such common Goal unless there was a Supreme Intelligence which had created and planned the universe. This Divine Architect must be infinitely merciful and compassionate, a Divine Man.

The choice of good implies all this, even though it be not consciously realized. Evil, on the other hand, implies the rejection of any such God Man, and denies that mans good must conform to the Divine design in order to be good.

All virtues stem from innocence and humility. The good man acknowledges that he cannot of himself determine good and evil, that the urgings of his sensual will do not reveal to him the Divine will. And he therefore is receptive to whatever instruction he may find that may, in whole or at least in part, answer the intuitive need for an object of worshiprepresentative of the Source of human life.

Good and truth are thus implicitly a one. The confession of the one true faiththe faith in the divine Humanis in-wrought as a necessity in the innocence with which mankind was endowed from its beginning and which is given to every infant born ever since. In the eternal life, if not here, ever soulin so far as it is in innocencewill advance towards an ever clearer perception of this supreme acknowledgment of God Man.

It is this inner predilectionoften almost unconsciousfor an acknowledgment of God Man, which unifies the well-disposed of every race and creed into an invisible communion, which the Writings call the Lords Church Universal and describe as a Grand Man of spiritual usesin which the specific Church (where the Word is known and the Lord is adored) serves as the heart and the lungs.

But even as this supreme concept of God-Man is implicit in all genuine good and thus unifies the race, so the rejection of that truth and the acceptance of untold falsities, become the means of destroying charity or rendering it merely natural, and thus dividing men and nations into dissenting groups which like the builders of the tower of Babelcan no longer speak the same tongue.

## II - THE ORIGINS OF FALSITY

The doctrine of the New Church points out that good, if it be sincere and not inspired by self-love, predisposes man's mind to acknowledge truth when he learns it. Unless this were so, it would be difficult for us to conceive of Divine justice. For no man can enter heaven without accepting the truth; indeed, heaven is defined as a conjunction of good and truth. It is therefore necessary that those who are in good in which there is innocence should have the opportunity in the other world to be instructed in the faith of heaven if they had not known it while on earth. Man is equipped to recognize truth especially the truth that God is and that He is one by a universal influx into his soul, and by the inborn faculty of rationality. But still it is only from good, or a state of good affection, that man can acknowledge and receive the truth in his will and life.

The universal truth which introduces into heaven, is the truth that God is Divinely Human. This is the truth to which all sincere good leads, because it places outside of man the source and origin of the good with which man is affected, and implies that man's virtues must therefore not be claimed as his own or regarded as meritorious, but as a result of the Lord's mercy and power.

From the universal truth that God is Divine Man there comes the perception that in all His creation His image may be recognized: and especially that a human community with its multiform uses, so far as they are prompted by mutual love, reflects the Human Form of God-Man, and that society thus serves as the Lord's means for dispensing His blessings. No good is good if it does not directly or indirectly regard the good of the whole.

Because this faith in God-Man is thus implied in all genuine good, it is universal in all the heavens, among angels from every planetary system in the starry heaven, whether they are informed that the Lord assumed a human on our earth or whether they think of Him as did the people of the most ancient church. But for Christians, who have the Word and from this have the knowledge of His advent into the world and of the Divine teachings He then gave, the saving faith is in the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Son of God, as the God of heaven and earth, and as one with the Father (@TCR 379).

But what is meant by saving faith? Faith alone does not save: this is well known in the New Church. But neither does good alone save, without faith to direct it! Faith becomes saving faith when it is conjoined with charity, or lived, obeyed, from a motive or good. Still the question is, What does this faith save us from? and how can it effect such salvation?

In the Christian churches around us the idea persists that faith saves man from the wrath of God, or from the punishment that God the Father would visit upon universal mankind because of Adam's sin. But this idea is foreign to the New Church. What man needs to be saved from is not God's wrath but man's own evil the evil whereby the hells seek to entice his heart and bind his thoughts.

It is here that a true faith is necessary. For while ignorance reduces a man's responsibility for evil, only truth can discover what is evil so that man, if he wills, may shun it. A babe is not blamed for its misdemeanors; but neither can the babe be rid of its bad habits unless it is instructed. The innocence of ignorance protects man from guilt, but does not rid him from evil; or, as the doctrine puts it, ignorance excuses, but does not take away a falsity which has been confirmed, for such a falsity

coheres with evil, thus will hell (@DLW 350).

That faith is saving faith which enables man to see his evils and to shun them. Such saving faith introduces into heaven, or into a state of spiritual uses and of interior happiness eternal blessedness. For the only thing that prevents genuine human happiness is the presence of evil; the evil of the loves of self and of the world.

This might be doubted by those who do not know that man's life is not broken by death, but continues to eternity. It might then be imagined that so long as one succeeds in adjusting his life to his environment so as to gain the cooperation of his companions and thus may enjoy a measure of security during his life time and the fulfillment of his ambitions and natural cravings, it would not matter what motive had led him, or what loves he had harbored, what incentives prompted his life. This, he would say, was his private concern, and of not the slightest importance after he was dead and finished. So long as he behaved as a civil and moral man, he would think, it would not matter a whit that he harbored no faith in God nor any love toward his fellow men. What would be the use to worry about the motives that drove him on or to explore what envies and lusts and hatreds were lodging in the depths of his mind? Why should he shun such emotions as evils or sins, if his only concern was to get along successfully for a brief span of years?

If such a man reflected more deeply he could perhaps understand that even his life on earth could be filled with a deeper happiness, an inner peace, and more lasting usefulness if he shunned his evils as sins. For whether man acknowledges evils as sins or not, evils are always impediments to happiness. The evil man depends to a large extent on the unselfishness of others, depends on their suppression of evil desires. Indeed, he must continually restrain his own evil impulses - and each such effort of his prudence curtails his delights and breeds dissatisfaction and bitterness.

But the man of faith and integrity discovers that the virulence of his evils, the insistence of his lusts, gradually diminish when these incentives of self and the world are not only repressed, but are being shunned as sins against God. Even in this life, he can feel a purer delight in whatever he may accomplish.

It was said that true faith is called saving, because it saves man from evil and hence introduces into happiness. The cruel fact is that evil, wherever it crops out, causes dissensions, hatreds, rivalries, wars, disorders, and the destruction of what is most precious in human life. Evil thrives only in darkness and confusion.

But evil by itself is powerless. If recognized as evil it is seen as ugly and unattractive, as repulsive and crude, as an enemy of society and as a threat to human welfare. Therefore it is in the nature of evil to create falsity or to mask its ugliness in attractive appearances. Evil seeks to clothe itself in falsity, because falsity can pose as truth.

No man would knowingly believe a falsity or a lie; but he might use a lie to hide an evil, or employ a falsity to excuse an evil, and if a man persist in thus using falsity he may come to persuade himself that it is true. It is so with the devils in hell. So accustomed are they to defend their evil behavior with false reasonings, that they come to love their own falsity. It becomes a phantasy which they feel to be as real as truth itself. At times this phantasy is shattered as by a judgment. If as much as a single way of the

light of heaven is admitted into their minds they are compelled to return into something of a rational state so as to admit that they were in error. But as soon as their evil loves become active they return with joy into their insane self deceptions. And strange to say, their companions also then see them as they appear to themselves perhaps as kings and rulers, or as magnates of great wealth, or as women of surpassing beauty.

Such deceptions, and the reasonings by which mans proprium cunningly defends its license to follow out its delights, are called falsities of evil. But the Writings speak of other types of falsity, not so vicious. For falsities have many origins. In general, all falsities are from two origins; indeed it is said, on the one hand that all falsity is from mans voluntary proprium, that is, from the perverted sensual will which is moved both by evils of heredity and by acquired evils (@AC 1047). On the other hand we read, All falsities take their rise from the fallacies of the senses (5 Mem. 7).

Both of these statements are needed, because all falsity has these two elements one from evil and the other from appearances of sense. An evil seeks in vain to use truths to excuse and explain its designs. For in truths there is power. But truths do not confirm evil, but oppose it. Evil therefore seized upon appearances of truth, or fallacies of sense, and thus indirectly creates a falsity out of apparent truths (@AC 7344). Sensory appearances, or appearances not yet understood, can be used to confirm either truth or falsity. They are as it were intermediate or neutral, neither good nor evil but serviceable to both.

This realm of sensual appearances is very wide. All so-called facts of experience and research are in themselves not truths but appearances of truth. All knowledges gained by the mere reading of the Word in its literal form, or of doctrine before it is really seen and understood, are appearances of truth, and may be turned to confirm either truth or falsity. But many of the knowledges of falsities, that is, the doctrinals of false religions, are also neutral facts which a good man may in his innocence reinterpret and apply so as not to be contrary to the things of Gods kingdom (@AC 8051). There are fallacies in all fields of human life in natural science, in civil affairs, in moral life, and in spiritual things. Always a fallacy is a conclusion from the appearance of a thing and not from its essence. It is a judgment of the eye and not of the mind. All the errors of our rational mind come from the false appearance that places the facts of experience before us in a wrong light. For the rational faculty itself draws its inferences perfectly without any previous instruction. The so-called laws of logic are inborn and operate quite unconsciously. But when the affection of truth is not active, and natural affections stir up the imagination, the mind begins to be flooded by a sensual light which contorts the evidence and puts a fallacious appearance over it so that mans reason errs; or rather, the reason is set aside, and the imagination supplants it (@AE 121[14]). How this can be accomplished is seen in the Christian doctrine of a trine of persons in the Godhead. Each of the three Divine persons is proclaimed as God, yet the Church forbade Christians to draw the logical conclusion that there would be three Gods.

On this account it is not too wondered at, that at this day falsities are more prevalent than truths; so that the angels are in grief over the darkness that rules on earth (@AC 8051; @DLW 188).

The fallacies of sense are innumerable. The Writings sometimes list some of these, both such as cause erroneous concepts about nature and such as prevent us from understanding the quality of the soul and the spiritual world. Everyone now knows that it is a fallacy to believe ones senses when they testify that sun and moon and the whole vault of the starry heaven revolves around this earth each

day. But it is also a fallacy to suppose that nature has only a single atmosphere the air, and that outside the air there is a vacuum. It is a fallacy of sense to think that the power of growth and procreation was impressed on seeds of plants and trees from first creation, without a continual influx from God through the spiritual world. It is also from a fallacy of natural sense that men have believed that atoms or other units of matter are simple substances instead of compositions of interior substances. It is a fallacy to think that all things are of nature and that there is nothing spiritual and celestial within. How partial the senses are and how limited their testimony is seen from mirrors which could multiply riches indefinitely and create all manner of other illusions. From the senses alone, a man may seem at rest in a moving ship, or be unconscious of the motions of the earth. The senses assign color to flowers, when yet the color is a modification of the sun's light. From sensory data alone, the eye seems to see from itself, rather than from the mind; and the body seems to live from itself; when yet men, spirits, and angels, none of them live except from innumerable agencies, unperceived by any sensation, agencies which the Lord has provided to transmit His life.

And from sense-data alone, it is concluded by many that man is but a superior animal, and will perish by death. For the senses of the body cannot testify of the immortal soul. If any idea of the soul be formed in the light of sensual concepts, it is that the soul is something ethereal or fiery which from some abode in the brain or heart rules the body as a machine, but which is dissipated by death. The senses convey no idea that there can be a heat or a light that does not come from the natural sun, but which can give intelligence and love to the mind.

The sensual man, judging from appearances alone, can tell no difference between good and evil. The act of the adulterer seems to him the same as the act of marriage, and he argues that matrimony was instituted only for the protection of the offspring. Nor can he see that heaven if it exists could be different from earthly life. He places his joys in supereminence or power, in a life of rest and the enjoyment of delicacies. He cannot see why man should not earn heaven by meritorious works; or be given it gratis by Divine favor, through a profession of faith, apart from charity. Heaven, he thinks, must be a place, and entrance alone should bring happiness. Yet, since he cannot imagine real life except in a material world, he believes that his disembodied spirit will not find heaven until, at the Last Judgment, he resumes his material body and may live on upon a renovated, paradisaical earth (@AC 5084; SD min. 4790-4762m).

But the fallacies of the senses cause other errors of import in spiritual life. They lead men to such varied ideas as that honors and riches are the real blessings given by God; or, that there is no Divine providence but that everything is of man's prudence; or that conscience is only a disease of the mind arising from bodily infirmities or from disappointments. If the existence of something spiritual is admitted, it is thought of merely as a purer natural (@HD 53).

It is notable that the testimony of the senses gives rise to many errors which contradict each other. For sensory experience is never complete, always partial. The data or so-called facts of sense experience are neutral and can be used to confirm good or evil, i. e., can be constructed to support truths or falsities. They are in themselves appearances of truth. If man were in the order of his life, such appearances would testify of truths. Man may think and speak according to appearances, for they are the symbols by which he conveys his thought. But so far as he confirms the appearance as the truth itself, it turns into a fallacy.

The fact is that man's life, because he is finite, is laid entirely within the realms of appearances. Neither man nor angel has any pure truth, i.e., truth devoid of appearances. There are degrees or appearances more and more interior; thus there are sensual appearances, natural appearances, and rational appearances. Angelic thought is couched in rational appearances, which seem like naked truths. The Word in the heavens, and the Writings and the Sacred Scripture here on earth, are all written in appearances of varying degrees, but so written that the Divine order is reflected therein: so written that the angel and the man of the Church can discern therein unending depths of Divine truth and be led from sensual appearances into rational appearances. The veiling of the truth becomes ever thinner as man's thought is raised into heavenly light, and he can see within the Word the spirit of faith and charity (@AC 3207).

The quality of the appearances in which man's mind dwells, depends on the affections which are active in his mind. The men of the Golden Age were probably in the grossest ignorance about the natural world, and in fallacious concepts about the physical universe. We are informed that although they conversed with angels, it was not granted to them to be in any other than natural light (Inv. 52). Yet they saw in the very appearances of nature a reflection of celestial truths or life to which the most learned of our own age are blind. The appearances of their sense-life were thus never confirmed as truths, and therefore they generated no falsities. They were not essentially interested in natural truth for its own sake, but used natural things only as a means to symbolize and express celestial affections.

Where there is innocence, the fallacies of the scenes have no vicious quality. A child in his ignorance flounders among appearances, yet the fallacies in which he is are not confirmed are gradually dispelled as he learns truths both natural and spiritual. It is indeed said that the Lord leads man according to his delights and also according to his fallacies and received principles, but always He leads him out of these first delights and fallacies; while it seems to man that he frees himself of such fallacies as by his own efforts (@AC 6472). If there is innocence, the fallacies meanwhile are beautifully irradiated as when the fancies of childish fairy beliefs are turned into vehicles of moral instruction and seem to inspire tender emotions and a sense of justice and charity. And in the light of innocence those fallacies are accepted by the Lord as truths (@AC 5510).

This may illustrate how in dark pagan lands the lore or myth and saga and the sayings of Ethnic Scriptures are used by the Divine providence to loosen the hold of evil.

But when the lusts and cupidities of man's sensual will takes hold of appearances and fallacies and molds them into falsities, innocence is exiled or defiled. There arises then the falsity of some evil, of the love of self or the world. Within many religions, it is the ambition to introduce innovations or the desire for preeminence that motivate such falsities (@AC 1188). Points of doctrine are seized upon, enlarged into extraordinary importance, isolated from other doctrines, and used to captivate minds and lead them (@AC 1295). The teaching of the church is often explained in favor of some human weakness or selfishness. There is a pandering to popular states, a subtle flattery of the proprium, or else a promise of some easier salvation, or of a greater, perhaps a temporal reward.

Such falsities, in their origin, are falsities of evil. And in their worst form, men are willing to acknowledge anything as truth if it favors their cupidities. The phantasies thus formed cannot be eradicated except by an interior repentance and a new life from the Lord (@AC 1188, 4729). And in the case of those who lived before the Flood, the falsities of evil were so monstrous and foul that they

produced the persuasion that man was himself Divine and acted by Divine right. Their sphere of persuasion and authority was so powerful, after death, that they took away from other spirits all ability to think, exercising a hypnotic domination (@AC 1673, 1679).

With those who originate false doctrines, or impose them upon others through various means of persuasion, or who resort to them from a life of lust, those doctrines may be falsities of evil (@AC 1295). But when they have become established in a church, such heretical doctrines may be accepted by others who are taught from childhood to believe them and are later confirmed by many things which favor. Such doctrines of the church-body take hold of mans understanding, but are not rooted in the will; i. e. they do not originate in the will. Such falsities are then called falsities of doctrine or falsities of ignorance; being false principles adopted from various reasons from respect for parents and teachers, or on the authority of leaders or historically famous men. Falsities from ignorance of truth remain with a man especially if his judgment is not very good and if his various occupations have diverted him from examining his religious opinions in the light of the word itself. Yet these falsities of historical faith or childhood persuasion are not very harmful unless he defends them from some natural cupidity (@AC 1295).

The Writings even say that falsity from ignorance is not opposite to heaven. If in the ignorance there be something of innocence, then this falsity is accepted by the Lord as truth. For they who are in that state can eventually receive truth (@AC 6784).

This can scarcely be said of all falsities. But there are falsities which agree with the good of the Church, and there are falsities which do not agree with it. The falsities which agree are those in which good lies hidden, and which therefore, by means of good, can be bent towards truths. But falsities which do not agree with the good of the Church are those in which evil lies hidden and which therefore cannot be bent towards truth... (@AC 9258). The hidden good or the hidden evil are like the prolific sap in a seed, which causes the pulp of the fruit eventually to shrivel away while forming the new plant. Even when the good is laboring for expression in falsities of ignorance, or in truths not genuine, such ideas are serviceable and are accepted as genuine. For those who are well disposed apply their fallacious ideas so as not to injure charity, softening the falsity when needed, or modifying it by common sense and moral justice.

Here the blessed fact should be noted, that mens opinions are not always consistent. A man may hold a very definite faith in his heart, and yet sincerely profess beliefs which are quite contradictory. Frequently the man is quite unaware of his inconsistencies. There are things a man thinks he believes, without analyzing what they really imply or where they lead to. If he did discern their nature, he would reject them. Thus a man cannot always be judged by his opinions or preconceptions or doctrines. When truth and falsity actually meet, one must drive out the other. Only profaners can entertain opposites or mingle them in his mind. But every man has falsities that are not actually opposite to the truths in him, but merely associated by applications (@AC 5217). They are as it were side-issues, never really faced; hearsay ideas taken for granted without study. Such falsities, if they were held without anything vicious in them, and if the good of life had been the desired end, may be retained even in the other life. In the ultimates of heaven and in the heavens where the Lord is seen as a Moon (@AE 443[2], 798:3, 401:9) there are innumerable good spirits whose life is obscured by falsities which cannot be removed because they have been inwoven in their conscience. They have been



moderated and modified, purified from evil; yet they remain, casting a shadow over the life of these spirits.

Falsities of ignorance, false doctrines imbibed as childhood teachings in a corrupted church, are not rooted in mans will, and thus adhere more lightly than falsities of evil. But still, being falsities, they cannot but produce evils of life (@AC 1679). A man who believes in meriting salvation by good works and confirms this belief, comes into the evils of self-righteousness and merit. On the other hand, one who believes that you cannot lead a pious life without acquiring self-righteousness, extinguishes in himself all piety and gives himself up a life of pleasure and lust (Ibid). But let us note that the evils which follow in consequence of such falsities are not necessarily observable. They do not usually show up in this world as open crimes or in natural disorders; they may be present even within a man of exemplary reputation. They have to do with mans inner attitudes, with his unspoken feelings. They may even be unnoticed as evils, as when a man is self-deluded by his own spiritual pride.

But and let this be our closing thought no man is judged by his ignorance. Thus there are many at this day who ascribe various creative processes to nature acting by a power implanted in her from creation; simply because they are ignorant of the spiritual Sun and the spiritual world and the influx thence, and can therefore have no other idea than that the spiritual is but a purer natural. A great many fancies are due to this ignorancesuch as that the angels are in the ether or the stars. But thinking men may also hesitate ascribing some of the productions in nature to God, because there are evil things as well as good, and lest they ascribe the silent sufferings of birth and death, and other evils, to God. For these reasons, the naturalist is excused when he seeks only natural causes for the manifold changes in creation.

Those, however, who reject a God, are not excused. For their falsity is one that coheres with evil and with hell. The truth they reject and which they can find ample testimony to confirm, if they wished, from nature itself, is the fundamental truth which is essentially one with all goodi.e., implicit in all good. The atheist can regard nothing as sin, and after death will follow the call of his own will. He is not an atheist because of ignorance or intellectual quandaries, but because he has chosen self as god; and this is a one with the choice of evil instead of good (@DLW 350).

### III - WHY MANY RELIGIONS

The teaching of the Writings is that there is only one true faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the God of heaven and earth (@TCR 379, 337). This was also the teaching of Paul who spoke of One Lord, one faith, one baptism, and said that the work of the ministry was for the edification of the church until we all come into the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, and into a life perfected according to the measure of the age of the fullness of Christ (Eph. iv.). Since truth is one, true faith must be one. It cannot contradict itself.

As to all essentials, but in an embryonic form, this faith is inherent or potentially present wherever God is thought of in Human Form as the Source of love and wisdom, the giver of human life. And wherever there is innocence and something of genuine good as in infants and in all who have not confirmed themselves in evil and falsity there is an implicit willingness to accept this truth when, in this world or the next, it will be presented in spiritual light. All the ancient heavens of this planet had the prophetic knowledge of the Lords incarnation, and accepted Him at His coming. Good spirits from other earths also accede with delight to the idea that the Lord has now been born on our earth, when they are informed of the fact.

It is seemingly not so urgent or so necessary for those of a celestial race to know of the Lords assumption of a human on an earth, and of His glorification. Therefore we are told that the prophecy of His Coming was not given until evil had begun to pervert the human heart and the celestial church had begun to turn away from the tree of life to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (@AC 2523, 2661).

What we have called the embryonic form of the faith in the Lord is however not in the power of overcoming all evil or of dispersing all falsity. But this can only be done by the one true faith, the faith in the Lord incarnate and glorified. This is why it is said that the Lord, by His advent in the flesh, took upon Himself all power in heaven and on earth, and ordered the heavens and subjugated the hells, holding them under His power forever.

Underlying all this we have the fact that the truth concerning the Lords glorification of the human contains in itself all truth, celestial, spiritual, and natural. The doctrine about the Lord is therefore called the supreme doctrine of the church; for it embraces every other doctrine and implies all truth and all good. It is applicable to all human states and conditions, and can remedy all human evils. To this it may be added that the degree to which the church comes to perceive this supreme doctrine is the measure of its advance into spiritual light. And because the Lord put on also the Divine Natural, He enlightens not only the internal spiritual of man but also the external natural of man at the same time (@TCR 109). In this truth concerning the Divine Human, all truth celestial, spiritual, and natural is unified and all knowledge comprised.

The Heavenly Doctrine which is revealed in the Writings and is the internal sense and teaching of the Holy Scriptures is centered in the truth concerning the Divine Human of the Lord. It constitutes the one true faith. But it is most important to note that this doctrine, although a unity, consists of innumerable truths concerning charity and conscience, concerning the make-up of mans mind, the relation of the two worlds, the nature of the Word and the Church, the laws of Divine Providence, and

even the government of civil and ecclesiastical affairs. No one truth makes a doctrine: a doctrine is constituted of all truths in their relation to each other; even as the human body is made up of many cooperating organs, none of which is effective by itself. The doctrine about the Lord is the life, the soul, the blood of this organic whole of the Heavenly Doctrine, the truth to which they all refer as to a central idea which gives meaning and unity to the whole.

All truths have a proper place in this human form of the one true faith, and each truth has its own good to which it leads. It follows from this that whenever some truth is dropped out or rejected from our faith, an opening is created for some evil to enter, against which our faith becomes ineffective. For where a truth is disregarded or denied, something of falsity will immediately begin to form; and falsity invites evil. This is meant in the Apocalypse, which closes with the warning, If any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life and out of the holy city....

This is the reason why it is necessary that somewhere on earth there must at all times be some Church which has the Word and acknowledges its Divine authority taking its teaching as a whole, as the source of its faith. This acknowledgment is in essence a reception of the truth in its organic completeness, in its fullness and unity, irrespective of the degree to which man's understanding can enter into the details of its doctrine. The revealed doctrine of faith, by such reception of the Word in its completeness, is thus held immune from man's own reasonings (@AC 2538, 2588).

There has at all times been a church where the Word of Divine revelation has been preserved and received as the Doctrine of faith, the Source of all doctrine for the church. Through such a church so long as its people acknowledge the Divine and learn truths from the Lord through the Word and do them there is a propagation of light and intelligence in the spiritual world to all spirits, and thereby a continual judgment of all states, an ordering of the world of spirits, and a communication of heaven with all the well disposed in all parts of the world (@AE 313[3]; @AC 2853; @HD 5). Thus the specific church has a singular function which depends on its reception of the Word which teaches the one true faith. But this Word with the celestial or most ancient church was not externally written, but was written on their hearts, as an order of life and a perception of the spiritual significance of natural things, so that they could even speak with angels (@AC 2896). Their faith we have called embryonic, yet it was entire and in a manner perfect, in that it included all essentials in a proper balance, ready to be infilled as need arose. The ancient church of the next age was spiritual. Its Word which was written also was a source of the true faith, but only in a prophetic form. As to internals, its worship, we learn from the Writings, was like that of the Christian Church; but it differed widely in external representations (@AC 4772). The Jewish Church was merely a representative of a Church, yet by their devotion to the outward forms of sacrificial worship and by obedience to the laws of God, the Jews also could serve as a basis of conjunction between heaven and mankind, because of the power of correspondences; and they maintained the truth of Monotheism in the darkest period of religious history. The Christian Church was instituted by the Lord as the next specific church, and served as such as long as its people or even a small remnant held to the faith in the Lord as the Son of God. Its doctrine, perpetuated through the New Testament, was a revelation of the internal and spiritual truths symbolized in the Hebrew Scripture, (@AE 6741, 60) and from it that Church could have seen Divine truths in light (@TCR 109).

Each of these Churches served their turn, but eventually they departed from the true faith which had been delivered to them. And the Writings show that this departure from truth always originated from a lack of charity, and increase of the evils of the sensual will, evils of pride and worldliness, love of dominion, envy, and other forms of selfishness. From the original faith, by subtle modifications of its teachings, by various innovations, by voluntary blindness to some of its truths and the perversion of others, new religions arose, resulting in further splits and schisms, and generally in a gross ignorance about spiritual things; until the world at this day presents a confusion of rival religions, which the Writings sum up in the severe verdict: At the present day there are none other than false churches (Inv. 38).

Let us note here that among the twenty-two hundred million inhabitants of our globe, there are more than 600 million who profess Christianity, about half of these being Roman Catholics and the rest Protestants or Eastern Orthodox. There are 11 million Jews, 315 million Moslems, 300 million Confucians, some of whom are also Buddhists or Tonists. The Buddhists in all are about 150 millions, the Hindoo about 255 millions. There are also 25 millions or so Shintoists, and some 125,000 Zoroastrians. Those classed as primitive, like many Negroes, number about 125 millions. The rest those of no profession or of unlisted types are about 435 millions. The figures are only approximate. Within each general profession, there are untold sects. In the United States alone, 256 denominations reported statistics in 1936, aside from nearly sixty others which did not report.

Here we meet with one of the stumbling blocks of faith: How can so many discordant religions exist, instead of one true religion over all the earth? What is the reason why in Divine providence it is permitted that false churches can arise and flourish and remain? holding their people in varying degrees of spiritual ignorance and deception? Why is it that there are even a few who are wholly ignorant of God? (@DP 253, 254).

In order that we may be enlightened on this matter the Writings require us to recast our thinking. First of all they assure us that although there is but one saving faith all the human beings that are born, however many and in whatever religion, can be saved, provided only that they acknowledge God and shun what they know to be evil as sin against Him. The few who are wholly ignorant of God, indeed appear, when they enter the spiritual world, almost ape-like; but, being born man, they have the faculty of being instructed by angels and are made alive by means of cognitions about God-Man. Their civil and moral life thus receives something spiritual in it (@SD 116; @DP 254). And all who die as infants are similarly receptive of the true faith because of their innocence.

But note that there is no salvation in man or from man. Salvation is from the Lord, and by means of Divine revelation. All knowledge of God comes by revelation, and thus from some form of the Word (@AE 963[2]; Coro. 39). A man is not taught immediately from heaven or from himself, but knowledge is transmitted from man to man. And while the Gospel of Christianity never reached all on earth, despite the efforts of missionaries, yet religious ideas have been propagated from the Ancient Word, the Israelitish Word, or the New Testament, to nations in the remotest corners of the world (@AE 1177[3]).

From these various revelations there have emanated certain principles common to all religions, whereby every one can be saved (@DP 326; @AE 1178). These generals of faith are, to acknowledge a God and to shun evil as sin against Him. If one of these essentials is lacking, there is no religion.

For religion is defined in the Writings as walking with God (Coro. 40). And that man may walk with God, there is provided with every nation certain precepts similar to those of the Decaloguecommandments forbidding murder, adultery, theft, and false witness, and advocating the worship of God, the reverence of His name, the observance of sacred days, and the honoring of parents and governors (@DP 254). When such a religion has been implanted in a nation, the Lord leads that nation accordingly.

As to what God is like and as to the particulars of life, religions differ. Concepts of justice and standards of goodness, valuations of various virtues, as well as the demands and practices of organized religionall these differ so widely that what is considered evil in one nation is regarded as a duty in another. Yet there is a common perception which dictates that what harms the neighbor is evil and displeasing to Godwhatever may be the accepted position of the cult.

The Writings explain why it has to be permitted that religions may verge into monstrous perversionsinto fantastic superstitions and idolatrous rites, and into degrading practices which seem to negate the very purpose of religion. The good of love the Lord imparts immediatelyfor He flows in continually with an abundance of the good of love, and it is through this that He leads manfrom within. But if man is to respond to this leading, he must do so as of himself, suffering himself to be led in freedom according to his reason, orwhat is the sameaccording to what he accepts and believes to be true (@AE 1179). In the formation of his faith man must be free, and the Lord cannotwithout taking away human freedomdo more than provide such truths of faith as man can receive in this world without profaning. The end of religionany religionis to lead to conjunction with God; and the state of man in this world, the extent of his knowledge, or his degree of culture or ignorance, is but a means to this eternal end. What matters is that the Lord may be conjoined to man in whatever truth that is with man. This truth varies. It can be given in greater fullness with those who are where the Word is, and in less fullness with those who are where the Word is not (known); and yet the fullness varies in proportion not only to their knowledge but to their life according to it, and consequently it may be greater with those who have not the Word than with those who have it (@AE 1179).

When we reflect on this pregnant teaching, we may come to see that there is no spiritual injustice in the fact that most men spend their preparatory years on earth in environments where falsities reign and only few truths are provided for the nurture of their spirits. These few truths are enough to prepare them for conjunction with the Lord and everlasting growth of illustration after death. Their knowledge is proportioned to their responsibility. If they had greater knowledgeand thus greater responsibilitythey would be likely, in their circumstances, to fall into temptations which they had no strength to resist.

This is the reason why mankind, once it fell into sin and became burdened with hereditary evils that accumulated as the generations passed, could not maintain the saving faith in its purity, or hold to the Divine revelations of the successive churches. This is the reason why the Ancient Word came into disuse and was eventually lost, except for certain portions still preserved in the Hebrew Scripture; and why falsities of all kinds crept into the thought of all religions. No man is singly responsible for this state of the world, or for being born into a sinful race. Each man stands alone before God, responsible only in proportion to his knowledge and his power to resist the evil that he can recognize as it faces him. The very impact of the fallacies and the falsities that surround him, confines the range within

which he can be held accountable.

But there is another reason why providence permits so many differing religions. The universal heaven is a kingdom of spiritual uses which the Lord sees as one Grand Man. But the kingdom of the Lord on our earth also presents before the Lord a human form, with functions as varied as the many uses of the organs and tissues of mans body (@AE 1222[3]; @DP 325[10]). Some of these uses must necessarily be external, others more interior in degree and of more universal scope. For uses cannot exist where there is an absolute sameness or a static equality among all. Uses imply needs that must be filled by a reciprocal interchange of services. Uses are possible only where there is an aspiration for a greater perfection and a further growth, and where abilities are different and complementary.

Such variety among human spirits could arise only through men of widely different forms of mind and with varied backgrounds and education. Even if we conceive the possibility of a worldwide Church in which the one true faith was universally professed, its perfection would depend on this faith being modified, accommodated, and varied with men of different age and of different races or forms of mind.

On our earth, hereditary and actual evils have made impossible such a Church. The varieties of salvable souls which are to make up the body of the universal kingdom of the Lord or the Church Universal, must therefore be drawn from all the conflicting religious movements and churches which contribute to produce minds of different outlook and experience. It is indeed notable that religion is a more potent influence than race or heredity. It is also true that each religion imposes certain marked limitations on its adherents, as well as allowing for the development of certain spiritual capacities or traits. And on the other hand it is true that each religion or denomination attracts men of a certain type of mindemotional or imitative, dogmatic or intellectual, etc.and can hold only those on certain educational levels.

When the Writings speak of the Lords kingdom on this earth as the Church universal, composed of all who are in a salvable state, constituting a Grand Man, it is said that the Church in special where the Word is, serves as a heart and as lungs, thus as the vital organs, of this body of humanity (@AC 9256). Those outside of this Church Specific answer to the rest of the members and viscera which live from the heart and the lungs.

Parenthetically, a warning might here be given, lest we should think that various religious movements or churches are here meant by the various viscera; we have no right to surmise that the Roman Catholics correspond tosaythe liver and the Moslems to the mesentery, the Lutherans to the spleen, or the Calvinists to the kidneys! For it is spiritual uses, not human organizations, that answer to these body-parts. And these uses cut across credal boundaries, having to do with mental reactions and attitudes, not with external professions. Nor can any ecclesiastical organization of the New Church lay sole claim to the position of heart and of lungs in the Church Universal. But in our prayers and strivings we can seek to make our institutions and societies, our homes and hearts, our hands and voices, serve these eminent uses of worship and evangelization of charity and faith, knowing that only the Lord can turn our efforts to spiritual account. Only those men are said to be of the Church Specific who are in the faith of charity.

This we know, that unless there be a church somewhere on earth where the one true faith is cherished

and lived, the conjunction of heaven with mankind is endangered. If the Word is there and the Lord thereby known, such a church may suffice even if it consists of comparatively few (@DSS 104).

The connection of mans spirit with his entire body depends on the functioning of the heart and the lungs. For these organs serve to propel and purify the bloodstream through which food and energy are distributed and life maintained. The New Church in both worlds serves as spiritual lungs when it keeps its faith sound and pure (@TCR 245) and thus rejects any falsities of evil that might divert it from its purpose. It is so that the threshing floor of judgment is kept busy in the world of spirits and good spirits are instructed and delivered from the lower earth from captivity to the delusions of a spurious conscience. Similarly, the Church acts as a spiritual heart through its worship, internal and external: internal worship being the love and charity which prompts its uses of life. It is by this that there is conjunction of men and spirits with the new heaven, and an influx of the heavens is made possible into the world of spirits, and also the presence there of angelic spheres to guide all spirits from outside the church toward heaven.

In the world of spirits, those who are in the greatest light from the Word are seen in the center and the influx of heavenly light is thus manifestly greater with those who are in the faith and understanding of the Word. Thus Swedenborg testifies that the spirits of Reformed Christians or Protestants among whom the Word was being read freely, were, at the time of the last judgment, in a central district of the world of spirits, and around them, in a separate district, were arranged the cities of the Roman Catholics; around these, again, were the Mohammedans; and finally the pagans had abodes in the outermost circuit. The light of truth with its perception, extends itself from the center to the circumferences. For truth, in the other life, radiates like light; without the physical barriers that prevent the dissemination of knowledge on earth. Hence the ordering of the states of the Church Universal in the world of spirits is accomplished just so far as the Specific Church is in spiritual light. And this light can then be imparted to every receptive spirit; who is then enlightened according to the knowledge that he has or can acquire from an affection of truth.

Those who are interiorly affected by truths, i. e., in a spiritual affection of truth, are indeed all received into the Specific Church now called the New Jerusalem (@AE 732). We read of gentiles and others who were raised up into ineffable wisdom and into interior heavens. It is said that such may enter ever more interiorly into the uses of their province of the Grand Man, and may sometimes be transferred to nobler uses, even into the province of the heart (@AC 4803; @SD 658, 659).

It is through such enlightened spirits from the various religions and races that heaven can rule and inflow into the men of the Church Universal that is scattered over the world. For men are attended by angels and spirits from societies formed from their own race and religion. The influx of the Lord through such mediations is what keeps men in spiritual equilibrium and makes illustration possible for them when and so far as the knowledge of truth reaches them.

But not all salvable souls are able to be elevated into spiritual light. They can indeed be saved, having lived according to certain general true precepts of their religion. But unless they had an affection of interior truth they have also confirmed some of the falsities of their religion not only by doctrine but by life (@AE 732). And such falsities obstruct the light of truth, and impair their usefulness in the Lords kingdom. Those who are confirmed in falsities remain in the societies of the religion which they professed on earth in heavens which lodge in relative shade, in varying degrees of spiritual obscurity;

as if in the light of the moon instead of in the sunlight. And by their adherence to their falsities and accustomed prejudices they are held in those provinces of the Grand Man refer to external functions. For there are skins, tendons, bones, etc. in the body which are living in a less degree than the organized forms of the vital organs and viscera (@DP 326[1]). Of these we read in the work on the Divine Providence in a well known passage:

It has been provided by the Lord that those who could not be reached by the Gospel, but only by a religion, should also be able to have a place in the Divine Man, that is, in heaven, constituting those parts that are called skins, membranes, cartilages, and bones; and that they, like others, should be in heavenly joy. For it matters not whether they are in joy like that of the angels of the highest heaven, or in joy like that of the angels of the lowest heaven; for every one who comes into heaven enters into the highest joy of his heart. He can bear no higher joy, for he would be suffocated by it... (254:4).

For happiness lies not in being the greatest, either on earth or in the kingdom of heaven. In this world man of achievement look with something of envy upon those wholike children can find delight in simple joys, or who can be innocently oblivious to imperfections in themselves, in others, and in their surroundings. The mercy of the Lord is that man, as a vessel of life, may receive in the fullest abundance what he can use and appreciate. And with the same measure that ye mete withal, the Lord said, it shall be measured unto you again. Reception is according to use. Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down and shaken together and flowing over, shall men give unto your bosom (Luke 6:38).



## IV - HOW LEGEND BECOMES DOGMA

In a living church the doctrinal opinions which become current are continually examined in the light of new studies of the Divine revelations which are acknowledged as the sole source of doctrine, being the Word of God given through prophets inspired with the Holy Spirit which leads to all truth.

The Writings show that it is not enough for men to take the doctrine of their church merely on the authority of man who are reputed as leaders or teachers, for this generates only a historical faith, which is persuasive faith and thus in varying degrees a blind faith. Nor is it enough to take what men teach the popularly accepted tradition and confirm it from passages of Scripture or in the case of the New Church from passages in the Writings. The doctrine is of course first to be learnt from parents and masters. But in order to receive illustration from spiritual light, each man must go the Word and prayerfully seek in it the teachings of the Lord hearing the Lord speak to his own soul with Divine authority.

The priesthood is appointed to teach doctrine drawn from the Word. But this doctrine is first to be drawn by a comparison of the various statements of naked truths wherein the internal sense is clearly expressed; and afterwards is to be confirmed from the sense of the letter. Hence the Writings warn us not to put confidence in councils of men but in the Word of the Lord. The Church is not instituted or restored (in *staure*) except by soundness and purity of doctrine (@TCR 245). But, my reader, Swedenborg is led to write, do not trust to councils but to the Holy Word, and go to the Lord and you will be enlightened: for He is the Word, the Divine truth itself there (@TCR 634[e]).

The Christian Church, in its early days, was a genuine church. Yet from its cradle it began to be infested and torn by schisms and heresies (@TCR 378). After three centuries it had reached its age of consummation, which was sealed at the Council of Nicea where the faith in three Divine persons was officially approved. It must be remembered that the Lord did not delay His coming to a time when He would be received favorably and His teachings could be fully understood. He came when mankind had fallen so low that His coming was imperative if any flesh was to be saved.

Thus the faith of Christianity spread among many races and nations which were steeped in polytheism and ancient superstitions and which often were morally degraded. It was taken up not only by genuine converts but by a multitude of sectarians and by intellectuals and fanatics who sought to use its teachings to embellish various preconceived philosophized or mythical concepts of their own, and who were not willing to adopt the Gospels as their sole source of doctrine.

In the first hundred years after the Lord's resurrection, the Gospels as we know them were gradually accepted among Christians as Holy Scriptures which were read at public worship together with the Old Testament. But in the second and third centuries various sectarians began to flood the church with legends and false Gospels, purported to be written by the apostles and early disciples, and in some cases by Pontius Pilate. Some of these were intended to confirm the doctrines of those who held that the Lord came on earth only as a spiritual vision or phantasm. Others sought to fill in the events of the Lord's life, while others were descriptive of visions of the apostles in the spiritual world, or prophetic visions of the end of the world. All were phantastic and fabulous in their nature and utterly unhistorical. Yet many were for a time accepted here and there at their face-value and regarded with

reverence. Generally, however, they survived only among heretic sects, like the Ebionites, Gnostics, and Manicheans. By the end of the second century we find the Four Gospels in a secure position,(\*1) which the spurious quality of the sectarian rivals was generally recognized. Indeed when we read those apocryphal or spurious writings we must marvel at the simplicity and credulity of the people who took them for serious or authentic.

\*1 James, the Apocryphal New Testament, Oxford 1924, p. xvi.

It might be thought that when Christianity had become firmly established, the invention of such legends would come to a stop. On the contrary, when the Church of Rome began to become dominant, and the Dark-Ages fell over the Christian world, new or embroidered versions of the Infancy Gospels, Passion Gospels, spurious acts and decretals, and false apocalypses continued to be fabricated. Documents of this kind, as a modern scholar points out, may be said to shade off gradually into the category of the Lives of the Saints.(\*2) Even in the thirteenth century and even later, fanatical monks continued to imitate these ancient fables in new pious legends.

\*2 James, op. cit., p. xviii.

This could not have been tolerated if the Roman Catholic Church had drawn its doctrine from the Word. But the position of the papal church did not encourage even the reading of the Word by its people, for fear that they might fall into heresy, i.e., might fail to see in the Word the particular doctrines which the Church had laid down as binding on the faith of the people: such doctrines as the vicarship of the pope, the invocation of saints, the veneration of images and relics, the division of the holy Eucharist, purgatory, indulgencies, etc., etc.

Instead the Catholic Church ordains that there are two distinct means by which the message of Christ finds its way down to the Church of the present day. One is the inspired writings or the Scriptures, the other is the living teaching voice of the Church from the earliest times. The first is subordinate to the second as a dead page is subordinate to a living mind though they both contain the same thought, or, better, as the living author of a book is above the book....(\*3) Thus the Catholic teaching is that Tradition is superior to the written Word. The Scriptures are not a book that is meant for teaching.

\*3 Thomas B. Chetwood, S. J., God and Creation, 1928 ed., p. 44.

Of course, tradition is a vague term. Lots of fallacies are handed down by tradition. But the Catholic maintains that the Church is Divine that its Councils can lay down the doctrine by approving the right tradition. In most cases, this means selecting as true what is most popularly acclaimed or favored. The voice of the Church is the voice of God. But the Catholic cannot deny that the councils themselves have often differed, and even condemned and anathematized each other. And so the final verdict must come through the Pope, the successor of Peter and vicar of Christ (see @AE 1089[e]).

Just last week we have seen an historic instance of this strange mode of establishing a traditional belief as infallible truth. In an open air ceremony at Rome among the splendor and pomp of an assembled retinue of thirty six scarlet robed cardinals and four hundred and eighty archbishops and bishops and patriarchs in jewel studded mitres, and before an audience of two hundred thousand of the faithful, the Pope, on November 1st, proclaimed ex cathedra the latest dogma of Catholicism. We pronounce, he

read from a 6000-word Bull written in Latin, declare and define to be a dogma revealed by God that the Immaculate Mother of God, Mary, ever virgin, when the course of her life on earth was finished, was taken up soul and body into heaven.

This act of the Pontiff makes it obligatory for all Catholics to believe explicitly and without reservation the Catholic tradition of the bodily Assumption of the Virgin. This is now an article of faith, a dogma, the denial of which carries with it an excommunication as an heretic and thus eternal damnation. For dogmas are regarded as truths revealed by God. The Pope is infallible when he defines questions of faith and morals because the Holy Ghost, the third person of the Godhead, is then supposed to speak through him.

It is interesting to note that in 1854 the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary was formulated. In 1870 the Council of the Vatican promulgated the dogma of the Popes infallibility. And now, after eighty years, a new dogma is adopted.

Before we touch on the doctrinal background of the new dogma, let it be noted that the Pontiff is necessarily a prudent man. The Holy Ghost is not, apparently, the sole factor in inspiring a dogma. For just as the proclamation or canonization of a new saint is preceded by a popular movement demanding the official recognition of the person whose relics or prayers have proved particularly powerful, so the infallible defining of a dogma is done only after much consultation with cardinals and clergy, to make sure that the time is opportune. In the present case only about three per cent of the bishops were opposed, contending that the dogma would create a hostile reaction in the Protestant world at a time when there should be greater effort of all Christians to join in opposing the inroads of materialistic Communism. The Pope explained therefore how he was moved by the requests of his faithful, and how a commission had studied the subject carefully. He then was convinced that the tradition was a truth revealed by God and is contained in the divine deposit which Christ has entrusted to His spouse to be guarded faithfully and declared with infallible certainty.

But what are the impelling reasons for such a doctrine, and what are its implications? Why should it be believed that Marys body should be somehow translated into heaven rather than, as Catholics believe of other men, return to the dust whence it was taken while her soul would await the last judgment day when it would be again joined to its body?

The answer is given by the Pope, that Mary through very exceptional privilege, conquered sin by her immaculate conception. Therefore she was not subjected to the law of remaining in corruption in the tomb nor must she await the redemption of her body until the end of the world.

Adam and Eve sinned. By their sin they brought physical death into the world, so that all men must thenceforth die because of the original sin that cleaves to all the descendants of Adam. But Mary was a privileged one conceived that she had no original sin. She was to be miraculously prepared as a pure vessel to receive the Son of God at His incarnation, so as not to impart original sin to her child. Therefore Mary was not under the curse of tasting the death of the body.

This is tantamount to saying that Marys body was glorified and that she rose, like the Lord, with her whole body. But Catholic doctrine implies a great many other things. For it teaches that both the reasonable human soul and the human body of Christ came from Mary the mother, whereas as to His

Divine nature, He was of the substance of the Father being the Son of God, a second person of the Trinity.

Since Christians early lost any concept of the truth that the Lord redeemed the world by defeating the hells, invited by the presence in his very flesh of the hereditary evils of the human race, transmitted through Mary, the tendency of many in the church was to ascribe to Mary complete sinlessness, and perpetual purity and virginity. This was not easily confirmed from the New Testament books. For while the virgin Mary is described as a good woman, nothing is said to indicate that she was sinless or that she remained a virgin or childless after she had brought forth her first-born son, Jesus. The Catholics use very complicated and specious arguments to explain away the meaning of Matthews testimony that Joseph knew her not till she had brought forth her first-born son (Matthew 1:25); or of the definite mention of the Lords being visited by His mother and brethren. His offended countrymen, astonished at His wisdom, said, Is not this the carpenters son, is not His mother called Mary? And His brethren, James and Joses and Simeon and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us? (Matthew xiii:55, 56).

It is strange that at every occasion when the Lord addressed His mother, there is something of reproof in His words; except at the cross where He commands her into Johns charge with the words, Woman, behold thy son; and to the disciple, Behold thy mother. He never called her mother in the words cited in the Gospels, but always Woman. At the marriage at Cana He rebukes her attempt to urge Him. Of her later life, at the home of John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, and of her death, no record is preserved.

But after a century or two, as Christianity spread in various pagan countries, the small knowledge about Mary was filled out by many legends which exalted her until she took a place in the popular mind almost of a goddess. It is notable that the position of Mary was not acknowledged to be superior to that of other saints until after the Nicean Council. In 428 A.D. the patriarch Nestorius of Constantinople objected to the title Mother of God which many applied to Mary. He maintained that Mary was mother only of the human nature of Christ; but his view were condemned at an Ecumenical Council in 431 and he was excommunicated and died in exile. In art, the figure of Mary with the Christ Child does not occur in the early centuries. But statues of the Egyptian goddess Isis the Queen of Heaven and the Mother of God with her son Horus were popular in the Roman world, up to the fourth or fifth century, and (except for the characteristic infant look) any of them might easily have been taken for Madonna and Bambino. And when the population in the vicinity of such shrine became converted more or less suddenly to Christianity, the natural thing was to transform the worship of Isis and Horus into an adoration of the Virgin. (\*4)

\*4 See Flinders Petrie, Egypt and Israel, London, 1912, pp. 137 et. seq.

Origen, who died about [?], is quoted by Catholics to have used some extravagant phrases, such as immaculate, about Mary. The earliest legend about her birth and infancy The Book of James, now called Proto evangelism is thought to date from the second century. It is full of pious and inconsequential details but mentions no immaculate conception but pictures her as an exceptionally renowned child. It then embroiders the account of the annunciation and the Birth of Jesus. The legend about the Assumption of the Virgin Marys death, burial, and the translation of her body to heaven dates perhaps from the third century. It must be placed in connection with a number of legends which are of equally fantastic nature. The earliest texts are Egyptian. All are full of long, tedious discourses and instances of angelic interventions. The story in brief is that Mary bade John summon Peter and James, and, with the

help of Mary Magdalene, now very old, spreads her burial linen on the ground, pouring spices on it. She lies down and prays to be delivered from the terrors of the next world from the dragon Amanti and the river of fire. Jesus then appears on the chariot of the Cherubim and tells Death to come for her. When Mary sees the figure of Death, she leaps into the bosom of her Son. Her body is then buried. Later the tomb where it was hidden is opened and only a sweet odor is perceived, a voice being heard saying, Let no man take the trouble of seeking it (viz. the body) till the great day of the appearing of Christ.

The earlier accounts go no further. Some accounts, dating from the 6th century, and they differ very widely, none of them making much sense add that after a certain number of days the body would be taken up. Jesus descends in a chariot of fire and calls out, Mary, my mother, arise! And then the coffin opened and the body arose and embraced its own soul ... and they were united one with another. Jesus takes her into the chariot and angels go with them.

As time goes on, the story is further elaborated. Some tell how all the apostles were borne to paradise in twelve chariots. More and more incredible historical details are used in the setting. (\*5)

\*5 See James, op. cit., pp. 194-227.

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Let us not think that the leaders of Roman Catholicism demand of its people to believe the truth of all the conflicting details in this mass of legend. Stories of the saints, with all their equally unreasonable miracles and trivialities, have been encouraged as the diet of Catholics for ages. But the new dogma of the Assumption of the Virgin merely requires them to believe that the body of Mary was so transformed that it could be taken into heaven. Literalistic Christians have long maintained that the body of Enoch was so translated, for the sacred text says, And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him. The same they believe about Elijah, who went up by a whirlwind into heaven in a chariot of fire. That there is an internal sense to these statements of the Word is of course not known to Christians.

The Catholics and the Protestant churches both subscribe to the Athanasian Creed which states that at the second coming of Christ all men shall rise again with their bodies to be judged. Thus the new Roman dogma only gives Mary a prior place in the resurrection. That the Catholics are quite literal in their interpretation of the biblical statements is clear from a text book used in their Colleges. (\*6) This explains that the resurrection body will be very different from our mortal body, and that there will be plenty of room for all men who ever lived because such bodies, more ethereal in structure, could stand tier above tier on the air, all looking toward the Judge at His coming. Yet these risen bodies which Paul called spiritual are the same as the mortal bodies, and though perfected will enjoy the joys of the sense on a purified material earth. Hell, the Jesuit author believes, is probably under the surface of this renovated earth.

\*6 Chetwood, op. cit., pp. 242 H, pp. 268 H.

The resurrection body will be eternal, immune from disease, hunger, or death. It will with the blessed be purged of original sin. It will, they hold, be like Christ's glorified body, so subtle that it can pass through material substance and will shine in brilliance. It will be so agile as to pass from place to

place with the speed of thought. Its substance is unchanging, eternal. It will enjoy sounds and savors and fragrance, yet need no nourishment. It will not impede the spirit, but the soul can act also without its aid.

But note that the souls or disembodied spirits of the dead, in Catholic belief, are indeed examined, judged and sentenced immediately after death. Those who die in actual mortal sin go to hell straightway, as is indicated in the parable of Dives and Lazarus. And the duly penitent who die in sanctifying grace, as soon as their sins and sins of omissions are purged in the fires of purgatory, are received into heaven and clearly behold God Himself in three divine persons.(\*7) Where this heaven is, is not clearly taught, but it implies a companionship with angels created from the beginning, and an ecstatic state of continual worship, and the blessed souls will also meet those bound by ties of friendship or blood and be able to see objects of created beauty and pursue knowledge.(\*8)

\*7 Op. cit. pp. 238 H.

\*8 Op. cit. pp. 268 H.

On this account it might be questioned why there should ever be any need of a resurrection of the body at the final judgment. Common sense has demanded a full and perfect life for the departed soul, and Catholic teaching has bowed to this human need. But sensual thinking finds no contentment in an eternal life unless the soul is rejoined to a body and given a final place of reward on earth. So Catholic dogma teaches a resurrection of the body.

The dominant idea of the eventual and of the world carries with it a peculiar concept of the Divine purpose. For with the Last Day, mankind ceases to propagate. Heaven and hell are completed. A stagnant eternity confronts us. The Divine love seemingly is satisfied to rest its creative work, has enough human souls to render worship and praise.

The idea of purgatory is called in the Writings a fable, a figment purely Babylonish and invented for the sake of gain (@AR 784, 770; @TCR 475[e]). No Scripture is found to support it. Yet it is one of the best known of all the doctrines of the Roman Church. Souls in purgatory, it is claimed, find relief from their pain when the faithful on earth pray for their release and pay the priests to say Masses for their souls. In the apocryphal Jewish book of Maccabees, prayers for the dead are briefly defended; and the Catholics still retain the Apocrypha as part of the Old Testament (2 Macc. xii.). But a system of professional praying is certainly not meant, and would be about as effective as the Tibetan prayer-wheels.

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We have departed from our central topic only to illustrate its setting in the general thought of the Catholics. Mary is hailed as the Queen of Heaven, exalted above other mortals and above all saints. Ave Maria, Mother of God, pray for us is their daily petition. The intercession of Christ is not enough. Mary captivates the imagination and sympathy of multitudes the suffering mother to honor, the pitying angel, someone to idealize and to flee and when faced with a brutal world or broken by disappointments, or when one feels like a helpless child in need of comfort.

This mother cult is the apotheosis of natural good. It releases the emotions. But for normal

development it is unhealthy indulgence in self-pity. Yet there is an innocence among the simple which is fed by the idea of the perfect mother. Its central fault perhaps lies in the exaltation of the virginal above the conjugal. It makes a one with the Catholic persuasion that the perfect life is the celebrate life, the life of the covenant. And here it verges upon the profane. It is intermingled with superstitions and mummary and mystical persuasions about signs and miracles which hold faith captive to authority, and leads the thought away from the Lord in His Divine Human.

The Writings exclude the Papists when they speak of the churches in the Christian world, since the Christian church is not there. For where the church exists, the Lord is adored and the Word is read; whereas with the Papists, they adore themselves instead of the Lord; they forbid the Word to be read by the people; and affirm the Popes decree to be equal, yea, above it (@HD 8). The Catholic Church is therefore called Christian Gentilism.

Swedenborg met certain very deceitful spirits who ensnare by holy things and pious emotions, and it was shown that it is such spirits who rule the Pope and inspire into him a peculiar respiration which induces him to believe that he is prompted by the Holy Ghost, and turn innocent affections to serve the love of dominating (@SD 3689, 3663). Thus a great many of the edicts of the Pope are from hell, although believed more holy than the precepts of the Word (@AE 1033[3]). Most of these papal bulls have as their interior and the extension of the dominion of the pope and his ministers over heaven and the world (@AR 795[2]). The delights are such that men will risk life, endure hardships, and sacrifice conjugal life, in order to taste them (Cf. @SD 6010).

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We will revert again to the subject of Mariolatry and the invocation of saints, and show how these practices and their implications contrast with our New Church doctrines. Here we will only cite an experience which Swedenborg had in the spiritual world:

It was once given me to speak with Mary the mother. She passed by some time ago and appeared, in heaven above my head, in white raiment as of silk. And then she stopped a little while and said that she was the mother of the Lord, because He was born of her; but that when He became God He put off all the human which He had from her; and that she therefore worships Him as her God, and that she is not willing that any one should acknowledge Him for her Son, because in Him all is Divine (@TCR 102).

# V - SAINTS, PRIESTS, AND SINNERS

In tracing the history of the new Roman Catholic dogma of the bodily assumption of the Virgin Mary, we noted that her exaggerated importance was traceable directly to the traditions which grew up in certain sections of the Christian Church, especially after the Nicean Council. But it is also true that Christians had but little idea of the spiritual meaning of the Lords sayings and early began to take literally the ornate symbolism that is employed in the Book of Revelation.

For this reason it is quite natural that simple Catholics might believe that it is the Virgin Mary who is described in the Apocalypse in the vision of the celestial Woman who was clothed with the sun and had the moon under her feet and on her head a crown of twelve stars. (It is so that many paintings depict Mary.) The Catholic version of the Bible has a footnote which says that by allusion this description of the celestial Woman may be applied to our blessed Lady. She is described as giving birth to the male child who is to rule all nations with a rod of iron. But because of the context, both Catholics and Protestants concede that the Woman principally represents the Christian Church, which must pass through the wilderness of persecution before the day of its triumph. The Writings now reveal that it is the New Christian Church that is symbolized by the Woman the New Church in heaven before it could be received in the world of spirits and among men. And the male child born of her signifies the doctrine of the New Church which was to descend from that heaven.

That Mary is enthroned as the Queen of Heaven, Queen of angels and saints, is however not to be doubted by Catholics. It is her right above that of all other saints to receive adoration.\*9 Other saints may be invoked and venerated, but the Virgin may be adored. This was made plain already in the year 787 by the second ecumenical Council to be held at Nicea. There it was also decreed that images and relics should be venerated.

\*9 The Greek term is hyper dulia. Some Catholics shy at the word adoration, others point to the diverse meanings of worship.

The popular superstitions which the centuries nurtured were gradually adopted with modifications and brought into a compact and fully authorized system of thought and practice. The superstitious instincts of the people were so, it regularized and channeled into the service of the church. Central to this system was the falsity that the Godhead consisted of a trine of Divine Persons, co-eternal, each distinct, equally perfect, yet constituting One God, because they were one in essence although three as to person. Next in idea was the doctrine of original sin that man, since Adam, are born in the guilt and stain of his sin and are thus shut out from the Beatific vision of God in heaven. But the second person of the Trinity redeemed man from the curse of original sin by paying the full ransom to eternal Justice taking upon Himself our deserved punishment by a death on the cross, and thus stoning, by proxy, for our racial guilt.

Only the Catholic Church supplies it claims the means for a union of man with Jesus Christ. As a Divine institution the Church is infallible and authoritative. By the Church, which has unfailing protection from error, is meant the whole Body of Bishops united to the Roman Pontiff. Mans soul is saved, and he is justified so that the guilt of sin is blotted out and any everlasting punishment for it is remitted, by Divine grace, or gratuitously. But man must dispose himself to receive that grace by the sacraments of



the Church through which the infinite merits of Christ are applied to the soul. The Catholics have seven sacraments, among them matrimony and extreme unction. It is obvious from this what excommunication from the Church would mean to a believing Catholic.

The grace of the sacraments remits the eternal punishment which is otherwise mans due. But man may sin after baptism, and thus be liable to temporal or temporary punishments, here and hereafter, on earth or in purgatory. Therefore the sacrament of Penance was established as a means by which grace could be restored after mortal sin, and since about 1500 AD the priests are authorized to forgive or to retain such sins as were confessed privately before them. The priest must decide what kind of sin has been committed whether mortal or merely venial and what kind of restitution or penance should be imposed. He must decide whether the sinner is penitent or not; and then pronounce the words of absolution or not.

The priest thus becomes the indispensable means of Gods forgiveness. But it is thought because Christ has infinite merit to bestow, because of His having satisfied Divine justice on the cross; and because the saints have accumulated far more merit in their holy lives than they need to earn heaven; therefore the Roman Church is in possession of a treasury of spiritual merits(\*10) which the priesthood can distribute to needy souls according to circumstances. This is done by the granting of indulgences. By an indulgence is meant not the forgiveness of a sin, but the remission of the temporary punishment due to a sin. Only those free from mortal sin, and thus destined for heaven, are in good standing to receive an indulgence. It may be partial, covering the minor, or venial sins committed during a period of time, and this may be granted by a bishop. Or it may be a plenary indulgence issued by the Pope himself and remitting all the penalty that that soul is due to suffer in purgatory.

\*10 The Thesaurus Meritorum.

The theory of indulgencies is tied up with the concept of the vicarious atonement and the transfer of merita concept which seems utterly contrary to common sense. But it also involves the whole system of the invocation of saints.

In the Word, saints or holy ones are often mentioned. The Jewish Church was called a kingdom of saints and in the New Testament angels and the remnants of the faithful in the Church are called saints. But the Writings show that saints mean those who are in true faith and who champion that faith. The reference is not to those who are characterized by an outstanding life of piety or external charity, but to the reception of the holy Divine truths of spiritual doctrine. Certainly it does not mean those through whom miracles have been performed. Those who are of the Lords New Church are also said to be signified in the Apocalypse by saints, for these are in Divine truths from the Word.

In the Roman church the early Christian usage of the term saint was lost. The biblical characters, like Joseph and Mary and her supposed mother, all the apostles and early evangelists and martyrs, were recognized as saints, and later most of the Church Fathers and a host of reputed miracle-workers. The Pope may select a saint for beatification or local invocation, and later comes the canonization if at least two of his miracles can be claimed as authentic. A saint may be chosen as a patron, a guardian or special intercessor for a town or country or for a trade or profession. Prayers before his shrine are believed by the people to be effective even in trivial matters, but generally the saints are supposed to have power with God to procure spiritual help.

And especially is this supposed to be the case with Mary, who is entitled by Catholics Mother of God. The strange title perhaps does contribute to lead some to an acknowledgment of the Lords Divinity. But it compels theologians to intricate explanations. For the Catholics maintain (as do most Protestant Churches) that Christ had two natures, one being perfect man (from Mary) and the other perfect God. These two, the second person of Deity and the assumed human although each a complete personality are united in a mystical union with hypostasis, so as to make up a one single Person. Mary, the Catholics claim, may therefore be called Mother of God. The Divine Son of God and the Son of Mary are related like Soul and Body. Therefore the Lord Jesus Christ is God and man God of the substance of the Father, born before the world; and Man of the substance of the mother, born in the world; perfect God and perfect Man ... equal to the Father as to the Divine and inferior to the Father as to the Human....

What is lacking, here, the Writings point out, is any knowledge of the glorification of the Lords human. The Christian idea of the Lords human is that of a human which is still interior to or less than the Father, not a one with Him. The Lords body, they think, indeed rose from the tomb, but it was not a Divine Body, but an etherialized or refined natural body such as all the blessed would receive on resurrection day and such as Mary has already received as a special privilege. That the Body of Christ could be imagined as finite seems strange, in view of Pauls teaching that the faithful would all be taken into His Body.

## PART II

### THE ATHANASIAN CREED

How important it is for the New Church to have a clear idea of what the falsities are that have destroyed the Christian Church and made it incapable of serving as the Specific Church, may be realized from the very full citations which the Writings make of the formal theological statements and creeds of the old church. The Brief Exposition gives some 15 pages of such citations as a preface, and devotes the rest of the book to an analysis. The Apocalypse Revealed devotes 18 pages to quotations of old church dogmas before the exposition of the spiritual sense is even begun. In several other books the Athanasian Creed is cited in full and is thoroughly analyzed and amended and confuted. The Council of Trust and the Formula Concordiae are also cited at length. Throughout the Writings, the false ideas on a subject are usually refuted and invalidated before the genuine truth is presented in its own light. Falsities must be removed from the thought, we are taught, before the truth can be truly received. And truth is best seen in sharp contrasts.

But who believes these creeds any more? You might object. Enough, apparently, to allow the Pope to proclaim new dogmas with the assurance that they will not be openly opposed within his vast hierarchy! Yet the time will no doubt come when creeds such as those of the old churches will have less and less authority over the minds of men. And the question may then arise with the receivers of the Writings why so much space is given to outworn creeds in a revelation which is meant for future ages when these churches may be only vague memories!

Let us then reflect that the religions of the earth were the soil from which the Grand Man of the Church Universal is made to spring up. They represent the many perversities and errors to which human nature always will incline and which must be judged continually in the light of the one true faith.

And especially is this true as to the concept of God and the doctrine of the Divine Human. For this doctrine makes one with the doctrine of charity and love, with the understanding and use of the Word, and with the knowledge of the relationships of the two worlds in which our lives are placed. And it is according to the idea that we interiorly have of God, that we find a place in heaven.

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This is the reason why the Writings analyze the Athanasian Creed which is the creed that is the basis of authority for the official theology of Christendom even today. On the other hand, this creed, which was the outcome of the fatal Council of Nicea, held in the year 325, is shown to establish as the center of Christian belief the faith in three Divine persons; from which all other falsities concerning the Lord, concerning redemption, freedom, predestination and salvation have sprung like a brood of monsters to destroy or pervert everything spiritual in the Church. But on the other hand, this creed is said to be true, provided only that for a trinity of Divine persons be substituted a trinity within the One Divine Person of the Lord, and provided that a distinction be made between the human from the mother and the Human from the Father (Doc. Lord, 57-59).

The Athanasian Creed arose from the effort of the Church to protect itself from the heresy of Arius, who taught that Christ was not of equal Divinity with the Father, but was a creature made of a substance not eternal. If this had been said of the human which the Lord assumed from the mother, it would have been true. But it was said of the Son of God begotten before the world. For by this time the idea of three Divine persons existing before creation had already permeated the Christian Church. Arius also professed faith in a trine of Divine persons. And under those circumstances if it was of Divine permission that the Council of Nicea should at least stress the Divinity of the Lord so that Christians would not make Him an inferior Deity or even a mere man. It was moreover of Divine providence that they should use the expression persons, for a person is a man and a Divine person is God who is Man (@AE 1109).

Throughout the Athanasian Creed there is a certain conflict of ideas. There is a clear idea that there are three persons as if there were three unanimous gods. But also there is an obscure idea that God is one. There is a clear idea that the Lord has the Divine and the human, but only an obscure idea that the Divine of the Lord is in His human as the soul is in the body. There is a clear warning that you must not confuse the three persons nor divide the essence, but only an obscure idea that the Human essence was taken into the Divine (@AE 1102-1108).

The fact is that clear ideas always prevail over obscure notions. Still, when it is suggested in the Creed that we cannot help thinking of the three persons as three gods, yet are forbidden by the Christian religion to say there be three Gods or three Lordssurely the truth is in a shadowy way admitted. And it is made clear that the Athanasian doctrine can be defended only as a mystery beyond mans comprehension.

The obscure suggestions in the Creed can therefore be a help to simple souls who admit that they can take it only blindly, while they can understand that God is to be worshiped in Human form. If you ignore the self-contradicting notion of three co-eternal persons, the rest of the Creed becomes intelligible. Therefore Swedenborg, in the Apocalypse Explained, revises the Athanasian Creed point by point (@AE 1107-1109). The result is a true confession. And since I am not aware that this version has

ever been collected before, I shall join together his revisions and present the result!

The Christian faith is this: We worship one God in whom is a trine and a trine in the one God... And the God in whom the trine is, is one Person and the trine in God is one Essence. Thus there is one God in a Trinity and a Trinity in Unity.

The trine in the Lord as in one Person is the Divine that is called the Father, the Divine Human that is called the God, and the Divine proceeding that is called the Holy Spirit; but the Divinity or Divine essence of the three is one, the glory equal. Such as is the Divine which is called Father, such is the Divine that is called the Son and such is the Divine called the Holy Spirit. As the Divine in the Lord that is called the Father is uncreate, infinite, almighty, so the Divine Human that is called the Son is uncreate, infinite, almighty, and so is the Divine that is called the Holy Spirit uncreate, infinite, and almighty. But these three are one, because the Lord is one God both in essence and in person, in whom is a trine.

The Lord from His Divine which is called the Father, from His Divine called the Son, and from His Divine Proceeding called the Holy Spirit, is one God and one Lord; since the three Divines called by the name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are in the Lord, in essence and person one.

When we acknowledge a trine in the Lord then it is from truth, and thus from Christian faith and religion that we acknowledge both with mouth and heart one God and one Lord.

From the Divine that is called the Father the Divine Human that is called the Son was begotten (natum), and from both the Divine that is called the Holy Spirit proceeds.

The next portion of the Creed is more complicated. But Swedenborg goes on with his revision as follows:

As the soul and body are one man and thus one person, and such as the soul is such is the body, it follows that as (the Lords) Soul from the Father was Divine, His Body also, which is His Human, is Divine. He took, indeed, a body or a human from the mother, but this He put off in the world and put on a Human from the Father, and this is the Divine Human.

The soul does not change itself into a body, nor so mingle itself with body as to become body, but it takes a body to itself. Thus soul and body, although the two are distinct, are still one man, and respect to the Lord one Christ, that is one Man who is God.

This concludes Swedenborgs revision in the Apocalypse Explained of the text of the Athanasian Creed. But in order to clarify the subject, certain other teachings are added. First it is pointed out that one Divine by itself is not possible, but there must be a trine of esse, existere, and procedere, or of being, manifestation, and proceeding. Even before His advent in the world, the Lord had such a trine. The Divine Human was the Divine manifesting itself. But before the advent, the Divine Human was not Divine even to ultimates (@AE 1112). Ultimates are what is called flesh and bones, and even these were made Divine by the Lord when He was in the world. This was an accessory, and this now is to God the Divine Human. And it is then explained: Every angel is a man, having soul, body, and proceeding; yet this does not make him a complete man, for he does not have flesh and bones as a man in the world has. That the Lord made His Human Divine even to its ultimates, which are called flesh and bones, He

made clear to the disciples who, when they saw Him, believed that they saw a spirit; saying, ...Feel me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have. From this it follows that now God is Man more than the angels are (@AE 1112). It is added that man and angel are only recipients of life, whereas the Lord, as to both the Divine and the Human, is life in Himself....

In the Doctrine Concerning the Lord, another, somewhat different revision of a part of the Athanasian Creed is published (n. 58). A later analysis in that book (nos. 59-60) pays particular attention to the confusion which exists in the Creed between the human from Mary and the Divine Human. For the Christian idea is that the human which the Lord assumed from the substance of the mother was never tainted with the hereditary evils of the race and was itself therefore assumed into God. The Mary-human, they think, consisted of a rational soul and a body of flesh, together constituting perfect man. This perfect man was joined into a personal union with the second person of the godhead, not by conversion of the Divine into a body, nor by a confusion of substance, nor by mixing the Divine nature with the human, but by assumption. The body of Christ rose from death but was not made Divine except by association. It is presumably still finite a permanent finite addition to the Son of God.

In commenting on this idea, the Writings constantly note that the human nature that came from Mary was actually put on by the Divine Soul which united itself to this body until they were not two but one person (Doc. Lord 35). In a sense, the body of the Lord which rose from the grave, was the same body which He had had while in the world (De Dom.). Yet how utterly changed it was as to essence and substance! It was no longer the son of Mary in any sense.

Throughout the Lord's life on earth He had been alternatingly in two states the state of Humiliation, in which He was in the human from the mother and thence in temptations, and in which He prayed to the Father as to one other than Himself; and the state of glorification in which He was in the Human from the Father, in which He said that the Father was in Him and that He and the Father were one. Successively He put off the heredity from the mother, purging His very flesh of hereditary taint (Doc. Lord 35). Thus He bore the iniquities of mankind and thereby was approached by all the forces of the inflowing hells, to conquer them and subdue them. By His overcoming all evil he ordered not only His whole mind as it was being built up by the Divine truths of the Word but also the substance of His very body into the perfect image of Divine truth.

How He could expel the maternal human is described in a note in the treatise on the Athanasian Creed. The maternal human, we read, was the infirm which adheres to nature, and because that is evil it was in correspondence with hell. When this is expelled, those things succeed which are concordant with the Divine and in correspondence with it. For the body is only a correspondence of the soul or spirit of man.... The Lord, however, whose Soul was the Divine itself, made His body correspondent with the Divine itself that was in Him; and thus above heaven. With man, evil cannot be expelled, but is removed. Because he is not life in itself nor Divine as to soul, but is only a recipient of the Divine, therefore man dies as to the body. But the Lord, from the Divine in Himself, expelled the evil (derived) from the mother: wherefore He rose with the whole body. He retained the infirm which in the world, because otherwise He could not be tempted, least of all on the cross: there the whole maternal was expelled (Ath. 192).

Let us note that both according to the Athanasian Creed and according to New Church doctrine, the maternal human nature cannot be transmuted into the Divine essence nor be co-mixed with it (Doc.

Lord 35). Yet when the Lord's human body had been purged of hereditary tendencies, He rose with the whole body which is not the case with any man; for a man rises again only as to his spirit, but not as to the body. That man might know, and no one doubt, that the Lord rose again with the whole body, He not only said it by the angels who were in the sepulcher, but also showed Himself in His Human Body before the disciples.... (Ibid.).

To certain Mohammedan spirits Swedenborg explained that it was because the Lord was conceived from Jehovah that He could glorify His entire body; so that even (ut quoad) that of the body which, with those who are born from human parents, is rejected and putrifies, was with Him glorified and made Divine from the Divine in Himself, and with this He rose leaving nothing in the sepulcher, altogether otherwise than takes place with other men (LJ post, 87; op @SD 524). And to gentile spirits the further instruction was given that because the Lord had an infinite and uncreate Soul, it could not be otherwise than that His Body should become like His soul, after He had rejected that of the body which he had taken from the mother; wherefore He left nothing in the sepulcher. The Divine itself ... which is infinite, could not have done otherwise than reject the finite which was from the mother, and put on the infinite from the Father, thus the Divine (LJ post. 129). His Divine essence rejected the finite native and its life from the mother (@LJCont 75).

It was not the human from Mary that was glorified. The Athanasian Creed errs when it suggests that the Lord was perfect man of the substance or nature of the mother. It is true that she contributed the first material clothing for the infant Lord. But the matter of the human body changes and is renewed throughout life until nothing of the original substance is left. What constituted Mary's contribution was rather that hereditary twist and taint which in man is maintained in every cell of the body, as an imposed form adapting it to receive an influx of life peculiarly attuned to the character of one's ancestors. And even after the Lord had expelled this imposed form of racial heredity, and reduced His body into correspondence with His soul, thus into the organic form of Divine truth, it still possessed a finite nature which served as a limitation for the currents of infinite life, and the Mind that dwelt therein was thus still beset by the appearances in which human life is placed.

The material body which originally had been built of Mary's substance had a finite nature that must also be put off. And it is so, at His rising on the third day, that the arcane process of Glorification finally culminated, when the veil of the temple rent and the Lord gave up the breath of finite consciousness to be united with His omniscient soul as the God-Man, the Divine Human, in whom everything is infinite. His natural body, by glorification, was made Divine (@TCR 109). For it is stated that the Divine Love itself formed the Body after its likeness ... until finally all things were forms of the Divine love, and when it was made Divine they are Divine love. Nothing there is closed, as in things finite, but all things are formed to the idea of an infinite heaven (@SD 4845).

He rent and dissolved the bonds of matter limitations which the Divine Creator had imposed when out of His own substance He created the world! Hence it is reiterated that He rose indeed with His whole Body, but that this Body was not now material but Divine-substantial (Doc. Lord 35). He had always been Man in firsts, in primes, as alpha. But now His Human Essence is as His Divine. He now became Man in ultimates, as the Divine Natural, the Omega.

## VI - THE FIERY FLYING HYDRA

The makers of dogmas have always had to take into account the fact that the men who compose the populace if not always entitled to be called rational are yet endowed with varying amounts of common sense. For this reason the Athanasian Creed was so constructed that, although it clearly taught three Divine persons, each of whom was equally God and Lord, yet it also satisfied the common perception of the simple by obscurely stating that the three constituted one God. This provided a loophole, a formula to point to in case of need.

The Writings, in quoting various creeds both of Catholics and Protestants, show that they all contain a similar double-talk to use a current expression. Beside the stately paradoxes which are solemnly presented as the main tenets of the church, there are usually found some face-saving phrases which the genuine Christian is glad to confirm in states when he is not thinking from blind faith but from the Word and from life and from reason.

All men who are in something of charity or in the good of life have an ability of being affected by truths. If a man thinks merely from confirmations, and his faith is blinded by what he has been persuaded to believe by others, whether it be a religious dogma or an atheistical one, he can confirm a falsity as easily and strongly as he can confirm a truth. But with those who are well-disposed and are affected with truths, there is a spiritual idea which inflows and dictates interiorly that what is heard or read is true or not (F 3, 11). For this reason the falsities of religion do not enter interiorly into their minds, but they note and cherish only those things which agree with their feelings of good will. They act on the principle noted in the Arcana (6822) that if in the church anything is called truth which leads away from good, it is not worthy of mention, for it is not truth. And, as we learn from the Writings, even a fallacy or a truth not genuine, can be adopted as a truth and is so accepted by the Lord, if it is made an instrument of good intentions.

There is a Providence in the fact that in the various creeds, symbols, confessions, or articles which serve as statements of faith for the churches of Christendom, there are phrases which can direct the simple to a good life and to such general truths as can be seen in the Law, the Prophets, and the Gospels.

Thus the Catholics concede that although works are meritorious, no-one should attribute anything of merit to himself (@BE 8). And the Protestants, who hold that good works are not necessary as a meritorious cause of salvation, and that faith alone lays hold of the blessing without works, will yet concede that charity and good works follow faith as the fruit comes from a tree (@BE 12, 13). Such concessions give ample material to priests and ministers in their preaching a Christian morality and their advocacy of the Church's participation in social service. It is accepted among all Christian leaders that whether it is faith alone or the grace of the sacraments or the meritorious works of man that take away the damnation of original sin and assure heavenly rewards, it is obvious that without morality and its various virtues both church and society would soon disintegrate. But it is also convenient that this stress on doing good and also the presence of other truths in the articles of their religion enable the old Christian Churches to hide the inherent falsities that lie, like monsters gnawing undisturbed at the root of their faith, and to divert attention from the theological inconsistencies by presenting an admirable moral program to the world. It is known that the most atheistical of ideologies hold out the

lure of social improvements and moral justice to captivate and bribe the multitudes, and only by degrees reveal the cruel falsities whereby the few initiates hope to gain control. It is in these ruthless principles that the danger to mankind lies. Similarly, it is not the superficial inconsistencies in Christian creeds that are harmful, but the hidden implications. The power of these unrecognized falsities lies especially in the confusion and obscurity that they create in human minds. They are so speciously worded that the simple reader is somehow relieved that they must be taken blindly, without real understanding (@BE 59). But the falsities involved, although blindly accepted, are a continued invitation for man to avoid doing the works of spiritual repentance, to indulge in a disguised form of spiritual pride, to attribute injustice and evil to God, and to worship with the mouth only and not with the heart.

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It is our intention, in this class, to examine one of the beliefs that have sprung from the idea of a God in three persons; namely, the belief that man is saved instantaneously by an act of immediate mercy apart from means. First it should be noted that the real falsities within the Christian Churches usually are not prominent until there is an effort towards missionary activities. These have not diminished, but increased tremendously, since the time of the last judgment. In Swedenborgs day it was reckoned that the Gentile and Mohametan population was ten times greater than the population of Christian Europe (@DP 330[7]). Now there are less than three Gentiles or Moslems to each nominal Christian. It is true that a humanitarian interest has spurred the establishment of mission sin foreign landsmissions which specialize in hygiene and education and social welfare. Yet the great zeal which is responsible for supporting extensive Christian missions in all parts of the globe is fed by the belief that without the church and the Gospel there is no salvation, but that all who are not baptized are necessarily facing eternal damnation.

The doctrine generally accepted among Protestants is that all men are under the curse of original sin until they are converted and baptized (@BE 15). Various church bodies make certain modifications of this teaching, but in the heat of evangelistic zeal the act of conversion is commonly made one with salvation itself, and the impression is given that all who have been baptized have put on Christ and are truly regenerate (@BE 15).

The pernicious character of this doctrine lies in the notion that salvation is an instantaneous restoral into Divine favor, a sudden change of state, like that of a poor man who suddenly becomes rich and honored and happy. Natural states may indeed change suddenly. But this is impossible with a mans character or spirit. Salvation is not a matter of being intromitted into heaven, for heaven is open to all; but a matter of being fitted to enjoy the delights of heaven which spring from a ruling love of the Lord and the neighbor. The ruling love of a man cannot be change from evil to good in a moment. The change must be gradual, by shunning evils as sins, by cultivation of ones mind by natural and spiritual truths, by the transplantation of his spirit from societies of hell into societies of good spirits and angels.

For the spirit after death is not happy except in the society of his like. He becomes distressed and tortured in mind and constrained in his breathing if he enters heaven before his corporeal and evil delights have been removed. The life of regeneration therefore means that as he shuns his evils the roots of his life are as it were loosened one by one from the soil of hell and other roots are extended into better societies; until the bonds that bind him to evil are relaxes and as it were atrophied. This is



accomplished not by any sudden decision or any ritual act but by an extension of his thoughts and affections into the realms of heavenly uses.

No one enters heaven, or a state of salvation, from any special act of Divine intervention, or as the Protestant doctrine has it by immediate mercy, apart from the means and modes which are provided for all men. Regeneration the formation of the new man which implies new affections and perceptions is a slow organic process, just as is mans formation in the womb. For the mind, or spirit, is organic. It can be changed only by a growth of new fibers and tissues.

The means which are necessary for such spiritual growth are truths whereby man gains wisdom, and goods from the Divine, whereby he gains love. They are provided by the Lord out of His unceasing pure mercy, and for all men throughout the world.

If we examine the doctrines of the Churches in the Christian world, we find much that is inconsistent with the idea of an instantaneous salvation out of mercy apart from means. Viewed interiorly, they teach life (@DP 338). Thus the Athanasian Creed states that on the last day the Lord will come to judge the quick and the dead and that those who have done good will enter into life eternal. The Protestants say that no one can fulfil the Law by spiritual life and that man is saved not by keeping the commandments but by faith alone; yet they teach their children the Decalogue and say that the law ought to be considered by the regenerate as a rule of religion (Life 63, 64; BE 13). And before the Holy Supper Christians are admonished to examine their evils and repent. The Writings therefore point out that it is the external man of the church (@DP 338) that uphold instantaneous salvation. And men of common sense readily perceive that sudden conversions are not to be relied upon being a result of a neurotic and abnormally excited state of mind, a mind spellbound by crowd psychology, and neither rational nor free.

The Writings graphically describe the belief in instantaneous salvation as the fiery flying serpent in the church (@DP 340). The reference is to a saying of Isaiah about the fate of Philistia, that out of the serpents root shall go forth a basilisk, whose fruit shall be a fiery flying serpent, signifying evil glowing from infernal fire. To rely on mere mercy for salvation is to abolish all religion. It prompts to an oral confession that a man is a sinner, but gives no opportunity for self-examination, or the recognition of any specific sin and thus shows no need for repentance or the resistance to ones evils. It reduces mans responsibility for any real acknowledgment of God, who is proclaimed a mystery a Trine of persons who consult together as to how to juggle Divine justice as to favor a chosen few.

And it induces an unhealthy feeling of security of life. This is the disease of the age. If salvation comes from Divine mercy alone, who would not be saved? What is the need for any concern about the state of ones soul, or about the lusts that run riot in his flesh the frauds and injustices, the envies and revenges or adulteries and slanders which he excuses? Still less, what matter the motives themselves, or the spiritual evils that he harbors? Cast yourself on the inexhaustible mercy of God it is thought and all such evils would be wiped away: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as wool.

It is not only the relatively few who confess at prayer meeting and are thus declared saved and washed in the blood of the Lamb, it is not only these misguided religious souls, some fanatic, some merely embarrassed, that are subject to this false security. But the indifferent multitudes, spiritual drifters, who gamble on Gods eventual forgiveness, are encouraged by the same doctrine. If religion can so

cheapen itself if salvation can be gained by a mere frantic scramble for the sawdust trail would God deny salvation even to worldlings who after all may not be much worse?

But there are more concealed and more dignified forms of this belief in instantaneous salvation. The Catholic faith that Baptism takes away original sin and that papal indulgences or priestly prayers and absolutions can commute the penalties of purgatory due on account of later sins, is only another way of abolishing the essentials of religion. The Protestant dogmas of faith alone and predestination are but steps on the same road towards the break-down of true Christianity. For they ignore the relation of man to his God. Indeed, they attribute damnation to the Lord, and open the mind to abominable accusations against the Divine. They present a God who confers salvation out of pure mercy upon some, by giving them the power of saving faith, while He withholds the same power from others for no fault of theirs (@DP 340).

For this is the inner logic of the doctrine that with many variations has reigned in Christendom since the Council of Nicea. The falsities that were hatched out among the Protestant reformers were but variation on an old theme. For from the Catholic Church the reformers carried over the ideas of three Divine persons from eternity, of the vicarious sacrifice on the cross, of original sin, and of the imputation of the merit of Christ; as well as a store of other traditions, such as the existence of a hierarchy of angels before the creation of man.

All religious errors stem from a wrong idea of God. That God could have condemned the entire race for the sin of Adam, at once places Divine justice as something outside of man's conception. God becomes a monarch with absolute power who requires obedience but cannot be loved. How His sense of justice could be appeased by the blood of His Son, cannot enter human understanding. How the merit (acquired by the Son of God, when He vicariously atoned for the guilt of Adam vicariously carried by the human race) could later be imputed to those who believed in the Son; that also is inexplicable. For to our poor human intellects it seems as if merit like guilt is a very personal thing that cannot be transferred to another or imputed to another, and if it is so imputed this act must be considered an error or an injustice. Certainly all Christians approve of the doctrine of Jehovah who spoke through Ezekiel saying, The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son.... Yet saith the house of Israel. The way of the Lord is not equal. O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? Are not your ways unequal? (Ezekiel 18:20, 25).

Yet it is upon the idea of a transfer both of guilt and of merit that the Christian churches have erected their formidable structure of theology and their mode of salvation. The Roman Catholic claimed that the priestly hierarchy was the medium by which the merit of Christ was to be applied to men, through the seven sacraments of pardon and of grace. And baptism is named the sacrament of faith. But the reformers without denying the Catholic doctrine that Baptism is a sacrament absolutely necessary for all, without which no one can enter into the kingdom of God sought to show that salvation, or justification in the sight of God, came by faith and by faith alone.

In saying that man is justified by faith alone, and that contrition and good works contribute nothing to salvation, the Protestants desired to distinguish themselves from the Roman Church. The Catholics had stressed the merit of good works and these good works were interpreted especially as giving to the church; through which abuses grew up, such as the flagrant sale of indulgences.

The Protestants therefore proclaimed that nothing man could do had anything to do with salvation. By the fall of Adam mans nature was so totally corrupted that he is blind to all spiritual things and to the need of salvation and is an enemy of God. He has lost all freedom, although he can still move his members. He has not a single spark of spiritual strength, cannot repent or accommodate himself to receive any Divine grace, or in the least cooperate of himself or as of himself. Industrious and ingenious in civil affairs, he is yet a slave of Satan; and in the spiritual things relating to his souls salvation he is like a stock, a stone, a pillar of salt! Such is the total depravity of his nature that he can be converted only by Divine grace, without any cooperation on his part (Cited in BE 15; @TCR 464).

Here we meet with a peculiar Contradiction. For although it is claimed that any man, before conversion, is merely a stock and stone, it is also said that by baptism all become truly regenerate and are then endowed with a freedom of will whereby they not only can hear the word of God, but can ... embrace it by faith (Cf. BE 69).

These tenets are cited in the Writings from the Formula Concordiae, which outlines the dogmas adopted by the Lutherans. The general position amounts to this that man has no free will to choose good, but only to choose evil. Although man would be restored to grace if had faith, yet he can do nothing to obtain that faith. The conversion, by which from a child of wrath he becomes a child of God, is solely and exclusively an act of the Holy Ghost.

Faith, therefore, is a gift of Gods grace. It would follow that God selects or elects those who are to be saved, and this irrespective of their evil state. God operates and effects the whole of conversion by His virtue and power through the Word in mans understanding, heart and will as in a passive subject. Man does not act at all but is only acted upon, even as a statute is formed out of stone, without its knowledge or will (Cited in @TCR 464).

The Lutheran doctrine continues by showing that when man has thus been justified by the imputation of the merit or justice of Christ, in that he has been given faith, there is remission of sins, vivification, regeneration, and sanctification. But by grievous evils, faith may again be lost.

The Lutherans do not officially draw the logical conclusion from all this, although it must haunt their minds at times. It remained for Calvin and the so-called Reformed Churches to admit that if conversion, or the bestowal of faith, is an act purely Divine, and all are not saved, it means that God arbitrarily choose one person and not another to be endowed with eternal bliss. All being equally guilty and unworthy, (it is argued), God chooses some and not others for the manifestation of His glory, simply because so it seems good in Gods sight. He thereby shows His sovereign freedom and authority.

The absolute predestinarianslike Calvindefend the thesis that God, being omnipotent, has by an immutable and eternal decree predestined most of the human race unto everlasting perdition without any reference whatever to the use they may make of their moral agency.

But the followers of Arminius modify this cruel doctrine by pleading that God had foreknowledge of what the character of men would be. Strangely enough, both Calvinists and Arminians are strong champions of the idea that man has free will. But both, at the same time, deny thatsince the Fallthis freedom of man extends to the point that man can cooperate in the act of justification or to obey Gods law. Mans will is free, but not free to repent; or if he repents, still he might not be of the elect who

receive grace.

A tremendously involved argument has enveloped the whole doctrine of predestination in a tangle of cobwebs. But there are always victories, here and there, for common sense. Few if any Protestants now hold that infants are damned if not baptized; and Catholics admit them into limbo, a borderline of heaven which is at least no place of torture. Calvinists especially espouse the confidence that their own children born in the covenant, so to speak would certainly not be excluded from salvation merely because they had not been baptized.

As to the heathen, less mercy is shown by the Presbyterian Confession of Faith, Chap. x, No. 4) which declares that it is very pernicious and to be detested to maintain that the heathen are saved who have not professed the Christian religion, be they ever so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature and the law of that religion they do profess; seeing that even Christian ministers may not all be among the elect. But this view, being contrary to a common sense of justice, is not frequently preached, except to stir up missionary zeal. John Wesley and other prominent Christians, felt that no man had a right to sentence all the heathen and Mohametan world to damnation. Thus common perception modifies the logic of many a dogma.

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The real truth is never difficult to recognize. Despite the strict dogma of salvation by faith alone, those who hold it could hardly dispute the simple statement of the Writings that religion is of life, and the life of religion is to do good. In fact, they might point to the tenet of their creed which notes that good works or charity follow upon their justifying faith like fruits from a tree, and are then not the works of obedience to the Law but works of the Spirit.

This admission is useful for the Christian. Yet the New Church man can easily see that there is something wrong and artificial about the simile. The Protestants good works seen to be like fruit that is tied on to the twigs of faith.

Good works do not spring from faith alone. They spring from a conjunction of faith and charity, or of will and understanding. If you take away all affection from thought, could you possibly think or speak or not? Indeed it is charity, or the affection of good and use, that shapes faith as a means whereby it can express itself as good acts or uses.

It is not faith that is the tree, but man (F 16, 17; @DP 532; @TCR 374, 585; @AE 942[2]; Coro. 27). The correspondence is quite complete. In the seed of a tree when it germinates in the soil there lies concealed the end, the intention, and endeavor to produce fruits. The parts of the tree bear a likeness to the organic structures of mans body. The root is a kind of heart, which provides a sap to make the stem and limbs, like the blood builds the body; the leaves serve as lungs, and the blossoms strain the sap and separate its purer prolific essences, even as the brain does in the body. The fruit is like a testicle that receives the vegetative soul from the [?] of the spiritual world.

But the real correspondence is to mans spirit. The seed corresponds to the first conatus which forms the native will like strong roots and rears its self-conscious strength and merit like a mighty wooden trunk. But it also builds the understanding. The branches and twigs are the understanding with its aspirations to higher things natural knowledges and rational truths which, like leaves, drink in the air

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of heaven and distill sweetness out of light in the marvelous chemistry of life. The blossoms answer to the marriage chambers in which the spiritual conjunction of will and understanding takes place. Spiritual truths from the Word of Divine revelation form the petals of the mind in flower. And into the rational mind there seeps the influx of heaven to begin the marvelous formation of the fruits of this spiritual marriage; even as the stamen and pistil collaborate to catch the vital currents for the procreation of the tree.

The fruits are uses, the goods of charity, in which there is the promise of eternal life. Good works are thus the product of charity and faith, of good and truth.

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Do the Writings then deny that man is corrupt and of himself incapable either of faith or charity? Do they assert that any good or truth can originate in man or come to him except by a gift of Divine Mercy and Grace?

By no means. But the Writings show that this Divine grace is offered to every human being, so that none is deprived of the freedom to cooperate or reciprocate, and all can be saved if they so choose. They also show that it is mans own fault if he is not saved. For no guilt attaches to him because Adam sinned. The sins of every man do indeed leave an inheritance behind him. They contribute to desolate the world and environ mens minds in falsities and are even ingrained in the flesh of coming generations as hereditary inclinations to evil. But they cannot transmit either guilt or damnation.

From himselfhis own propriumman has nothing of good and nothing of truth. But through his soul the Lord inflows continually with the mercy of love, and this, through the remains which the Lord instills in every man, can give him freedom of will and the gift of charity; and similarly the Lord inflows into his faculty of reason with the Divine grace, which is felt as an affection of truth for its own sake. The whole of Divine providence operates to keep all men in spiritual freedomthat is, in the free choice to respond to the Lords love, to enter the way to heaven or the way to hell, thus to repent or not.

The conjunction with the Lord must be reciprocal and mutual (@TCR 371). It is effected not by action and reaction, but by cooperations. Man receives the Lords action and operates as from himself; yea, of himself, from the Lord. It is from free choice that he can will and think and act from the Word, that is, from the word, or from such truth as he has. Such good, although done in freedom, is neither meritorious nor is it from self. If you do good from the Word, do you not do it from the Lord, from His own mouth and will? (@TCR 506). Constantly, man is held in a spiritual equilibrium that he may feel life as his own and thus become responsible for its use. Only so can heavenly happiness ever mean anything to him. Only so can he interiorly harbor a true idea of the Lords love from a faith that springs from charity; and do good, not from himself, but from the Lord.

## VII - THE JEWISH CHURCH

It is told in the Writings that the church on our earth, from most ancient times to the end of the Jewish Church, progressed like a man who is conceived, born, and grows up, and is then instructed and taught. The successive states of the church after the end of the Jewish Church, or from the time of the Lord to the present day; have been like those of a man who increases in intelligence and wisdom in the course of regeneration (@AE 541). The parallel is here drawn with the normal states of a man as they develop. Nothing is said of the evil states which, by a perversion of the objectives of religion, accompanied their rise and caused their fall.

It is also explained that inmost Divine truths were revealed to those of the Most Ancient Church, exterior Divine truths to those of the Ancient Church, while to the Hebrew and later to the Israelitish churches only most external and indeed ultimate Divine truths were revealed. With the Israelites all Divine truths finally perished because they adulterated everything they had from the Word. But then interior Divine truths were revealed by the Lord for the Christian Church; and now truths stilt more interior far the church that is to come - the New Jerusalem. These interior truths are such as are in the spiritual sense of the Word. In the measure that interior things are revealed, man can become wiser or, what is the same, more interior. There has been a progression of Divine truths among men from inmosts to ultimates to interiors; thus from the wisdom of the Golden Age to a state of more ignorance, and then from ignorance to wisdom (@AE 948, 641).

The Jewish Church represents the lowest point - the nadir and turning point - of this progression. The advent of the Lord marks the beginning of the recovery and of the ascent toward wisdom and regenerate life.

It is pointed out in our doctrines that a representation of a church was instituted with the people of Israel because the true Ancient Church among the nations had become pervert and the Israelites were so sensuous and external in mind that they were unable to understand spiritual things and therefore could not profane them. The Old Testament amply testifies to their brutality and selfish loves, their coarse avarice and stiff-necked pride, their utter materialism and sordid thinking. But it can hardly be concluded from this that their sins, though many, were as interior and terrible as the evils of those who lived before the Flood - the antediluvians, who had perverted and profaned the high wisdom of the Most Ancient Church. Even as the evils of the Ancient Church were not as vicious as those of the Christians who perverted the spiritual teachings of the Gospel, so the Jews - though thoroughly degenerate as a race were not as culpable in degree as they might have been if they had been in some perception of interior truths. This is indicated by the Lord's words on the cross, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

It was because the Israelites were so gross and worldly in outlook and heredity that they were permitted to serve as a living prophetic artificial church which had the strange function of guarding certain Divine and holy ultimates through which the heavens might retain a basis of influx in the world and thus make possible something of Conjunction with men.

The statutes, judgments and laws given to the Israelites were not new, but were external forms taken from the nations of the Ancient Church (@AC 444[6]). These nations which Israel despised still retained

some truths of spiritual value, although they had so perverted them that nothing of the true church was left. The Jews, however, were wholly natural, and therefore they had nothing to profane. More than is the case with any other nation, their interiors were filthy, that is, full of the loves of self and the world, of contempt and cruelty. Yet for this reason they were persuaded that Divine worship consisted solely in externals without corresponding internals. And consequently they could be in a merely external holiness, for the sake of the superstitious fear they had of their God and the material rewards they hoped He would give His worshipers. They could therefore separate themselves from their filthy internals which were then closed up, and grovel in the dust or fast and offer sacrifices, and mourn for days in obstinate prayer for external things (@AC 9337, 10430). They were willing to obey laws prescribing every detail of their daily life, for the sake of becoming a chosen nation favored by Jehovah above every other. Indeed, they insisted on becoming a representative of a church, without knowing what this meant. They accepted Divine commandments which modeled their worship into a correspondence with heavenly things.

This idolatrous loyalty to the forms of their external worship enabled them without harming internal spiritual things to serve their unique use, and become the nation through which the Divine Word was written. Their entire national history, from Abram to the birth of the Lord, became a representation of the spiritual developments of a true church, and even a detailed prophecy of the Lord's life on earth (@AC 2523).

To aid us to understand this the Writing reveals that a marvelous power lodges in correspondences. Thus we are told: Lest the Word should be lost (destroyed), it was provided by the Lord that the Jewish nation, with whom is the Word of the Old Testament in its original tongue, should still survive and dwell dispersed through a great part of the earth. Though this nation denies that the Lord is the Messiah or Christ foretold by the prophets, and though it is evil in heart, yet the reading of the Word by them has communication with certain heavens. For correspondences communicate, whatever the quality of the person who reads, if only he acknowledges the Word to be Divine.... The case is the same today as formerly. Even if the reader venerates the patriarchs as if they were deities, the heavens perceive the Lord instead of these persons, not knowing the man from whom that holy of worship proceeds. Such is the conjunction of heaven with man by means of the Word (De Verbo 39).

It is obvious that the benefits of such a one-sided conjunction would be mainly with the heavens which are thereby given the basis of new perceptions of the internal sense, despite the errors of the Jewish reader. Yet at the same time there is extended a certain protection from heaven over the man who unwittingly performs such a use. In ancient Israel the external worship, although mostly idolatrous, was communicated (by reason of its correspondences) to simple angelic spirits who do not reflect on internal things. The holy eternal into which the Jews introduced themselves for the sake of themselves, could thus be miraculously converted into a true holy external through such simple spirits, and from them be received by the angels and thus be elevated into a holy internal (@AC 8588, 3480, 10602). By this means they could serve instead of a true specific church.

The special use of the Jewish representatives was to defer the judgment upon the ancient church which still contained remnants of good. But the prophecies in the Word about the coming Messiah at the same time deterred evil spirits in the world of spirits by threatening a judgment if they should come into flagrant and open iniquities.

It has recently been charged that Swedenborg must have been influenced by the anti-Semitism current in his time as well as ours, to judge from the extreme severity of his description of the state of the Jews, both ancient and modern (@AC 788, 9377). But after all he merely reports, by Divine sanction, on their spiritual desolation as this was apparent in the other life where nothing remains hidden. Thus he reports that many Jews who had nominally been converted to Christianity, internally mock at spiritual things; but so, of course, do many nominal Christians (@AC 4847). And he repeatedly mentions Jews who have lived in mutual love and who had not any contempt for others. Such, after death, are sent to synagogues composed of converted Jews and are instructed (@LJCont 80; A 3479; J post. 251, 293).

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Strangely enough many Christians, though they are so condemnatory towards the Jewish race, of whose evils they are more conscious than their own, believe that the Jews were a holy nation and chosen by Jehovah because of their excellence, and that before the second advent of Christ the Jews will be converted and brought back to Canaan as certain prophecies would indicate when interpreted literally. Christians can believe this so far as they believe that the election and salvation of man are of immediate Divine mercy, however a man may live (@AC 7051; @AE 119).

But granting that the Jews were in infernal loves more than all others nations, because more corporeal and external; yet this need not imply that their evils were most interior. The virtues of the Jews reached no higher than to genuine natural good; and clearly their vices were only in proportion. Yet on the maintenance of the Jewish Church as a spiritual fulcrum depended the fate of many far off nations. For by means of the prophetic Hebrew Word there was a continued purification of the heavens. It was a Divine ultimate for the control of the world of spirits. If the foundations are overturned, what should the righteous do?

Let us observe what the Writings say concerning the state of the race immediately before the Lords coming. The Lord came when there was no longer any faith of love left in the whole world (@AC 2034), or when the human race had so estranged itself ... that not even with a single (man) was there natural good from a spiritual origin (Ath. 49). No natural good was left with the man of the church (Ac 10355); nothing of the church was left (Lord 3) no good and truth, no knowledge of the Lord (S 14). In mankind, we read, there was no longer left any celestial or spiritual good, and not even any natural good (@AC 2854).

Note that the specific conditions which made the Lords incarnation necessary and urgent, did not concern merely the state of the Jewish Church. The causes lay in the state of the spiritual world, where evil was rampant to a degree never equaled. The Lord came to judge not only the Jews but the entire Ancient Church; and this was especially imperative because since the Ancient representative Church had become corrupt the antediluvian hells had broken out and wandered about in the world of spirits almost at will.

The last judgment performed at the time of the Flood was not of a final character, because it was performed by the Lord from the Divine that yet remained in the human race, thus from remnants of Divine order with men. (Ath. 49) When these ultimates of Divine influx with men failed the last and most sensual resort being with the Jews in their rituals and prophecies the Lord Himself had to come



into the world to establish His own Divine ultimates, by which He could forever operate from firsts to lasts (Ath. 49, 177).

Specifically we are informed that, unless the Lord by His advent had delivered the world of spirits from those terrifying demons who are called the giants or the Anakim and Nephilim, and who had been the last posterity of the Most Ancient Church, not a single spirit could have maintained himself in the world of spirits, and mankind would have perished (@AC 581). The heavens of this earth would have had to be translated elsewhere to find a basis with men on some other earth and mankind here would have perished in eternal death (@AE 726[7]). For the Nephilim or the profane genii who lived before the Flood were in such a deadly persuasive power that they could take away all faculty of thinking and turn other spirits into slaves by their suffocating sphere (@AC 581, 1673, 7686; @AE 544[2]). They could also infuse this sphere into the men of the church on earth, as well as infest the spirits confined in the so-called lower earth, below the world of spirits. The Nephilim were in such falsity as had not been before and shall not be afterward (@AC 7686).

Mankind had therefore reached its crisis. The hells, we are told, had grown up to such a height that they had begun to infest the very angels of heaven, and also every man coming into the world and going out of the world (Lord 33; cf BE 57; H. 293; @AE 806). The hell that is, evil spirits from the hell inundated the world of spirits, and thence threw into confusion the ultimate heaven and even assaulted the second heaven by a thousand different infestations (@TCR 121, 123). In fact, there was no way by which those who were of the Ancient spiritual Church could establish permanent heavens. All that could be done was for them to dwell in societies adjoined externally to the celestial kingdom of heaven, for they had no basis of their own. They were held in order only by a transflux of the Divine through the celestial kingdom, and this was of limited efficacy (@AC 6371-6373). It could not prevent that evil spirits, who were in falsity and evil but in external order from ideas of dignity and preeminence and performed external uses, took possession of those regions of heaven where those of the spiritual church should have had their heavens (@AC 6306, 8054). The reason why this could happen is that every province of uses in the Grand Man of heaven must be filled with spirits, in order that there may be no break in the chain of influx even down to man. And when good is diminished in the world, and evil increases, the wicked are drawn upon to perform the necessary uses because the good are lacking (@AC 8054).

Such then was the state of the world of spirits immediately before the advent of the Lord. The Lord was called upon not only to redeem men and spirits and restore their freedom to progress into heavenly life, but also to deliver the angels from infestation (@AR 829). And besides, the whole world had entirely alienated itself from God, by idolatries and magic. Polytheism was universal, except for the solitary voices of the prophets of Israel who boldly and stubbornly challenged the gods and the priesthoods of all the nations. But alas, Israel was not moved and consecrated to maintain this proud challenge by a love of the Divine Creator; but it proceeded from the boast that Israel's tribal god was the Supreme and that Israel was His favorite people.

Only as long as the Israelitish nation dwelt alone and could be held in a complete ignorance about spiritual things, about the after-life and the interior things of faith and charity, could it perform its use of a representative of a church; for so long they could be held in an external holiness without opportunity to profane internal truths. But after they were taken captive into Babylonia and had dwelt

dispersed in Egypt and Persia, they came into contact with many remnants of spiritual truths that still lingered among the pagan religions. From Persia many of them were introduced to the idea of a complex spiritual world with hierarchies of angels and ministering spirits, and of an eventual resurrection of the body at a last day of doom. From Egypt, which had come under Greek rule, some of them learned to think in terms of classical philosophy and from a more interior reflection; and some, about the time of the Lord, even sought to discover a mystical sense within the Hebrew Scriptures.

But this people were not able to enter into interior things without either perverting them and defiling them with corporeal ideas, or else rejecting them. As the Lord said to the Pharisees, who held that there was a resurrection: If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see. Therefore your sin remaineth (John 9:41).

The Writings point out that as soon as the Lord came and taught love and faith in Himself, then that nation ... could no longer be kept in such ignorance as before, nor could they perform an unconscious use by means of their holy external, without their own evils and falsities being intermingled (@AC 10500). Lest they should profane internal things by their sacrificial worship in that land wherein all places from most ancient times had been representative of celestial and spiritual things, they were driven out of the land of Canaan. Forty years after they had clamored to have the Lord crucified, His innocent blood was indeed visited upon them and their children. In the year 70 A. D. their temple and city were ruthlessly destroyed, and since then no sacrificial worship has been offered by the Jews. Their church had run its course. And the people of Israel became eventually scattered throughout many lands, living in ghettos in Christian cities under the shadow of persecution, in a social ostracism that but increased their racial pride and their sense of destiny.

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It must be remembered that the Lord's first task was to save the lost sheep of the house of Israel. All His twelve apostles, and the multitudes which formed the nucleus of the Christian Church, were Jews. When the Lord redeemed mankind by restoring spiritual freedom, He also freed the Jewish race, the evil heredity of which He had assumed and combated in His Human. We must remind ourselves that all men born can be saved, and that none can be blamed for his heredity. Nor is any man to be judged by his race, but by his personal character, his struggles to resist evil where he sees it, and to serve the common good so far as he can recognize it. Yet it is well to reflect on the fact that the burden of heredity with a race may be such that it is of mercy that its people be withheld from faith in the Lord and in spiritual truth even though they may live in the midst of Christendom (@AC 6963). Jews who from infancy are led to refuse to accept Christian faith do not profane when they speak against it (@DP 228). These are not yet in a state of freedom, and their final opportunity will be offered them only in the world of spirits.

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When Judaism recovered from the shock of its national destruction and the loss of the temple of Jerusalem, the rabbis centered the loyalty of the Jews around their Torah, the Law, and their holy Scriptures. These became the center of every synagogue, however far and wide the Jewish colonies were scattered. As the dark ages fell upon Europe, and the flickering learning of Christendom survived only fitfully in occasional monasteries, the Jews in their ghettos guarded their Scriptures jealously.

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Some of the Jews, as those in Spain, benefitted by the learning of the Arabs and Moors who had preserved the writings of the classical Greeks. Moses Maimonides, a physician of the 12th century, became famed as a philosopher, and revived among the Jews the hope of a bodily resurrection and eternal life according to the tradition of the Pharisees. But the fanatical zeal of the Catholic Church against all Jews and heretics forced Jewish learning underground, so that it fostered many fanatical and bizarre movements in which sorcery and magic, astrology and alchemy, mingled with rabbinical superstitions about the unseen powers of the spirit-world and lofty esoteric speculations about the Deity and creation and the archetypal Grand Man. One strange system, called the Kabbalah, was taken up by Christian scholars and mystics of the early renaissance like Mirandola, Reuchlin, von Nettesheim, Paracelsus and later by Bohme.

But the foundation of the Jewish mysticism was the belief that the Hebrew Scriptures had a mystical sense. They had no knowledge of spiritual correspondences (@DSS 22). But by juggling the Hebrew letters and translating them into numerical values, some of them thought that they could deduce the formula for making gold. This common notion Swedenborg discussed with Jewish spirits who were told that the Word does indeed contain a spiritual sense which is pure gold, for gold signifies the good of level. But they have not want love, they said, but gold (J post. 257).

It is strange that the persecutions and massacres of Jews by Christians were usually due to a resentment over the financial power which was often centered in Jewish hands. Historically, the Jews were driven into the field of banking and into trade in jewels because the Church forbade Christians to engage in usury, and because jewels and money was a form of property that could easily be secreted or transferred. But there is a spiritual reason also. For the Jews were the guardians of the Old Testament and loved its literal form. And the literal sense of the Word corresponds to precious stones and to gold and silver. Even in the other life, the Jews are permitted to trade in precious things (J post. 254). And avarice remains as a ruling trait with theme love of external comforts and possessions (T. 801).

It was foreseen that the Christians, who were ignorant of the spiritual sense, would in practice neglect the reading and study of the Hebrew Word. The Jews have been preserved for the sake of the Hebrew language ... because the Word in that language has immediate communication with heaven (J. Post. 261). Their synagogue copies are apparently written in a style like that of the ancient inflected letters (Ibid.). The celestial angels especially derive a signification from the very forms of the letters. Providence ordained that all the letters were counted by the Jewish Masorites when they supplied the vowel points to the Hebrew text (De Verbo 14; @SD 5619).

The reading of the Hebrew Word is thus still spiritually effective amongst the Jews so far as they are in simple reverence. The Lord therefore said of them, This generation shall not pass away before all these things be fulfilled (Matthew 24:34); suggesting that the remnant of the worship of Israel is to have an end with the end of the Christian Church in Europe (@AC 10497), or as is more likely not until the people of the New Church can take up the uses which are involved in the reading of the Hebrew Word.

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If Christians had lived as internal men ... that nation, like other nations, would have been cut off many ages ago (@AC 3479). Note, that even the Jews of today are here referred to not as a race, but as a nation. Lately, to counter anti-Semitism and in condemnation of Nazi genocide, it has been the fashion

to stress that the Jews could hardly be regarded as a race, since their original stock has been mingled with many breeds. Yet the Writings indicate that it is paternal heredity that is dominant, and also that the most potent thing to fashion a common heredity is Religion. The general image of Jacob and Judah still remains in their posterity, by which they may be distinguished from others, because they have hitherto adhered firmly to their religious principles (@TCR 103).

The Jews maintain that they are a people. Not a sect or denomination. Nor are they organized at this day into a church, but into groups of synagogues without any priesthood or any common head. Neither do they conduct any sacrifices, although the dietary laws are still observed widely. They are bound by no set creed, but by common memories, problems, hopes, and a strong sense of mission as a chosen people. (\*11) Their religion consists of the worship of Jehovah as the one God, who is invisible, and in the punctual observance of certain feasts. The Jews are not agreed as to the existence of an afterlife. Some orthodox believe in the coming of a personal Messiah, others in a Messianic Era in which Israel is to be restored.

\*11 We draw freely from the article by Rabbi, P. S. Bomstein, Life Magazine, Sept. 11, 1950.

The Zionist movement has now culminated in the formation of a national homeland on the soil of Palestine. The religious motivation for this return to Zion is somewhat confused. For since the Jews have been emancipated from the ghetto there has been a steady tendency toward secularization. The Reformed Jews have discarded traditions, liberalized the Sabbath laws, shaved their faces. They have forsaken their former pretense that Jesus Christ was a myth, and now rank Him beside Moses, as the greatest of Jews, a moral teacher without equal, whose Sermon on the Mount is the high peak of Israel's idealism. But they reject the faith that He was the Messiah, or in any way Divine.

The roles in which the Jews see themselves are those of testimony and martyrdom. They think of themselves as the prisoners of hope, persistent optimists, always forward-looking, in the thick of movements for social reform. Rabbi Bernstein points out that even the Jewish radical, like Lenin, who has forsaken the religion of Judaism, is yet the product of its Messianic fervor.

Indeed, it is a question whether Judaism can be called a religion. It is a self-conscious ethnic movement with an ethical culture which is clothed in traditional customs all its own. The God of the Jews is invisible and at the hands of an Einstein or a Spinoza is easily absorbed into identity with the interior powers of nature. Such a religion can stress kindness and philanthropic giving, and cultivate the virtues and values of the life of the family and the tribe, without inquiring into the delicate questions as to the evil or self-love and the conceit of attributing merit to oneself.

Yet the sense of sin has ever been strongly present among the Jews. There is no perfection claimed for any of their patriarchs. Sin is simply something which God does not like, but which is forgiven on Yom Kippur the Day of Atonement. The wrong done to fellow men can be effaced by the penance of restitution.

God is conceived as invisible. Yet the human failings of revenge and repentance, of favoritism and vindictiveness, which are attributed to Him in the Old Testament, preserve something of the idea of a Divine Man with the simple. It also consoles the Jews with the belief that man is neither inherently sinful nor depraved. They consider that the flesh, with all its instinctive drives, are good. There is no

hereditary evil, they say. Even desires that are called evil often have good results. The sex drive produces the family and the race. The acquisitive instinct builds homes and creates wealth for society.

And the rewards of God lie first of all in long life and prosperity, not in the uses of a spiritual afterlife. The aim of the Jewish religion is stated to be morality.(\*12) The Writings note that the Jewish Church was compared by the Lord to a fig tree, but one without fruit. The fig signifies genuine natural good, or the morality which springs from a spiritual origin. And however much natural emotion and human warmth and zeal be in an act, there is no genuine or spiritual charity until there is an acknowledgment of the Lord in His Divine Human. It was to reveal Himself as the visible God, of infinite love and wisdom, that He descended by the womb of the Jewish virgin, to manifest the Source and inner motivation of all true human good.

\*12 Religious Systems of the Word, London 1908, p. 595.

## VIII - SENSUAL THOUGHT ABOUT THE AFTER-LIFE

Despite the teachings of the churches, few men in Christendom believe that they will live after death (@AC 5006[4]). Few believe that there are spirits with them, or even that there are any spirits. The chief reason assigned for this prevalent condition, is that at this day there is no faith, because no charity (@AC 5849).

Belief is more than a mere lame assent. There are few who would not give a superficial assent to the possibility, nay, the probability of human survival after death. But only those believe who live as if it were so, live in the full consciousness that this earthly existence is but a preparation for eternal life.

Among the winds of doctrine that blow across the world, one of the chilliest is this fallacy that nothing is real beyond the world of matter, and that the grave is the end of all our hopes. It makes childhood the halcyon time of life, when one still lives in blessed fancies. It robs manhood and even parenthood of any genuine delights, leaving only its struggle for bread and social position. It saves up for old age only the dried crusts of memory and final disillusionment.

Perhaps it might be doubted that so few, in their actual life, are motivated by the background of a belief in another world. And, fortunately, few is an elastic word! Yet compared to the time of Swedenborg, to whom this scarcity of faith was revealed, this our day presents on the surface an even bleaker picture of spiritual desolation. Religious hopes are pushed to the side of modern life, which preoccupies the mind with so many concerns as to how to improve the mechanisms of natural existence, that there is room for little else. Natural life has become an end-in-itself. The art of living gracefully and in comfort here on earth is now dignified as the height of achievements, ranking above the wisdom of spiritual charity. And if many find that this art of getting along requires them to conform to custom and to belong to a church, to profess a creed, to give to benevolences, yet what meditative thought do they ever give to the questions of eternal life, unless they are confronted by the shock of death to kin or companion?

A funeral, in the world, is a sorry spectacle, revealing the emptiness of life for those whose only sure hope of immortality lies in the size of their grave-stones or the survival of their name. Usually, the thoughts of those who attend is turned backward to natural life, in a tribute to virtue or accomplishment, and to death as an object lesson that all is vanity. For before the thought of the after-life, mens minds recoil with a deep discomfort, a pathetic realization of ignorance and doubt, which the formal litany of the church cannot dispel.

At such times, those who are bereaved grope about for comfort, and their minds are somewhat more open than usual to seize upon either truth or falsity if it will but change their state. There may come a hardening of the embittered heart and a stern dismissal of the possibility of the souls survival; or there may be a desperate desire for confirmation that the dead still live, or will live, a search for something of a purpose in this endless waste of human lives, and for an ordered scheme and goal in the otherwise futile struggles of man.

But even so, people are wont to think sensually about the life beyond the grave. Even when the teachings of the New Church are presented, it is only the descriptions or the objects of the other life that are admired, mostly as poetic wish-thoughts; and the real fact that all things in the eternal world are spiritual is not comprehended. Swedenborg's revelations of the after-life let us not forget have had a tremendous influence quite apart from the New Church, and has colored the thoughts of millions. Our doctrine about heaven usually meets with an interested tolerance, and a politely suppressed wonder that we seem so sure about it all. To the average person in the Christian world, nothing is very sure. There are few champions of definite views of the after-life although you often meet with the complacent philosophy that no one church has a monopoly of truth and that there may be some truth in every religion. The pulpits in most churches avoid preaching against falsities; perhaps on the principle that those who live in glass houses should not throw stones; but also because church-goers absorb far more of their spiritual food from general spheres of thought from opinions which are dished up in promiscuous rotation in magazines and books and disseminated in conversation than from their own church.

A certain saving measure of common sense has to a large part modified the orthodox teachings of Protestants that the dead sleep in the grave until the Day of Doom and the general Resurrection. Hamlet's reverie recurs: To die: to sleep; perchance to dream. For in that sleep of death what dreams might come?... The idea has found favor that the spirit waiting for the final judgment is somewhere consciously alive. But his state during this interval is a matter of speculation: whether he flits amid dark space as a luminous ethereal body which possibly might haunt mortals below; or whether memory might, through some fourth dimension, reconstruct a dream life in which the consequences of error are punished according to poetic justice; or whether the soul, released, lives on as a flame of life, awaiting a new fulfilment. But what does it matter, man ask, if we cannot know for sure.

The doctrine of the Catholics claims more authority. It states that the soul is committed to heaven or to hell immediately after death, although even the penitent must make up for his omissions by sufferings in the fires of purgatory; and later, at the Last Judgment, each soul will join its body in a body resurrection on a reconstructed earth.

Both Catholic and Protestant teachings about heaven are equally sensual. Sensual thought places reality in material things. It pictures a place whether this earth, purified by fire, or some central star on which the blessed should gather in refined (and sex-less) material bodies; a place presided over by a race of angels created before earth ever was. It pictures sensual rewards. The quality of men's ideas of what they expect heaven to be, is described in *Conjugial Love* (nos. 2-10), where it is told how novitiate spirits were cured of their persuasions as to the various imaginary joys of which they believed heaven to consist: paradisaic delights, feasting, conversion, wealth and power, or perpetual glorifications and ecstatic songs of praise; or as some thought more admission into the sphere of heaven.

Ignorance of the state after death naturally breeds fantasy. Lack of any rational teaching encourages the imagination to roam at will. Heaven becomes merely the fulfilment of the cravings thwarted on earth, the satisfaction of natural affections, such as we see instanced in the mythologies among the heroes of Valhalla and the shades of the Elysian Fields! The idea of spiritual uses and the delights of charity in connection with such imagined heavens. And apart from sensual ideas of heaven, men have found it increasingly difficult to believe in the after-life at all, merely upon the say-so of the churches.

They have demanded proofs in personal experience by which to confirm the very existence of spirits and angels. And as every church in the past, so the Christian Church began, from olden times, to give birth to various irresponsible sects which particularly catered to such a desire and purported to furnish sensual proofs of the presence of spirits.

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Divine Revelation has consistently warned against this attempt of man to pry open the gates to the spiritual world. Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, it was written in the Mosaic law: There shall not be found among you anyone ... that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer... (Leviticus 19:31, 20:6, 27; Deuteronomy 18:9-14). Such had to be punished with death. An almost impossible provision, this, which kept Israel alone in brave opposition to the combined superstitions of the East! Saul succumbed to temptation and asked counsel of the ghost of Samuel: But Isaiah later voiced the same prohibition when he said, When they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep and mutter, should not a people seek unto their God? For the living unto the dead? To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them (Isaiah 8:19-20).

The Lord, while on earth, constantly refused the testimony of evil spirits as He drove them out of those who were possessed. And in his parable, He cites Abraham refusing to send Lazarus back into the world to warn the five brethren of the rich man, saying, If they hear not Moses and prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead! (Luke 16:19-31).

But even at that time, and in the early days of Christianity, angels unsolicited appeared to men in visions. And the Christian fathers were not sufficiently careful in warning their followers against trusting the spirits, although John, in his epistle, had written, Beloved, believe not every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God... (1 John 4:1, 3). The early Christian gift of prophecy thus paved the way for infestations and sorcery, which in medieval times commingled the belief about the after-life with a fantastic dread of ghosts and ghouls that haunted the grave-yards, and of vampires and of elemental demons that could control the wild forces of nature unless curbed by esoteric magic or by the prayers and solemn rituals of the church. Inside the pale of the church, priests and saints were subject to visions and revelations, while unauthorized mystics and seers claimed intercourse with the unseen world. The hysteria which marked the great witch-trials even on this continent was but an indication of the insanities to which men laid themselves open by illicit attempts to communicate with spirits, and thus invite obsession.

After the Last Judgment, we perceive somewhat of a lull in the efforts to seek intercourse with the other world. It became frowned upon as superstitious, and although the same abuses continued, outstanding instances became rarer. And then, towards the middle of the last century, there sprang up a new movement towards its revival in a more respectable garb in a more scientific form: a movement which chose the name of Modern Spiritualism.

It was ostensibly a research into occult phenomena, by empirical methods. Although claiming continuity with the work of seers, prophets, revelators, and mystics of all previous ages, as well as admitting kinship to sorcerers and magi, diviners and astrologers, the partisans of this movement date



its practical beginning with the so-called Rochester spirit-rappings, in 1848, when the Fox family heard knocks and noises, which answered their questions according to a prearranged code. The Fox sisters, children at the time, later toured this country and England to display their peculiar spirit-telegraphy. And, although one of them publicly disavowed her own part in these phenomena as so much fake, the momentum of the movement had gathered too great a force to be stopped. A great many other people had found themselves to be sensitives, found that they could serve as mediums for spirits who then controlled them. Once established as mediums, they could draw profitable audiences of ardent believers, and from time to time for the next fifty years the free publicity given these mediums was tremendous. In 1884, unsubstantiated claims were made of sixty million adherents in this country. It was claimed by Spiritists that the world of the departed had long been seeking for this means of coming into contact with mortals, and that now they were crowding the air, and descending to inaugurate a new era in which unbelief would be wiped out.

The particular tricks which spirits learned to do was to give messages about dead friends, through the voice or pen of the medium; to write on covered slates, lift bouquets of flowers from room to room, blow trumpets and beat tambourines without the help of any human hand; to suspend the laws of gravity, lifting people or chairs or tables into the air; and finally, to materialize themselves in a substance (ectoplasm) which perspired from the body of the medium, and thus become tangible and visible, even so as to be kissed and photographed, and engaged in conversation.

The spirits or the mediums were unwilling to participate in most of these phenomena except amidst small groups of affirmative friends; and an extraordinary preference was shown for dark rooms and closed cabinets. Yet several prominent scientists, like Professor Sir William Crookes, Professor Sir Oliver Lodge, and Professor Richet, have been converted to a belief in their genuineness. A Society for Psychical Research now gathers and sifts the evidence represented by alleged mediums, and, so far as is possible, so of their learned investigators have imposed almost fool-proof conditions to these experiments. One fact, however, is universally admitted: that almost every physical medium has been proved at some time to have cheated, by producing the desired phenomena by clever trickery. The explanation offered by Spiritualists is threefold: firstly, the spirits that use the medium, they show, are quite liable to resort to deception, since they retain their human failings; secondly, they concede that a medium whose powers are exhausted and abused, will naturally be averse to admit it; and thirdly, the took no responsibility for professional exhibitionists.

The hope of the Spiritualists to convince the world of the survival of the dead, has not been fulfilled. To most people, the clever accomplishments of the mediums are a nine-days wonder, soon dismissed. Even within that small group of learned men who confess themselves baffled by some of the experiments, many are inclined to explain their results as due to physical and mental powers within man, hitherto not understood. And the vapid, vacillating messages of cheer from the other world which the seances produced, were so valueless and ambiguous, that they spoke poorly for the intelligence of the departed. Wild and indefinite pratings, desperate attempts to suggest marvelous revelations to come but which never come; hold the attention of the devotee. Rational people soon recognized that an atmosphere of unbounded credulity was present in the spiritistic movement. As organized cults, it embraces now only about twenty-seven thousand persons in this country; although it has unnumbered adherents and sympathizers among the laity and even clergy in other churches, and its beliefs and practices are shared by several strange sects which dabble in occultism.

Spiritualism as a religion, is of course founded on a sifting out of certain common elements found within the contradictory revelations of the mediums and automatic writers. This means that they honor the Lord, but only as a great medium and a lofty spirit; that they place the Bible among a number of other messages from above; that they picture a spiritual realm of unending progress, with redemption possible for the evil spirits also who are merely undeveloped; that they reject any resurrection of the material body. One organization attests to the truth of astrology, and of palmistry, of prophecy, and of the significance of dreams. Another believes in elemental spirits, and has chosen as its emblem the pond-lily, which shoots up from the mud through the putrid waters, yet evolves beauty and purity. But all encourage the seeking of material proofs of the souls survival.

The opposition to Spiritualism comes mainly from the Catholic Church, from many literalistic sects, from some of the clergy of more conservative churches, from orthodox scientists, and from skeptics everywhere. Each group has reasons of their own, doctrinal or practical. But as is usual in such opposition, each in condemning the spiritistic movement denounce much more, and reject the fundamental truths which that movement has misused and perverted. An instance is served by the attitude of those psychiatrists who from their studies of the psycho-pathic wards have contracted the habit of regarding all unusual human states as abnormal and due to mental disorder. Such men go further than to condemn the practice of spiritism because of its ill effects on the nervous system of its victims. They also regard all claims to spiritual intercourse as an indication of a disordered mind, and would classify even the visions of the prophets and disciples as sensory hallucinations due to paranoia, paraphrenia, or other forms of mental disease. And this attitude, born from a preconceived denial of the existence of a spiritual world or of its influx, precludes all further understanding of the distinctions between the orderly means by which in the Lords providence, and according to His protecting law the spiritual world could at times of need be opened to varying extent for prophets and seers who were to serve as his instruments of Divine revelation, and the disorderly enterprises by which men seek to pry into the unseen world and by which spirits seek to dominate and obsess human minds, when these are diseased or voluntarily submissive.

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And here we must note that in the annals of Modern Spiritualism, whether written by its friends or its foes, the first chapter is usually devoted to Emanuel Swedenborg, who then is labeled as the foremost mystic and seer of modern times, or as the father of our knowledge of supernal matters. When the first rays of the rising sun of spiritual knowledge fall upon the earth they illuminated the greatest and highest human mind before they shed their light on lesser men. That mountain peak of mentality was this great reformer and clairvoyant medium, as little understood by his own followers as ever the Christ has been.... In order fully to understand Swedenborg one would need to have a Swedenborg brain, and that is not met with once in a century. So writes Arthur Conan Doyle, lately the leading champion and biographer of the movement. It is flattering to Swedenborg, if not to the New Church, which, it is said, has allowed itself to become a backwater instead of keeping its rightful place as the original source of psychic knowledge.

I am afraid that Conan Doyle, delving for clues in the solution of the final mystery, lacked the Swedenborg brain. The theology of the New Church, and the revelation of the spiritual sense of the Word, are not of any comfort to the spiritist movement. But in spite of this side of Swedenborgs work, Doyle hails the immense store of information which, he says, God sent to the world through

Swedenborg. Again and again they have been repeated by the mouths and the pens of our Spiritualistic illuminates.

To the eyes of New Churchmen, this admission unwittingly reveals more than was intended. For when spirits do speak to men, it is spirits who are of the same religion with himself, and who can only confirm whatever the man has made a part of his religion; thus enthusiastic spirits confirm in a man all that pertains to his enthusiasm; Quaker spirits all things of Quakerism; Moravian spirits all things of Moravianism; and so on (De Verbo, xiii). This is said to show that it is untrue that man might be more enlightened ... if he had direct revelation through speech with spirits and angels. Spirits speaking with a man speak only from his affections and according to his thoughts and knowledge. This provision is made to preserve mens freedom even when they try to squander it by offering themselves as the dupes of evil spirits.

The only real information about the other world that has ever been given to men since known history began, comes from the Word and, especially, the Writings. And this knowledgemixed with all manner of superstition, contorted by Christian traditions and modified by wishful thinkinghas especially a fruitful haven in the imagination of the spiritist. This welter of information is in the mind, either of the medium or the questioner, at the seance. And so far as there is any clarity in the supposed answer, it comes from the Writings. Nothing new, nothing which adds in the slightest to the real comprehension of the life or order of the spiritual world, has ever been furnished by the wizards that peep and mutter!

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The futility of seeking open intercourse with spirits, or sensual confirmation of a belief that our departed are still near us, is abundantly clear. But it also is well to note that the claims of the accomplishment of spiritualistic mediums go counter to many things said in the Writings.

There is indeed an influx of the spiritual world into the naturaland it is by this influx that all organic growth, vegetative and animal, takes place. Even dead nature has its conatus undetermined motion from a spiritual influx. Evil uses, such as noxious pestswe are taught, are creations that received their contorted form from the influx of the hells into putrid and rancid matter on earth (@DLW 343). But this influx is not a materialization of the evil spirits, but an activity of spheres of the hells. There is no conjunction of the two worlds except by the mediation of man, i. e., through mans mind. We do not believe that there is any ground, in the Writings, for a belief in any materialization of spiritswhether through a man or separately from man. In the entire Christian world, and in accord with the sensual thought that had prevailed since Jewish times, the appearance of angels to the prophets had been explained by such materializations. Swedenborg himself as first sought to reconcile this belief with his conception of the nature of the soul, suggesting that by the omnipotence of God it could be effected that a spirit might be clothed with a temporary embodiment from materials present in the atmospheres (Rat. Psych. 523; Adv. 1457). But in the Writings we read this disavowal: It is believed in the Christian world that angels have assumed human bodies, and have thus appeared to men; but they did not assume them, but the eyes of the mans spirit were opened, and so they were seen (De Dom., 14).

Swedenborg distinctly claimed that such intercourse as his own with spirits was not miraculous (Inv. 39: Mir. v. et. al); these revelations, he wrote, are not miracles since every man as to his spirit is in the spiritual world without separation from his body in the natural world; but I with a certain separation,

but only as to the intellectual part of my mind... (Mir. v., cf. @AC 69). He claimed no uniqueness in being able to converse with spirits, but only as to the marvelous extent of these revelations which surpassed even the visions of the men of the Gold Age; for these remained in natural light while Swedenborg was granted to be at the same time in spiritual and natural light (Inv. 52). Such intercourse had never before been mentioned in history (Inv. 43), and, together with the appearance of the Lord, and the revelation of the spiritual sense of the Word, was superior to any miracles (Ibid., 39, 43, 44).

In the Most Ancient Church, direct or immediate revelation were given, and there was no written Word (De Ver. xi.). This indeed the mode of revelation on other earths, also, because of the genius of their inhabitants (h. H. 309; @AC 7802, 7804, 10632, 10380, 10384). But when our race through the Fall came into their peculiar external and scientific temperament, this way of communication was closed. The written Word was given, whereby man might become reformed in freedom through rational things of doctrine. Indeed the Writings abound in statements that no one is reformed by visions and by speech with the dead, because these compel (@DP 134). Divine visions, such as are mentioned in the Word, do not take place at the present day, and would not be understood if they did; diabolical visions are severely restricted by spiritual laws; and there remain only fantastic visions, which are mere delusions of an abstracted mind.

Nevertheless, conversations with spirits is possible (though rarely with the angels of heaven); and this has been granted to many for ages back (@DP 135). But it is rarely permitted, because it is perilous... Some who lead a solitary life occasionally hear spirits speaking with them, and without danger (@HH 249). A spirit may come to a man and communicate some truth; but still it is not permitted the man to speak with him mouth to mouth, lest the spirit come to realize that he is with a man (Doc. II., p. 388; @HH 249); and therefore the spirit, who addresses the man, may speak only a few words; and they who speak by the Lord's permission never say anything that takes away the freedom of reason, nor do they teach; for the Lord alone teaches man, but mediately by the Word in a state of illustration... (@DP 135).

A man who is in deep abstract meditation often appears as to his spirit in his own angelic or infernal society. But if a spirit then addresses him, he vanishes (@HH 438; @DP 296). A man who is in enlightenment from the Lord through a love of the truths of the Word, may sometimes hear the speech of spirits, but he is never taught by them, but led with much precaution for this freedom (@AE 1183). This may be perceived by such men as a kind of response by vivid perception in their thought, or by a tacit speech therein, and rarely by open speech; and it is to the effect that they should think and act as they will and as they are able, and that he who acts wisely is wise, and he who acts foolishly is foolish; but they are never instructed what to believe and what to do... They who are taught by influx what to believe and what to do, are not taught by the Lord, nor by angel of heaven, but by some enthusiastic ... spirit, who leads them astray (@DP 321).

Those who want to seek instruction from speech with spirits do not realize that it is conjoined with peril to their soul (@AE 1182). Only evil spirits come to the summons of man: When spirits begin to speak with a man, we read, he ought to beware that he believes nothing whatever from them: for they say almost anything: They fabricate things and lie... If they were permitted to describe what heaven is ... they would tell so many lies and this with solemn affirmations, that a man would be astonished.

Therefore when spirits are speaking, I have not been permitted to have faith in the things they related. For they have a passion for inventing; and whenever a subject of conversation comes up, they think they know it, and give their opinions one after another in one way and another in another, quite as if they knew: And if a man then listens and believes, they press on and deceive and seduce in diverse ways. For example, if they were permitted to tell of things to come... (@SD 1622). And they can impersonate so that they even deceive themselves that they are someone else: Let those who speak with spirits beware, therefore, lest they are deceived when the spirits say that they are those whom they have known and that have died. For ... when like things are called up in the memory of man, and so are represented to them, they think that they are the same persons! (@SD 2860, 2861). These things make evident the danger in which a man is who speaks with spirits, or who manifestly feels their operations (@AE 1182).

Such warnings against seeking sensual experience to confirm the existence of spirits should suffice for any New Churchman. Yet it has not been so. From the beginning, the temptation to explore the other world, like Swedenborg did, or to call upon its powers of influx illicitly, has threatened the New Church in differing degrees. In 1786, a French society of Illuminati, was formed by Abbe Pernety, mixing spiritistic ideas with free masonry and the New Church. The same ideas, in milder forms, such as the practice of Animal Magnetism and healing by exorcizing spirits, influenced the early New Church movements in Sweden about the 1790s. In 1817, James Johnstone a workman belonging to the English New Church began to receive visions in which Abraham and other arch angels dictate nonsense for his spiritual diary. In 1846, Ludwig Hofaker, editor and translator of Swedenborg's works into German, died of insanity after mixing spiritistic theories and practices with our teachings. In 1844, Mr. Silas Jones, with the sanction of a leading New Church minister, conducted a spiritistic circle in Brooklyn, profanely mixing sorcery and astrology with New Church rites. In 1859, Thomas Lake Harris after megalomaniac adventures with spiritism on this continent, and having ostensibly embraced the New Church as a first step towards it, visited England and almost succeeded in turning the Swedenborg Society there into a spiritistic propaganda agency, converting, with his strange charm and marvelous eloquence, William White, the Swedenborg biographer, and Dr. J. J. Garth Wilkinson, a most profound New Church scholar; causing the latter to descend into the Hades of Harrisism for twelve years, during which he wrote improvisations by spirit-dictation.

Harris's career ended in scandal and disgrace. But it is not enough to say that the New Church, like other movements, must have its lunatic fringe. For throughout the years, the recurrent defense of spiritistic practices in several New Church journals, has shown that the temptation to spiritism is a result wherever the faithful study of the Heavenly Doctrine is neglected, and that even this does not avail as a safeguard, when there is harbored a secret or open desire to forsake the arduous way of redemption which the Lord offers to the spiritual church. This way is reformation through doctrine and reason, through the discipline of self-compulsion and loyalty to the truth. This difficult road is necessary for the spiritual church, for those of a spiritual genius: which includes all those whose hearts must confess to being subject to hereditary and actual evils.

The temptation is to deny that we need to walk that road; the temptation is to think that we have attained to a celestial state, and that on this account we may do without the discipline of Doctrine, and rely on our own power to withstand the onslaughts of hell, and on our instinctive discernment to know an evil spirit when we meet him.

But as for us, let us humbly recognize that the Lord enters into man through no other than an internal way, which is through the Word, and doctrine and preachings from the Word (@DP 131). For this way leads not down to a dependence on the senses and its fallacies, but up to the rational mind, where alone a man is free to see the spiritual things of heaven in light.

# IX - PAGAN INFLUENCES ON CHRISTENDOM

In the course of our discussion of Faith and Falsity it has been intimated that many of the falsities of Christian belief had a pagan origin. Since this fact is of great significance not only for the past but for the future, it deserves a further examination.

The Lord said to the disciple of John the Baptist, No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment and the rent is made worse. Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles and both are preserved (Matthew 9:16, 17). This was said to explain why the Lord's disciples did not often fast. It implies that a New Church needs to have its own distinctive externals, new forms of organization, new modes of worship, new terms to express its doctrine. It cannot remain as a part of the old consummated church, cannot amend the false doctrinal system of the past by merely patching on a new truth here and there. But a New Church must grow like the body grows from its own soul so that its externals truly correspond to its internals.

This truth is easily comprehended as an abstract principle. But when we come to apply it, it is soon realized that what we think of as new has often already existed for a long time in some different form or connection. A New Church will necessarily adopt and adapt old customs and forms to its new and distinctive uses. It cannot invent anything totally new which is entirely divorced from the past.

This is also implied when it is said that the Lord commanded the Israelites to borrow from their Egyptian neighbors vessels of silver and vessels of gold and garments when they fled from the land of Pharaoh. These precious substances were used later in the construction of the tabernacle and its furnishings. The metal objects were melted down and remolded. But it is also shown that before this was done, the people gave Aaron their golden earrings and these were made into an idol a calf such as the Egyptians worshiped. There were, in the worship of Israel, many features which were carried over from the ancient representative church such as sacrifices and offerings. And the ten commandments given on Sinai as the Divine law of Israel contained precepts similar to those known in most nations.

Somewhat the same took place in the Christian Church. Baptism was used by John the Baptist. It was a development of the ritual washings prescribed for the Jews. The Holy Supper was a symbolic adaptation of the sacrificial feasts. The Christian observance of Sunday was of course a new form of the celebration of the Sabbath as a holy day. The Christian ministry corresponded in many of its functions to the priesthoods of Israel and other nations. And chiefly, the Hebrew Scripture was in its fulness carried over into the Christian Church as the Word of God, and the precepts of Sinai remained for Christians as holy commands, even though the forms of Jewish ceremonial observances, sacrifices, and offerings, and circumcision, were abrogated by the Lord, and the New Testament became the character of the New Covenant. Whatever was taken over from ancient religions was given an entirely new meaning, even if the form remained unchanged. The burden of the Old Testament was no longer seen as a promise of ultimate triumph for a chosen nation, but as a prophecy of the Lord's coming to redeem the entire human race. The law of Moses was shown as a necessary precursor to the doctrine of charity which the Lord had come to deliver, even as obedience and repentance must prepare the way for Christian love and faith.

The Lord therefore also taught, Every scribe instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto ... a householder who bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old (Matthew 13:52). The fundamentals of truth are ageless and have been basic in every successive church, even if only represented in symbolic form. The forms have often survived even where the essence has been lost through perversions; and have been restored for the use of a new Church where the old corrupted its meaning.

The danger comes, however, that a new Church, when faced with the task of making the garments of its worship and preparing fresh wine-skins in which to store and convey the wine of its new spiritual doctrine, may remain content to patch old garments and use dried out and musty wine-skins. And this is done where old falsities are not clearly recognized and judged. From the very first, this was the temptation before which the primitive Christian Church wavered and fell. On this account, the Writings give special warnings, lest a similar fate befalls the communities of the New Church, the Church of the Second Advent. In the Brief Exposition, one chapter warns that the faith of the New Church cannot by any means be together with the faith of the former church any more than an owl and a dove in the same nest! (@BE 102f).

From its infancy, Christianity was vexed and torn by many pagan currents of thought. The True Christian Religion (n. 378) notes that in the very time of the apostles, Simon Magus, the gnostic of Samaria, who claimed to be an embodiment of the world-spirit, sought to buy the gift of the Holy Spirit from Peter and John. In the second century there was indeed a danger that Christianity might be taken over by various gnostical movements which sought to mingle the Gospel teachings with pagan philosophies, or with Persian dualism, or with Hindoo ideas of a return of souls to an unconscious Nirvana, etc. While the Church consciously resisted these heretical systems, even the greatest among the church fathers were children of their age and incorporated in Christian thought many fanciful conceptions current in the Mediterranean world, while their efforts to avoid some pagan errors caused them to adopt opposite falsities.

Many pagans who were converted to Christianity because of its doctrine of charity and its promise of resurrection and redemption, had never rid their minds of the possibility of several Divine beings. It was no shock to them when some Christian teachers even referred to the Lord as a second God. The idea of trines of Divine persons was common in India and in other ancient lands. In Egypt, Divine triads were pictured on every temple-wall. Thus the conception of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as three persons seeped more or less unconsciously into Christian thinking. And, especially in Egypt, there grew up the thought of the Son of God as a lower emanation of the Father or as the first created being, who was thus of a different substance from the Father. This was the doctrine of Arius, which was condemned at the Council of Nicea because by implication it denied the Divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Every Divine revelation must of course be formulated in the language of the people to whom it is addressed and couched in terms of popular thought. Thus when John was inspired to write, In the beginning was the Word, and the Word ... was God ... and the Word was made flesh this was a presentation of the doctrine of the Lord's Divinity in terms of philosophies current in the Hellenic world. For the Greeks generally accepted the idea that the world was ruled by Reason, by a cosmic spirit, or Idea or Logos, equivalent to the wisdom of God. And John now claims that this Logos or



primordial Word was the creative Law or Divine Truth by which the world was made, and that this descended, assumed a Human of flesh and manifested its glory in Jesus Christ. Educated Christians understood very well what John meant by calling the Lord the Logos made flesh. But the gnostics regarded the Logos as simply one of many supernatural agencies that had evolved out of the Divine source, and spoke of it as a distinct personality. Thus it was from the habits of pagan thought that the Church gradually adopted the view that God had three personal forms.

The Writings show that it was from the idea of a Trine of Divine persons, and a misunderstanding of what the passion of the cross effected, that the various heresies of the Christian centuries sprang. The relation between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit was the subject of unending debates. Some church fathers came quite close to the truth denying that there were three persons in God, but saying that God manifested Himself in three forms as Father, as Son, and as Holy Spirit. But they were regarded as heretics, and condemned because they had to take the position that God Himself suffered on the cross. To evade this difficulty, many began to maintain that Jesus was never really crucified but that it was His image or phantasm that seemed to die on the cross. Some even resorted to the view that the Lord came on earth only in appearance, not in a body of flesh and bones, and they revised the Gospels to allow for that concept.

Such fallacious doctrines formed in the light of Pagan thinking are listed among the heresies that the Writings note as existing in the early Christian Church (@TCR 378). But among the orthodox Christians many ideas came to dominate that had their origins in gentile religions and in popular concepts about the universe.

So, for instance, it was widely insisted that the stars revolving with sun and moon in concentric circuits around the earth were rational beings embodied in material forms, and that various orders of angels were created in the beginning, some of whom fell into error and sin and then became men. These speculative notions came from pagan sources but were confirmed by passages of Scripture.

As Christianity spread in Europe, there were also pagan survivals especially in isolated country districts. The old gods, instead of fading out of existence, were turned into gnomes and demons, and the pagan and Jewish species of elves and nature sprites remained to haunt the superstitions multitudes without any authority from Scripture. The impudent god Pan, symbol of man's indulgence of the animal appetites, became the verisimilitude of the Christian Devil, complete with horn and cloven hoof!

But sometimes Christian thinkers went to great extremes to avoid the conclusions of pagan philosophy. Thus the fear of pantheism which identified nature and man as of the same essence as the Divine, closed the minds of Christians to the truth that the Lord created all things out of His own Substance. This they feared to affirm, lest men should come to think of the created universe as God, or to think of nature as self-originating or self-evolving, or to think that God is only the inmost of nature (@DLW 283). For they could not conceive that God's love is the only real substance, and His wisdom is infinite form. Christians therefore adopted the doctrine that God created the universe out of nothing; although it became a common cynical comment that *ex nihilo nihi fit* from nothing comes.

The Writings show, clear reason demands, that nothing whatever in the created universe is God or is continuous from Him; for what is continuous from Him is God; yet God has created all things out of

Himself, or out of His Divine substance. And no other substance than the Divine is Substance in itself or form in itself (@DLW 283, 55). This can be understood only if man excludes notions of space and time from his thoughts.

The matter may be clarified by the use of illustrations. Two atoms of Hydrogen and one atom of Oxygen may combine to form a molecule of water. Water has certain new properties entirely different from those that characterize hydrogen and oxygen. In the same way every effect has properties, or if you please limitations or specializations, not present in the cause. So the natural world, or natural substance, has limitations of space and time and consequent properties of speed, mass, and inertia which are not present in spiritual substance. Yet doctrine tells us that the only possible origin of nature and natural substance is the spiritual world and its substance. The spiritual is the cause and the natural is the effect. And if we go further we may see that the Divine is the cause of the spiritual world, yet the spiritual world is finite while the Divine is infinite. There is no finite ratio between any discrete degrees. The Divine is the final cause of all created things, of all spiritual things which are distinguished by limited states, and of all natural things which are limited by space and time; yet there are neither space nor time nor any states, in the Infinite, or in God; nor is there anything infinite or anything of the Divine essence in the created universe.

The very idea of creation implies the appearance of something new which had not existed before. Certainly the finite world came from something not finite. And in so far you might say that all creation is a creation out of nothing. Yet when we say this we refer to the emergence of a new quality a new type of reality which entirely depends on the original Divine substance yet acts as a substance of its own. In the creation of finite substance the Infinite, which is the only real substance, loses nothing of its infinity. Yet the substance of the created world can in no sense be identified with the Infinite or said to consist of the infinite substance, or possess any Divine or infinite attributes. Augustine and other Christians need therefore not have hesitated to acknowledge that God created the universe out of His own infinite substance, which is a one with His inexhaustible love, the ultimate reality which upholds all things.

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The orient had a powerful influence upon the thought of the early Christian church. The sensual materialism which marked the Jewish view of life left its stamp upon Christian concepts of the last judgment and man's bodily resurrection, and a final heaven on this earth. This was only to some little extent modified to suit the loftier Greek philosophies when Paul and others explained that the resurrection body was really spiritual a refined body of ethereal quality.

The Gospels, with their direct and authentic citations of the Lord's own teachings, were used by the Church fathers with great success to stem the influence of gnosticism. The gnostics encouraged the idea that the fervid believer could receive his wisdom from an inner light and did not need to rely on the written revelations. They taught an ascetic life and the cultivation of ecstatic mystical states, brought on by continual prayers and pious contemplations. Throughout the Christian centuries, hermits, saints, monks, and nuns sought after mystical entrancements of this sort. Today, not only Catholics but also many Protestant sects like Quakers sponsor such mysticism, as if it were the very essence of Christianity. Actually we must turn to the pagan religions of the orient for the best examples of this kind of piety.

Certain types of mind are particularly prone to seek mystical experiences or to seek for esoteric knowledge. Their minds are usually impatient of the authority of creed or science and tend to accept as fact what accords with their hearts wish even if it lies in the realm of pure surmise unsupported by calm research or by evidence reasonably interpreted. Such minds were therefore easily attracted by a new invasion of oriental philosophy which took place in recent times and is exemplified by the movement which has adopted the title Theosophy.

It may be of interest to note that the word Theosophy means Divine wisdom, and carries no mystical connotation. It was in fact used by Robert Hindmarsh in 1784 when he organized the first group of English New Churchmen into the Theosophical Society. But the name was given quite a different meaning a century later when Mme Helena Petrovna Blavatsky appeared in New York to found a miracle club and propagate the occult doctrines of a Tibetan brotherhood which she claimed to have visited.

A New Church clergyman, in 1886, a Mr. Vetterling, ironically enough, the first stipendiary student of the Academy became a contributor to her journal and later under the pseudonym Philangi Desahe wrote a book called Swedenborg the Buddhist(\*13) in which he makes the preposterous claim that Swedenborg received most of his doctrines from telepathic suggestions of Buddhistic adepts. For he freely admits that Swedenborg did not read any Buddhistic or mystical authors. This is interesting, since Signe Toksvig, who recently wrote an elaborate biography of Swedenborg, also professes that Swedenborg received many of his revelations by thought-transference from these Tibetan adepts. It might be well, therefore to review the chief sources from which the theosophists and a dozen other mystical and esoteric sects, derive their inspirations.

\*13 Swedenborg the Buddhist, or The Higher Swedenborgianism, its Secrets and Thibetan Origin. The Buddhist Swedenborgian Brotherhood, Los Angeles, 1887.

The governing feature of the philosophies of India is the law of Karma the thought that every creature at death remains as to the soul or character which he has formed by his own deeds, awaiting a transmigration or rebirth in a suitable form on earth. The desire of the soul is to find release from the bonds of flesh and matter with its illusions and this, Buddhism began to show, could he finally achieved only when man after many reincarnations has renounced all the desire of self-life, not only evil lust and corporeal pleasures, but all higher affections and wants even the love of individual use or individual existence, so that his life merges with the Infinite whence it sprang and with which it was always identical.

There are many variations of view as to the precise meaning of the Nirvana or loss of identity into which the soul thus passes. A tremendous number of sects and cults have divided Hindooism and Buddhism. The thinkers of India recognize a subtle philosophic meaning in the many different gods that are worshiped gods who are avatars or incarnations of various forces, spiritual or natural. The grotesque gods of the conflicting popular cults are in themselves so unbelievable and repulsive and amoral, that thinking men naturally turn to some mystical profundity as an explanation. And what the Hindoo has generally accepted is that the soul and life imprisoned in all things is the same and is in man the Self and is identical with God.

Nowhere as in India is there more reverence for the philosophical saint, the mystic passively brooding

on the moaning of existence and finding the answer in himself in the ecstatic state of intellectual awe, which none can really communicate to another, but which leads to a discovery of man's potential godhood.

In such experiences the Hindoo found an escape from the sordid environment that was his heritage. But not every man could attain such mystical states with their pleasant flattery that he is realizing something of his divinity! Only the few, the worthy, could receive the esoteric or secret doctrine by which man could become an adept and so come to control even the world of material illusions.

Compared to these solemn endeavors of the orientals, the modern Theosophist seems only to be bet on an intellectual spree. Theosophy is essentially eclectic recognizing some of its truths in other religions, especially in the gnostical sects of the early Christian centuries. Yet Mme. Blavatsky outlined its tenets in her *The Secret Doctrine* and *Isis Unveiled*. She claimed to be an incarnation of the Word and an agent of certain mysterious adepts in Tibet who lived there in a sort of Shangri-la possessed of all the learning and literature of the ages. They wield powers and possess knowledges to which our modern science is but as child's play. There are three orders: adepts, masters, and mahatmas; Christ is reckoned among the masters. Man, she explains, evolved from the mineral kingdom and all are gods in the making, being raised to higher forms by repeated reincarnations and intervals in a spirit-realm, a sort of astral purgatory.

There are, according to the ancient ideas revived in Theosophy, seven graded planes, the physical, the astral or psychic, the animating soul, the passions, the mind, the spiritual soul, and (highest of all) the pure spirit which is the first emanation of the One absolute and eternal principle. Each plane has its own sort of matter, and the claim is that the astral body of man extends twelve inches wider than the physical body. The physical body can be left behind by certain initiates or yogis; and you can learn during sleep from thought-forms that are continually given off from us. A departed soul need not be born again if it can instead possess the body of a dying person and so incarnate itself.

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In our survey of some of these pagan intrusions into the thought of Christendom we have encountered many fantastic ideas and some enormous falsities which continue to influence the faith of our contemporaries. Yet we have also recognized certain teachings which bear a strong resemblance to truths given to Swedenborg by Divine revelation. It is this fact that causes many of the learned to class Swedenborg among the mystics, while others claim that he was influenced by neoplatonism and gnosticism. The theosophist concept of many planes of existence which was similarly taught in ancient Egypt is somewhat suggestive of the doctrine of discrete degrees.

The fact of course is, that the truths of the Ancient Word affected many nations and have cropped out in varying forms, more or less perverted, throughout historic times. Ideas such as those of the Grand Man and of man as a microcosm, and the doctrine of correspondences and of symbolism, are suggested in the New Testament and have from time to time been elaborated unfortunately by speculative thinkers who mixed the truth with the superstitions and falsities of their times.

Christians had in the Gospels no Divine revelation which could separate for them the dross from the gold, or present in their rational perspective the truths hidden within the symbols and allegory of

mythic lore and taught in part by the classical philosophies. They had to resort therefore to the uncertain and flickering light of common perception. This was sufficient for the humble in heart, who were modest of opinion and confided in the Word in simplicity. It was those who began to rely on their own illustration and on the inner light who came into the worst fallacies and into the persuasion of private revelations in which enthusiastic spirits would lead them astray.

And it is to protect the men of the New Church from the persuasive fantasies of the mystic and the eclectic that the Lord has made His second advent in a doctrine of Divine truth addressed not to our fickle emotions but to the rational mind according to that heavenly doctrine that true illustration can come.

# X - THE FALLACY OF AN INNER LIGHT.

On October 30, 1748, Swedenborg made note in his Diary, that almost the whole world of spirits is wicked and enthusiastic, and sedulously anxious to obsess man.... This was written nine years before the Last Judgment, and written as an explanation why it would be most dangerous for spirits to speak with men, or for men to attend to the operations of spirits upon themselves. It was written at the close of some paragraphs describing Quaker spirits in the other life. Those of that religion, while on earth, continually thought about the Holy Spirit, and in their meetings they continually expected to be stirred up and led by the Holy Spirit; until they supposed that they spoke from the Holy Spirit. Yet in reality it was evil spirits inflated with the pride of profane assumption and filled with foulest passion that sensibly moved them and made it seem that the persuasions stirred up from their own minds by the cupidities of the spirits, actually was the influx of the Holy Spirit. It even happened that they were excited and goaded to enormities by this spiritual fraud, disguised as piety. And when, on entering the other world, such men also enter into their own inner ideas and recognize the voice of the Holy Spirit as their own, they come to the insane conclusion that they are the Holy Spirit and, therefore, can do no wrong (@SD 3781, 3775).

The Quakers were but a small part of Christendom. Yet the established churches of Swedenborg's day were infiltrated with enthusiastic movements, some of which, like the Quakers, later crystallized into organized sects. Thus we recognize the Moravian Brethren, or Zinzendorfians; the Anabaptists; the Monnonites; the Wesleyans, or Methodists; and the Shakers, now a dwindling group.\*14 But in the course of the 18th century we find all the Protestant churches very deeply influenced by pietistic or quietistic ideas, which were characterized by a reliance on the Holy Spirit, and which ran like a hidden emotional current underneath the dull surface of the ecclesiastical orthodoxies.

\*14 In fact almost extinct, since they are celibates.

In a sense, these enthusiastic movements, which provided an active minority which dominated the world of spirits at that day, gained adherents here on earth because they stood each in their own way for a popular protest against the stiff formalism of the established churches which were all self-satisfied and smug and dictatorial, and already strait-jacketed by traditions. Many people wanted relief for their feelings, wanted to sing and shout and be natural; wanted to feel some ecstasy in their religious life. They came to regard the historic church as unspiritual, as cold and dead. They wanted to be moved by prophets instead of being shepherded by priests. Others, more sedate and proper and self-conscious, felt a need for a revival, wanted to be parts of some small, informal, intimate group which could feel itself guided and directly led by a continuously self-revealing Holy Spirit. They craved a personal message which would give sensual proof of God's nearness even as the spiritists sought sensual demonstrations of the survival of the departed. If possible, they wanted to feel the Holy Ghost to come upon them, as had happened in the apostolic days of Christianity; and if true Christianity came back again, would there not also come a renewal of the age of miracles, with the gift of tongues, and of prophecy, and of healing in response to prayer?

Although these movements differed from each other in practice and precept, yet the underlying human feature was a longing for the Holy Spirit, and a feeling that they wanted to be ruled by the Christ born within them. In this there was the semblance of genuine religious emotion. But what

might, with a man, commence as a genuine hunger for something of spiritual life, is easily diverted into something very different when the force of all the natural impulses are adjoined and given full sway, and he becomes seduced to believe that he has become cleansed of sinfulness, and that he may feel Gods Spirit in him.

There is no delight to surpass the abandon of ones natural affections which circumstance and training and reason and prudence and conscience all tend to direct and confine within bounds. The spontaneity of the child and of the peoples of primitive races, unconscious of sin, has the external marks of innocence. But so far as men are adult, instructed, rational they are responsible to control their own emotions, if not by conscience, at least by reason. The enthusiastic sects, however, are not rational, but experiential. And in differing degrees they have all passed through a period of overwhelming emotionalism, a stage of excitement, tending to excesses, hypnotic convulsions, mental breakdowns, extravagances, hallucinations, visions, and even sexual disorders. This was the case with the Moravian brotherhood, for which Swedenborg in his *Journal of Dreams* had expressed sincere admiration before it became evident that it had entered the convulsive stage, and thus shown its sensual features. The Quaker and shaker movements also had such periods, before they settled into their more respectable ruts. To judge from the record, the Seventh-Day Adventists followed the same typical cycle, passing from heated emotionalism into disillusionment at the failure of their prophecies, on through a reconstruction period; and then came a hardening of their beliefs into sedate sectarianism form. And the Methodist evangelism, which began in Swedenborgs old age, with its earlier camp-meetings and circuits, and its sporadic outbursts of religious excitement, in time conforms, in most places, to the patterns of the conventional city-church!

At first glance, it would seem as if doctrine played but an insignificant part in such movements. Yet the same doctrinal feature derived from the parent-bodies, is at the root of them all; namely, the false idea that man is saved instantaneously on the reception of faith, saved out of pure mercy apart from means. It is only by the giving of the Holy Spiritin, or after, conversion or confession ... that man is saved, and saved irrespective of his life. The main anxiety of the Christian thus is that he may receive this grace to believe, this gift or conscious acquisition of the Holy Ghost.

But the Writings plainly declare that by such a persuasion religion is abolished, a state of false security is induced, and damnation is attributed to the Lord (@DP 340).

As to the state of false security of life, we learn that one may be lulled into such security by a denial of life after death; but equally, also, by the belief that life can be separated from salvation: for such a man will think, What does it matter whether I live well or ill, if I can be saved, at my later convenience, by throwing myself upon the Lords mercy? And we read, Any man in such a state of security makes nothing of adultery, frauds, injustice, violence, defamation, and revenge; but lets his flesh and his spirit run riot in them all; nor does he know what spiritual evil and its lust are (@DP 340).

It would be difficult to make those who accept the dogma of faith alone and election to admit that this is so. Yet the whole life of regeneration is smothered out by such a belief, and external good conduct is cultivated only as a means of self-respect and to convince others that one is sanctified and thus superior: even like the Pharisee who thanked the Lord that he was not as other men.

That this is the case cannot with any certainty be confirmed except from the revelations which occur

after death. On earth, no one can judge of the internal state of other individuals. Nonetheless, we see the doctrine of security openly embraced with much self-satisfied rejoicing especially in those churches which are called holinessmovements: whose membership is formed from those only who know that they are born of God, who are consciously regenerated, and thus are, they believe, in a state of entire sanctification.

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But, you might say, these small sects, and even the larger church-bodies, which encourage the fallacy of such spiritual security, have only a small and dwindling influence on the worlds manner of thinking, and surely none at all of ours!

If we so reason, we show signs of relying on an automatic security of a kinder sort! Besides, the facts are otherwise. The world has but translated religious dogma into a secular type of philosophy which we see cropping out in many diverse and contradictory forms everywhere, but which just as certainly discourages interior repentance, and which makes men live in just as deceitful a fools paradise of external decorum and natural good. In educational practice, it takes the form of a reliance on the fundamental goodness of the individual; in national affairs it becomes pacifism; in social contacts it comes out as snobbery an self-assurance and impulsiveness; and in business-like, as a trusting in hunches. It is, essentially, a confidence in ones own perfection or in ones own inner light and instinct, rather than in the convictions that are gradually formed from reason and Revelation, and in the wisdom that a man gathers from experience. It may seem a far cry to connect these popular frailties with the religious falsities of total sanctification and the desire to be obsessed by the Holy Ghost: yet the origin of both sets of practices lies with similar spirits in the other world.

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In returning to our spiritual problems, let us pause in our broad denunciations. Let us rather ask: Is there not some truth behind the pervert doctrine of sanctification? Cannot a regenerate man tell, by some sign, that he is born anewborn not of the will of the flesh, but of God? Can he not know when he is enjoying the light of true illustration, and is in perception?

These questions recur, because they cannot be answered curtly. The Lord knows that man needs both hope and humility. Hope is given when man most needs it; but if it grows into a certainty of salvation, manas he is constitutedfalls into new temptations for which he is not ready. While a man remains in corporeal things (that is, while he is living in the body) ... he is in such a general and obscure idea and perception that he scarcely knows whether he is in the good of charity or not (@AC 2367, 2380); because he is not much sensible of affection, nor, if he has it, does he reflect upon it.... He may have charity although it does not so appear, nor is he himself able to know this (S. D. min. 4547). Some think that they are not in good when they are.... To such a man it sometimes appears as if his ends are for self when yet they are not so; for it is in the nature of a man to reflect upon himself in everything, and this from custom and habit (@AC 3796). And when such men reflect upon the good in themselves, it is at once insinuated by the angels in whose society they are, that they are not in good, lest ... their thought be turned to their own merit ... Without this guardianship they would fall into temptations. On the other hand, some suppose that they are in good when they are not; and when they reflect on themselves, it is immediately insinuated by evil genii and spirits in whose companionship they are,

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that they are in good (for the evil believe delight to be good). Thus they receive the suggestions that they merit recompense for this in the other life, and have merit above others whom they hold in contempt. And, strange to say, if they were to think differently, they would fall into temptation sin which they would yield, and thus become openly evil (@AC 2380).

But just because the genuine affections of good and of truth which descend from the Lord diverge into various streams and form new origins in mans natural affections, and thus may become interiorly spurious although externally like the genuine ones, it is therefore the part of a wise man to know the ends that are in him (@AC 3796). And this can be explored if he pays heed to the delight which he perceives in himself from the praise and glory of self, and to the delight he perceives from use separate from self... (Ibid.). A characteristic mark of the evil is that the ideas of their thought and speech are wont to commence from good but they end in evil; and of the good, that the ideas of their thought and speech may commence from evil but they end in good... What is universally dominant is the end and affirmation, so that it is the plane to which the ideas are swayed (S. D. min. 4577).

Common sense demands that if a man is able to become regenerate it is essential that he be able to tell the difference between good and evil, and this in himself. Self-examination is concerned with nothing else. It is true that good that is really good comes from the Lord, and it flows in in proportion as man shuns the evils that oppose it. The good that is good is therefore never mans, even when he acts from it. It is not mans, but is an influx, a gift which vanishes the moment man ceases to use it. In that sense, the all-inclusive virtue is the endeavor to shun evils as sins against God. And man can recognize when he is in that sincere intention; and can also recognize the fact that goodthe good of charity and lovecomes when the evils are resisted and put away. It is felt as mans own, and he thinks form it: but if he reflects on it, it is either recognized as from the Lord or else it vanishes and pride takes its place. Man also recognizesif he is in self-examinationthat this good, as he feels it, is never pure, but mixed with the things of his proprium in such a way that the Lord alone can know how to disentangle it from the adjoined natural affections.

But such a man must also recognize something else: that he cannot tell how permanent the good intentions are, how dominant, how deeply seated. Indeed, evil men can believe themselves to be sincere, as is the case with many hypocrites; but this is because they have given up self-exploration and are satisfied to justify themselves. The good man can be sure only of the endeavor to shun evils; when this endeavor is active. He can know whether or not he is resisting. And it is of order that he acts as if this intention is his very own, and thus as if he was in the good of truth, or in the desire to live according to the truths of charity which are taught in the Word. The very membership in the church is a public confession of this desire, and in this desire members mutually strengthen and encourage each other.

It is a distinct teaching of the Heavenly Doctrine that the man whose spiritual degree has been opened, does not know that he thinks and acts from his spiritual man, nor that his higher, unconscious degree is being filled by the Lord with thousands of arcana of wisdom and with thousands of delights of love into which he is to come consciously when he dies. Such a man, while living on earth, still thinks in his natural mind, and the only indication of the opening of his interiors is that truths are seen in light and uses are performed from affection (@DLW 252). In other words, he knows nothing of the opening of these degrees within him (@DLW 238).

Yet a man may, on reflection, realize when he has been in enlightenment, or in rational perception (@AC 10551(2), 2171); realize it by contrast with other states. Even so, he can be deceived, for even in the reading of the Word, a light of confirming previous principles appears illusively like illustration. Man cannot with any certainty see how far along he is on the road to regenerate life, for at best his states fluctuate and he must make continually new beginnings; and indeed, something of this holds true to eternity.

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The nature of man is such that he does not wish to question the light in which his mind is. What comes to him in such a light seems like a special revelation to him, and as such he will defend it and confirm it against the most weighty objections. For this light seems to come from within himself; and what he sees in it is felt as his own. On this account, all useful argument must cease when a person is unwilling to view a question in a light not his own, a different light. If he claims that his light is superior, comes from a superior learning, a higher, more interior viewpoint, he has gained, forthwith, a cheap victory in his own sight. He is invulnerable to the severest logic, and covers himself with a cloak of invisibility. Reason, or Divine Revelation, have both lost their power over him. He retreats to that realm which philosophers agree to call Mysticism.

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Jacob Bohme, the cobbler of Seidlitz, is among the most renowned of mystics. He said of his own writings, These writings transcend the horizon of intellectual reasonings, and their interior significance cannot be grasped by speculation and argumentation: but it requires the mind to be in a god-like state, and illumined by the Spirit of God. This book comes forth not from reason but by the impulse of the Spirit. I am a very little spark of Gods light.

In all ages and climes such mystics have been conscious of a light from within, as a supernatural source of knowledge, which the ancients called the Gnosis, knowledge acquired by super-conscious or transcendental processes. The Catholic church has had to throw their mantle of sanction over mysticism, in order to explain the many ecstatic states of their saints and recluses; indeed, the peak of such experiences they consider the beatific vision the vision of the Godhead, vouchsafed after death to the perfect believer, but possible also to the chosen few on earth.

This type of private pseudo-revelation is a mystical experience, a seeing of a vision which is uncommunicable and inexpressible, yet invariably colored by what the man already believed and knew; and what he knew, he could express. But the characteristic fruit of the mystics thought ripens through a negative way: he feels that he must somehow get away from self, and from others, retreat beyond thought itself, and merge with the light that floods him, until the soul, stripped of personality, stands face to face with a cheer, pure, absolute One, sundered from all two-ness and in Whom we must eternally sink from nothingness to nothingness. (I quote from Meister Eckhart.) God thus becomes the absolute Dark, the nameless Nothing, an empty God, a characterless and formless infinite, whether of motion or of quality, a God devoid of attributes. (\*15)

\*15 Rufus M. Jones, *Spiritual Reformers*, p. xxvii.

Through their ecstatic states, the mystics usually came to the conclusion that the human soul or spirit

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was not wholly severed from God, but was a spark, an offshoot or branch of the Divine. What they saw from the light of the soul they aver was the Divine seeing in them. Thus they confused the eye and the light. The human was merged in the Divine. Not I, the I that I am, know these things, wrote Bohme, but God knows them in me (apology to Tilken, ii. 72). It was a Divine self-knowledge. Theosophy, he said, is the self-knowledge of God in man! Which, I suppose, meant that God thus becomes conscious of Himself in man! (Cp. D. 6002, 6104).

Thus we come back to the fallacy that we can feel the operation of the Holy Spirit in ourselves, and be obsessed by God; which is the original idea within the word enthusiastic which Swedenborg applies to the spirits who are invited by the Quakers and other sects. These put their trust in an inner light or the immediate personal teaching of the Holy Spirit; that this alone if followed and obeyed is sufficient for his salvation (thus apart from the word), and that the Light Within is the only light that anyone need follow (U. S. Rel. Census, 1926). This is substantially the same principle as that of the recent Oxford Group movement, or Buchmanism, which marshaled a vast following within all the churches before the second World War.

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In the New Church we acknowledge the importance of what the Writings call enlightenment, or illustration. Illustration means the introduction of man's mind into the light of heaven, the light of the spiritual sun, which is identical with the Holy Spirit, or the Divine truth proceeding from the Divine Human. This spiritual light gives to angels and men the faculty to think, and the heat of heaven gives him the faculty to will. It follows from this that the Holy Spirit is perpetually present with every man, whether good or evil. Without it no man could live or think (Inv. 23, 57).

In the spiritual world, this spiritual light is the only light, and is sensibly perceived as light streaming out from the Sun of heaven and being reflected on all the objects that are visible there. It is indeed modified and tempered to the states of the discretely varied degrees of heaven, and is even perverted into a sensual and distorting lumen, in hell. Yet it is felt, there, as light, although the angels are aware that it is proceeding Truth, and think of it spiritually. But in the natural world, this spiritual light is not perceived sensibly as light. With men, spiritual light is only felt as a mental faculty of seeing the things of our own memory; and while we indeed acknowledge it symbolically as the light of the mind, we think of it as an abstraction, as knowledge or as truth, and many think of it as merely a memory-reflection of the physical light of the world.

In the most ancient times, before sin and pretense and hereditary evils had perverted the natural man, this spiritual light inflowed into the natural mind and into the light of worldly knowledge, and made all things there to testify of the order of God. Thus we are assured that the men of the celestial church had revelations by which he was initiated from infancy into the perception of goods and truths; for his will was good and could receive such revelations that without new instruction he perceived innumerable things; so that from one general principle he knew from the Lord the particulars and singulars which now men have to learn and so know (@AC 895). If this method were followed now, man could not but perish eternally, for his will is wholly corrupted.

How, then, can the Divine light of heaven be imparted to man now, since nature no longer testifies to Divine order? The answer of Doctrine is that the light of heaven is given to men now through the

Word, written by the Spirit of God and containing His spiritual truth and order. The will being corrupt, perception can be restored only through the upbuilding of truths of faith in the understanding, where a new will can be formed and light can be received from heaven apart from the corrupt will of man.

The Word is a revelation to the whole of mankind. But it must become revealed also to the individual. Each man is intended to have individual revelation. Wherefore we read, By revelation is meant illustration when the Word is being read, and perception then (@AC 8594). Such revelation is not by sonorous voice or open vision, as with the prophets; but within the man, as an illustration of the internal sight (@AC 8780). It cannot be given when the evils of man are active, for evil loves pervert the heavenly light and produce their own biased light of phantasy. The sensual will must become passive, and the mind must be imbued with the love of truth: not a desire to understand, in a human measure, about man and his relation to God and His purposes. Those who are in the good of charity and love, and thus in the affection of understanding, enjoy revelation when they read the Word: they find in the word the light of heaven, wherein all things are seen in true and proper relations. Still, the quality of such a revelation can scarcely be described: it is not manifest, neither is it completely hidden; but it involves a certain consent and approval from within that the thing is true, or disapproval if it is not true. When there is approval, the mind is restful and serene, and in that state there is the acknowledgment which is of faith (@AC 8694). This opening of the mind to spiritual light gives clear perception only so far as the mind is in the knowledge of true doctrinals. It gives the rational mind to see truths. But we look in vain in the Writings for any signs that illustration means the introduction into some sudden state of ecstasy! Or into any mystical visions! Indeed, Swedenborg (so far as I know) mentions ecstasy only once, and then in connection with a profane spirit who in the world was able to throw himself into such ecstatic states (@SD 4488).

Illustration is granted only to those who are in good. Yet, from remains, every man can be in the sphere of good, in the sphere of heaven, and be moved away from his own selfish delights at certain times. Then he is able to elevate his understanding above his will, and may enter into a borrowed spiritual enlightenment almost like that of angels; then he sees truth seven to acknowledgment, and laughs at his former views. But with the evil man this state soon passes and leaves nothing constructive behind; for when he is faced with the practical need to shun his evils as sins, his thought sinks back to the level of his evil will.

In every field of use there is something corresponding to illustration. It may be called professional illustration, and it implies a clear sighted view of the needs of his use, and also a faithful study of the knowledge and the principles which govern in the fields of his office; and the unbiased study of these so far as possible without any perversion of them by reason of personal ambition. If this is necessary in other uses, it is especially essential in the uses of the priesthood, which is charged with keeping doctrine pure as a means to promote the regenerate life. It is notable that it is not the tendency of priests, but of laymen, to turn mystics. For responsibility sobers a man. Yet in the spiritual uses of his own regeneration where he alone is responsible, each man must seek a similar illustration, from Divine Revelation, where he can find the principles of spiritual truth and check his rampant imagination against the laws of Divine order. He cannot rely on his illustration, for this vanishes when he departs from that plane wherein alone it can be sought. He must rely on the Word. For illustration shifts and changes, but the Word remains.

It has been cited, from the Writings, that man knows nothing of the opening of the spiritual and celestial degrees within him (@DLW 238). In spite of this teaching, there have been recurrent attempts on the part of professed believers in the New Church Doctrine, to explain away this statement and to claim that their spiritual degree or celestial degree had been opened, and that they now viewed the Writings from a higher, more interior point of view, either that of charity, and spiritual good, or that of celestial good and celestial perception.

Thus there developed the claim, with some, that a minister must teach from the truth of his spiritual good which involved the conclusion that the Writings were not binding as authority if man from good perceived a deeper truth. The later pseudo-celestialism of Thomas Lake Harris also annulled that authority by the assertion that Harris was a celestial, thought from celestial perception, and discovered a celestial sense in the Word which was subversive of Swedenborg's teachings and made spiritism allowable, the hells only temporary, the Lord a combination of Divine Masculine and Divine Feminine, etc., leading to blasphemies, scandals, and insanity. Dr. William H. Holcombe also preached Celestialism, believed that the world and the hells were being redeemed and made celestial by a subconscious influx. From this discretely higher ground, the spiritual states of other men could easily be judged, and catalogued. G. W. Christy, of New Orleans, and Chester E. Pond, of Philadelphia, were, like Harris, regarded as celestial men whose perceptions were sacred however startling and however they attacked each other! They spoke in unison in only one thing: that Swedenborg was only a herald of the new era, in which there was to be a reliance on private revelations by perception.

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Those who demand private revelations, who seek guidance from an Inner Light, and who, in some other form, are carried away with widespread fallacy of relying on their state of illustration, become devoid of any real protection against such false prophets who say Lo, here is Christ, or there. For such would deceive the very elect. Behold, the Lord warned, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert: go not forth; Behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it or not.

It is in the Word of Divine Revelation that the light of heaven is to be found, it is there that we can see the Lord, it is thence that His Holy Spirit emanates. The Lord, the Writings state, is present with man in the sense of the letter, and nowhere else (@SS 53). There He speaks with man in fulness (@SS 97). That sense is the touchstone, the ultimate of all illustration. For though the source of enlightenment is within, in the spiritual Sun and thence in the heavens and in the spiritual sense of the Word, this light is refracted into many colors in the minds of angels and men and is focused again into its fulness and entirety in the very words of Revelation, where truth is seen in its rational and orderly relation to truth.

Even the wisdom of the angels rests upon the Word with men. And let us note in conclusion, that although Swedenborg was consciously introduced into the spiritual world, and spoke with angels as one of them, it was not done for his sake, but for the sake of all the future; and it was not done by his being thrown into great ecstasies, but the prosaic mode of a sincere study of the Word in its literal sense. And the result was not a delirium of inexpressible things, not a poetic outpouring or an emotional appeal, but a well reasoned presentation of spiritual truths and laws in comprehensible factual statements which rational men may freely accept or freely deny.

# XI - CHRISTIAN SCIENCE AND THE DENIAL OF EVIL

The salvation offered by the Lord in His Second Advent is symbolized by the sturdy walls of the New Jerusalem, walls of jasper, clear as crystal, standing four-square on foundations garnished with every precious stone. Though the twelve gates of it would never be shut, there should enter into it nothing that defileth or maketh a life.

By these walls are meant the doctrine of genuine truth now revealed in the Writings. It is by the coherence of the truths of doctrine that there can be a real protection against falsities and evils. For truths that are not connected into true doctrine have no power to avert temptation or to foster the states of charity and faith, or promote the normal development of man's spirit. All over the world, among various religions and sects, we see instances of how this truth or that has been picked up like scattered pieces of a mirror and haphazardly joined into beliefs that contort the purpose of life rather than reveal it. Only when our minds are hedged about the true doctrine can spiritual thought be cultivated and interior truths be perceived without being defiled and perverted.

Interior thought is possible only when the mind is elevated above the sensual and can meditate on spiritual things apart from worldly anxieties and selfish desires, apart from the obscuring notions of time and of space, of matter and of person. This does not mean that one should condemn the body or the senses, or retire from the world like a monk or a hermit. It does not imply a rejection of the literal sense of the Word or a denial of its holiness and its Divine origin and purpose. For the material world and our body of flesh are truly created by the Lord and intended to serve the soul and to confirm spiritual truth rather than to obstruct, confuse, and deceive.

But the aspiration towards lofty thought, the conjecture and contemplation of the realities that might underlie the appearances of the senses is not confined to those who are guided and protected in their search by true doctrine principles. The imagination and the reason of man seemed indeed to be goaded into more intense activity when the guiding truth is unknown; and will then stray farther afield to explore every possibility. Thus every falsity will create its reaction, its opposite counterpart.

The latter part of the 19th century was the hey day of Materialism. Leading lights in the fields of science and philosophy scoffed openly at those who believed anything that the eye could not see or the hand touch, or who sought to explain the phenomena of life as anything but the results of physical laws. This total denial of anything spiritual, the extreme to which the materialists went and their failure to satisfy reflecting minds that life with its marvelous richness of thought and human achievement, its science and poetry and art and invention, could be accounted for by the mere mechanical concourse of the elements, led many to test the opposite extreme; namely, to deny the existence of the material world altogether, and take refuge in the philosophy of Idealism which regards all phenomena, all sense-experience, as merely a subjective state of mind, with no outward cause.

Idealism is not a modern product. It was resorted to by some of the ancient Greeks to explain the paradox that life must be an unchanging One, yet it appears as multiform and changing. These therefore said that all things of sense were a delusion or a mental appearance. This premise was

revived by Bishop Berkeley while Swedenborg was a young man. It was and is entertained by many philosophers with varying logical embroideries. But its most startling form is that of so-called Christian Science, the system discovered by Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy in 1866.

Mrs. Eddy could not be called a philosopher, for her attempt to present her ideas logically or categorically frequently breaks down. In her chief book, *Science and Health with key to the Scriptures* (1875),(\*16) she instead presents her discovery in a biographical setting, and claims that she had been prepared by God for the reception of this final revelation of the absolute divine Principle of scientific mental healing (S. H., p. 107). The book is written with dogmatic finality, yet with elusive vagueness in a flowing, impressionistic style which often relies on suggestion instead of grammar. It contains nothing essentially new, but borrows from many sources, weaving the whole together with emotional fervor to prove that man is but a reflection of God the compound idea of God and therefore spiritual and perfect, incapable of sin, sickness, and death (p. 475). Nor can God, by whom man was evolved, engender the faculty or freedom to sin (p. 471).

\*16 References are to the 1934 edition unless otherwise noted.

When Mrs. Eddy's book which is read as a second lesson in all Christian Science churches states that man was evolved by God, this does not mean that God has created the world as we know it, or man as an inhabitant of earth. What comes from God must be Divine and infinite, she assumes. God is Mind and man is His reflection which does everything that God does (p. 515). Man is the family name for all the ideas or thoughts of God (p. 515). Man can have no other substance or mind than God; man's consciousness and individuality are reflections of God or emanations from Him. Man and woman as coexistent and eternal with God forever reflect, in glorified quality, the infinite Father-Mother God (p. 515).(\*17) (If there is here an approach to the idea of the Grand Man, it is very contorted and resembles that of many ancient mystics rather than the teaching in the Writings.) Somehow, the contradictory picture is presented of an infinite variety of immortal souls or beings emanating from God yet eternal, various yet all the same, distinct yet infinite, uncreate yet constituting a sort of creation by God, or a Divine progeny. Man is however, not identical with God. God alone is Spirit. Man is spiritual.

\*17 For the recurrent concept of a Divine Feminine, see SH pp. 332, 516, 517.

On the other hand, mortal existence is a dream, and has no real entity (p. 250). The Father Mind is not the father of matter. Infinite Mind is the creator, and creation is the infinite image or idea emanating from this Mind. Thus all is Mind. And, of course, since Mind is God, all is God (p. 257).

The author naively believes, however, that she rejects shallow pantheism by denying the existence of the material world. Indeed she obliterates from her mind all the problems raised by the presence of material things, of sensations of the world and the body, of error, of sin, sickness and death, by saying that all such things are the false testimony of false material sense, which evolves, in belief, a subjective state of mortal mind, which this same mind calls matter (SH, 98 ed., p. 2). Matter is an illusion of the sense, the senses are the illusion of mortal mind, and mortal mind is itself an illusion, because all real Being is in the divine Mind. Actually, mortal mind has no existence. Yet it is responsible for all these illusions matter, disease, body, evil.

Granted that every system of thought is founded on a premise, we are yet unable to follow this circular

argument. Even an illusion must have something that is deceived or duped. But God cannot be imposed upon, and Man as a thought of God cannot be deluded. The illusion therefore is left in vacuo, without any subject or substance, and without any cause. If cause it has, it is its own cause. But being nothing it can have no cause, since it never existed.

We are left to conclude, then, that the thesis of Science and Health is merely to ignore matter, sensation, disease, death, and evil as unworthy, undesirable, and therefore non-existent. Of course, being a woman, Mrs. Eddy was in a privileged position. It is conceded that women may at times take liberties with logic, and no harm done! It is part of their defense that they are not to be pushed unduly into logical corners, but should see things freely from a perception that springs from love. At times, they are allowed to ignore unpleasant things and exercise a forgiveness beyond the understanding of a mere man. For they are forms of conjugal love, and this love would otherwise never be possible. But what is sometimes a virtue in the feminine mind can also become her un-doing. Feminine perception can be tragically wrong, and it must certainly not become an authority, especially for others. And when it denies the existence of matter and disease and evil, without even accounting for the appearance, it goes beyond the privilege even of the much-maligned ostrich!

The occasion of Mrs. Eddy's discovery of her leading principle was her own state of poor health. She was treated by Dr. Phneas P. Quimby who was practicing some system of mesmerism, or hypnotic cure. Dr. Quimby and one other of his disciples, a Dr. Warren Fels Evans, were both idealists and both acquainted with Swedenborg's Writings, but read Swedenborg from the Tulkite interpretation. The Tulkites, followers of Charles Augustus Tulk, were idealists, and held that God creates the world through man. Dr. Evans published a number of works on Mental Healing, even before Mrs. Eddy had published Science and Health. There is also independent testimony that Mrs. Eddy at one time was interested in the Writings of Swedenborg, according to the Rev. John Whitehead, who in 1907 published a book, entitled *The Illusions of Christian Science*, to which we are indebted for some of this information. Any New Church reader may indeed recognize in Mrs. Eddy's writings familiar phrases and ideas suggestive of Swedenborg's own. But lest we should think that the Tulkite reading of Swedenborg's system was at all legitimate, and that the natural world could have been a projection of man's ideas, we note what is written in the work *On The Last Judgment*, n. 9: ...Man was last created; and what is created last (ultimo), that is the basis of all that precedes... The ultimate (or last) of creation is the natural world, including the terraqueous globe with all things on it. When these were finished, then man was created, and into him were collated all things of Divine order from firsts to lasts....

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Dr. Quimby's treatments of Mrs. Eddy (then Mrs. Patterson) met with astonishing success. Her nervous ailments were allayed and her organism functioned perfectly. But not until 1866, after a concussion due to a fall on the ice, did she claim to have found the principle of healing that Mind, not moral mind but divine Mind, is superior to all the beliefs of the five senses and able to destroy all ills.

It is not our intention to enter upon an examination of this principle or to sift the evidence of the many cures which Christian Science claims to have effected. That the human mind especially its unconscious powers can be roused to restore many disorders of the nerves, the brains, and the viscera, is not to be questioned. The Writings show that the spirits with a man are responsible not only for man's moods but for many diseases of the body. Nervous force can be stimulated by suggestion and by auto-



suggestion, irrespective of the truth of the suggestion. The suggestion may work whether the patient is an atheist or a Christian or a pagan, or whether the miraculous effect is credited to a witch doctor or to a Catholic saint. Each cult or sect uses these effects to lead me to believe in its own peculiar doctrine or confirm them in it. The question before us is what is the faith to which the Christian Science practitioner guides his patient? or what are the concepts taught in Science and Health?

First of all, the book strongly stresses that to regard God as the creator of matter, is to make Him responsible for all disasters, physical and moral... (P. 119). For to Mrs. Eddy, matter is evil.

This is an ancient concept, current among the Persians and implied in much Greek thinking. It came from the corrupted Ancient Church and was also revived by the gnostical sects and by various mystics, like Bohme. It has often led to the idea of two co-eternal powers, one, the principle of Good and light and spirit, the other, the principle of Evil and darkness and matter both regarded as necessary elements in creation. Sometimes, one god is described as the creator of matter, another god as a redeemer. Always, it has tended to make the redemption of man equivalent to a release of the spirit or the mind from the bonds of matter, as if nothing else no other regeneration was necessary. Some of the Hindoos expressed the same idea as Mrs. Eddy, however, that matter and the ills it harbors are nothing but Mara, illusion!

The strained effort to realize this denial and seek to lift ones thought above all things of the external world as if they did not exist, is bound to fail if a man is to do his worldly work. But the fluent, flattering sentences of Science and Health with its musing of repeated phrase and idea have a persuasive effect on the unwary reader, especially if he or she is of a neurotic or self-centered temperament, pretensions of loving-kindness but not given to analytic thought. There is a promise of escape from unpleasant realities such as illness. Yet Mrs. Eddy indeed speaks like ordinary people as if the world existed. She appeals to the evidence of our non-existent senses for proof of her success in restoring the non-existent material body to perfect health. Although, if the body is non-existent, what matters it what its state of health is?

Matter, to Mrs. Eddy, is not the cause of evil, but is evil. It is mortal error. The idea persists that evil is only a relative absence of good that it is not a perversion but a lessening of good, so far as man becomes a slave to the illusion that matter exist. How mortal mind with its error, evil, disease, and death arose in the universe, is never explained. Even an error must be somebodys error. Yet it was not the error of God; nor of Man as Mind, for man cannot sin or fall or be deceived.

There is no birth nor any death. Yet into this unsubstantial and imaginary world of matter there persists in coming into apparent existence children of human parents. Marriage is regarded as a moral and social concession difficult to do away with. But it can be dissolved by mutual consent (@SH 98, p. 297). The material birth of an infant is not the appearing of the immortal man but of a new individualized mortal mind, thus a new illusion. The mothers thoughts form the embryo of another mortal mind and unconsciously mold its (@SH 98, p. 132). But a Christian Science obstetrician can convert the event of birth into that of a new Divine idea (@SH 98, p. 459).

At best, mortal existence is error. Why the Lord raised the dead, bringing them back into such mortal error, might seem hard to explain. But Science and Health claims that death is not the stepping-stone to immortality and bliss (@SH 98 p. 99, 344). Death can never hasten the attainment of immortal,

incorporeal happiness, since mortal mind creates its own physical conditions (SH p. 76, 77).

Christian Science not only rejects the resurrection of the body at the last day, but probably with Swedenborg in mind especially denies that spirit is confined in a finite, material body from which it is freed by death, and that, when so freed, spirit retains the sensations belonging to that body (SH p. 73).

The theory that man must be born on earth to be individualized, Mrs. Eddy says, would reduce God to dependency on matter (SH p. 335). The soul pre-exists birth as an infinite idea of God. The universe of Spirit is peopled with spiritual beings which must not be called spirits or regarded as persons; yet this must not suggest man's absorption into Deity and the loss of his identity. Mortals can rise from depravity to morality and thence to a spiritual state where mortal mind disappears. There is then conferred upon man an enlarged individuality, a wider sphere of thought and action, a more expansive love, a higher and more permanent peace (SH pp. 265, 259, 115). This is about all we can learn from the book about the afterlife. It may satisfy the simple; but it is difficult to reconcile with other statements that man is not finite, but infinite, etc.

The theory that the natural body is merely an error of belief is directly opposed by the apostle John in the following words: Many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist (2 John 7, 1 John 4:1-3). Mrs. Eddy treats of His coming as an appearance: the virgin mother, she says, conceived this idea of God and gave to her ideal the name of Jesus.... The infant Jesus was the offspring of Mary's self-conscious communion with God (@SH 98, p. 334f). But a child becomes a separate individualized thought another mortal mind a subjective concept felt as flesh and bones. Jesus Christ manifested the image of God or the reflection of Mind; which is not God, but Man. He was Divine only in the same sense as other men are. His power of healing was a prototype of Christian Science, but the latter finds it unnecessary to use touch in healing, as did Jesus (@SH 98, p. 74). That Jesus was crucified was only an illusion in the minds of the Jews. The spiritual Christ never suffered (98, pp. 343, 469). The Lord's miracles were illusions; yet He came to destroy illusions, not to create them.

Even as Christ raised the dead, so Christian Science has for its goal to abolish death.

Why life in this world should be prolonged, is not made clear. For man learns nothing through the senses. The Mind is not educated by the mortal span, for it was from eternity perfect and carries nothing of its experience with it. Earthly life and would not this include the Lord's life is simply an error no one knows whose!

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These extravagant tenets have been cited as a contrast to the revealed doctrines of the New Church. For in the Writings we learn that the Lord, from His love, created both the spiritual world and the natural world in His order, and that they are both good for their respective uses.

The Lord cannot create others outside of Himself as objects of His love, if these possessed anything of infinity or of Divine substance or essence. To love others who are of His own essence if this were possible, which it is not would be to love Himself, a supreme instance of self-love! (@DLW 49). It is taught us that the Divine love cannot create any one immediately from itself, for (one so created) would be love in its essence, which love is the Lord Himself; but it can create out of substances and

matters so formed as to be capable of receiving the Lords love, like the earth receives the heat of the sun (@DLW 5).

Man is not Divine Mind, nor is the soul infinite or a reflection of God. The esse of man is to receive life (@AC 3938[2]). In a certain sense, human souls can be said to pre-exist the body; but they are not emanations or radiations or parts of the proceeding Divine. They are, instead, created forms, receptacles of life. If they were the thoughts of God, emanations like the rays from the sun, they would be continuous with God and thus Divine. And so man, living God, would love himself; and God, in loving man, would only love Himself.

The case is not so. Mans life is only a reception of the Lords life, and this is what makes man free, responsive, and responsible, instead of being a mere echo or reflection. Unless this be recognized that mans very being is nothing but reception one would inevitably confuse the Divine with the human, and ascribe to man what belongs to God.

It is therefore ordained that mans spirit, which is the real man, is to be created of spiritual substances and formed in a natural environment. If born or created into the spiritual world immediately, he could not become a permanent finite individual, for this is possible only through a physical body which is in sensory contact with the constants of ultimate creation the fixed world of time and space (DWis 8:6, xii. 5:3). It is in order that there may be procreations and formations of the spiritual, that the world of matter is created with its dead sun, its atmospheres, and, lastly, the terraqueous globe, so that there might be there the ultimate matters in which all the spiritual may case and in which creation may subsist: to the end, also, that the work of creation should there continually endure and be perennial... (@AE 1207[e]).

Human consciousness can begin only in the realm of time. Mans ruling love can be formed only where space compels the spirit to associate with all manner of states not of its own choosing, and by virtue of this become free to choose its permanent quality. Therefore the Lord created two worlds one for the sake of choice, and another in which the fruit of that choice may be reaped.

And for the same reason, He permits evil. Evil is a very actual thing. As an opposite of good it is indeed not anything that is, not anything of good (@DP 11). Yet it is not nothing. It has an origin in man as a free being. It is not a creation, but a state a state of disorder. Evil and falsity are not imaginary, but states of the minds substance. And they have power through fantasies even through the fantasy that they do not exist. For evils cannot be shunned merely by denying that they exist.

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That Mrs. Eddy had read something of Swedenborg appears from her attempts to explain Scripture in imitation of the Arcana. She claims to have found a spiritual sense within Genesis and the Apocalypse. Her effort which reveals both ignorance and inconsistency is to show that the seven days of creation tell of the emanation of Divine ideas from God. But the second chapter of Genesis, which unfortunately states that man was created dust of the ground, does not agree with the first and must therefore, she concludes, describe the history of human error, the rise of mortal mind (SH p. 521). God is there named Jehovah, which she claims was only a tribal deity, and it is Jehovah that forms Adam by infusing spirit into matter which Mrs. Eddy will not allow possible. To prove the point she divides the Hebrew name

Adam into two English syllables, a and dam; which, she declares, means obstruction or error (SH p. 338).

But these and other equally atrocious liberties with the Bible will not disturb those who are attracted to Science and Health. The use of the word Science is misleading. What the author means is what the ancients called Gnosis an inner knowledge which is intuitive and spurns all reasoning. Some sectarians call it the inner light. It is easy to mistake our perceptive glimpses and alluring speculations for such Divine knowledge springing from the soul. Mrs. Eddy exclaims, No human pen nor tongue taught me the Science contained in the book... (SH p. 110).(\*18)

\*18 Mrs. Eddy is keen to take credit (and profit) as the sole discoverer of her system, and warns that if any new schoollike New Thought, or Divine Science claims to be Christian Science, it is plagiarism and theft (SH. p. 112).

The book appeals mainly to those seeking bodily health and an escape from undesirable situations. But there are other systems of Idealism which attract more serious thinkers. Idealists draw no strict lines between God and the human soul, because they know that God is infinite, and thus the All. Man, therefore, they conclude, is only an idea of being, perhaps an idea in Gods mind!

The Writings therefore assure us that it is because the Infinite is the all that we can exist in reality. Man is something, we read, is a finite substance, because he was created by an infinite God who is Substance itself.... Every created thing, and especially man and the love and wisdom in him, are something and not merely an idea of being. Unless God were the All, man would not be anything; consequently (he would be) either a non entity or merely an idea of being, according to those visionaries who are called Idealists (@DP 46).

## XII - DIFFERENCES WITHIN THE CHURCH

Up to this point our subject has been the relation of several falsities which have tended to destroy the churches of the past, to the One True Faith. We now turn our attention to the fact that even within the New Church many differences of doctrine and attitude have arisen.

Even as there can be only one true faith, so the New Church is in itself one and indivisible. Yet even heaven consists of innumerable societies with a great variety of states and differences of love and faith. And among the receivers of the Writings there are differences of doctrinal understanding, due to different backgrounds, different genius or emotional temperament, different degrees of instruction, different conceptions of the New Church, its use and purpose, and of the duty of the New Church man. The main differences have concerned the nature, inspiration, and function of the Writings and the mode by which they are to be understood.

From the beginning there have been two general attitudes within the organized New Church. One is to accept the Writings as the Divine revelation in which and by which the Lord has made His second advent and from which the Lord speaks with Divine authority in plain language, for the establishment of a New Church distinct from the old.

The second attitude is to regard the Writings and the New Church as a herald of a new age in which the Lord is making His second advent by a secret influx from the new heaven into the minds of the people of various religions and sects, so that they become more and more affected by the truths of the Heavenly Doctrine even without having heard of the Writings of Swedenborg. Thus it is hoped that aided by a judicious New Church propaganda and by the fraternization of the New Church with the old the old denominations will be permeated by the spirit and thought of the new age and thus draw breath again, gradually undergoing a regeneration or spiritual evolution until they become New Church in all but name. In line with such a view, the Writings are regarded as inspired, indeed, but in a vague and elastic sense in which their authority is only that of an enlightened commentary on the Bible. Swedenborg's theology is thus considered as reasonable and broad, contributing a general pattern for the advanced religious thought of the future.

These two attitudes have grown up side by side in the organized New Church bodies since their inception, and the second attitude has of course undermined the constructive work inspired by the first. The futility of this conflict became so obvious that the Academy of the New Church and those supporting its cause were unable to carry on their work of distinctive New Church education, study, and pastoral and progress for the Church, and that it will serve to protect the Church against the intrusion of falsities. For if falsity enters the Church, it would fall under immediate scrutiny and eventually be displaced by doctrine drawn fresh from the Writings. The importance of this is clear from the teaching that doctrine does not inaugurate a church, but soundness and purity of doctrine (@TCR 845).

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The word heresy has an uncharitable sound. The Writings which alone can give a Divine verdict, indeed condemn as detestable heresies a number of falsities which are responsible for the destruction

of the life and faith of religion in the former churches. But they also note that if mutual charity ruled men would not even call schism schism or heresy heresy, but a doctrine matter in accordance with each mans opinion; and thus they would leave to each persons conscience, provided such a doctrinal did not deny first principles, such as the Lord, eternal life, and the Word; and provided it was not contrary to the Divine order, that is, to the Commandments of the decalogue; and provided he does not disturb the Church (@AC 1834, 6047, 5432e; @HD 318).

Doctrinal errors are not resisted or corrected by mutual recriminations, but emotional remonstrances, or by denying that our opponent has a love of truth, or questioning his motives or his spiritual state or his illustration. Concerning the clergy, we are taught that the Holy Spirit uses within the organizations of the older bodies of the New Church. The General Church was by degrees organized as a separate body; and among the principles on which it was founded was the clear acknowledgment that the Lord has made His second coming in the Writings and that in them is contained the very essential Word which is the Lord, wherefore the Church acknowledges no other Authority, and no other Law.

The announcement of this principle was not the creation of a sacrosanct dogma. It is self-effacing. It does not introduce anything new or alien into the Writings. It leaves the Writings to speak for themselves and to interpret themselves. It means that we accept their own testimony about themselves. It means that we do not put any final trust in any council, decree, or man-made statement of doctrine, or claim Divinity or sanctity for it; but lodge all Divine authority in what we can see that the Writings plainly teach.

Of course, we may at any juncture see very little of the truths which the Writings provide infinite abundance. And we may also recognize certain things as true although we have not seen them as plainly taught in the Writings. But knowing that our minds are fallible, we do not attach any Divine authority to concepts unless we see them plainly taught in the revealed Doctrine. For although many things held by others or discovered by our own rational conclusions may appear as credible, we regard the Writings as the only source of Divine doctrine and spiritual enlightenment.

It is our belief that this principle assures both freedom effects with them especially, illustration, perception, disposition, and instruction. Illustration is from the Lord. We cannot question its presence in other men, knowing nothing of their internal states. Perception, however, is with a man according to the state of his mind formed by doctrinals; and of these we can entertain opinions. For perception is clarified by true doctrinals, but confused and obscure when his doctrinals are false; although from confirmations there may be induced a light of infatuation which makes the false seem clear. As to Disposition, this depends on a mans affections and an angry zeal testifies of an evil love being active while a good love, which is inwardly merciful, takes the form either of mildness or of a thundering and ardent zeal. We may therefore make moral judgments, but always with the reservation that we may be wrong; since outward behavior is easily misunderstood (@TCR 155).

Charity, first of all, regards the freedom of another. Charity does not desire to condemn, but sees the good as well as the evil, the true as well as the false, in others. It is not deliberately blind, however, and will resist falsities if they threaten to injure, rend, or disturb the church and nullify its uses.

The Writings say that wherever there is any Church there arise heresies, because when people are thinking about one article of faith they make it the principal one; for mans thought is of such a nature

that when it is fixed upon any one thing it sets it above all other things, especially when phantasy claims it as ones own invention... (@AC 362). Heresies themselves, innocently accepted, do not condemn men, but an evil life. Yet what is hurtful is to confirm the falsity in the heresy from the Word (@DSS 91, 92).

The protection against heresy is therefore to realize that the one true faith is composed of a multitude of truths which must all contribute to the perfection of ones understanding. A truth of doctrine which appears as of paramount importance to us in one state, especially if we as it were discovered it in the Writings for ourselves, may not with equal urgency apply to others, nor may it be so new to others. There is always a fascination about something that seems to us a new conceptan innovation. Indeed the danger is that is our enthusiasm we neglect to see its relation to other equally important truths. For if we do this we become blinded to phases of doctrine which should modify and clarify our understanding. And the end may be that we then deny some truth merely because it does not fit into our limited vision which is fixed upon our own discovery. On all heresies the appearance can be induced by confirmations that they are from truths (@AE 780[3]).

This is indeed one reason why it is useful to read in the Writings regularly and consecutively with a view not to confirm preconceptions but to learn whatever is presented in the text, for thus the Lord can lead us to form a genuine conscience of spiritual truth.

Differences of doctrinal understanding are inevitable because many men means many minds. Yet if there be charity and unity as to essentials, there is maintained an agreement as to the generals of doctri doctrines generally seen as taught in the Writings and thus generally preached in the Church. Such teaching forms what is often called, in the Writings, the doctrine of the Church. This becomes traditional in a Church, and it may be true or false. It becomes true so far as it continually leads back to the Writings as to its sole source and authority. It becomes false so far as it neglects, ignores, or denies some of the teachings of the Writings or nullifies their context meaning. It is of exceeding great importance that the doctrine of the church be sound. For this doctrine is what largely forms the faith of the simple and of the next generation before they have the opportunity, desire, or ability to go to the Writings for themselves and receive from the Lords own mouth the truths from which they make up their individual doctrine of love and charity.

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About twenty years ago, a divergent view was developed by some laymen and priests in the General Church, as to the nature of the Writings and as to certain fundamental theological doctrines. It led to so wide differences as to result in a new body of the Church with a new church government and organization. Because it originated in Holland, its views have been known among us as the Dutch Position or the Hague Position. The proponents of this view are critical of the General Church for not adopting their theses or premises, and suggest that this is due to a decline in state, attributing our disagreement to a lack of a calm and open minded consideration of their claims.

As a matter of fact, much of our time was spent in exhaustive studies of the doctrines involved. The difficulty faced by the students of the General Church was of quite another nature. The Hague Position was publicized at great length, and was claimed to be as revolutionizing as was in its timethe Copernican theory. Yet when its startling statements were challenged, the answers were usually

ambiguous, and to the effect that the printed statements did not mean what it was thought to have meant, yet could not be retracted. New definitions were put forward: for instance, the Heavenly Doctrine did not mean the Writings in themselves considered, but meant the Writings as understood in the Church. The term the Third Testament was adopted for the Writings, to emphasize the thesis that the Writings contain a literal and an internal sense just the same as the Old and the New Testaments, and that their internal sense is to be opened with the assistance of the science of correspondences which apply to the Writings without any difference or reserve.(\*19)

\*19 D. H. L, fasc. I, pp. 80, 81, 27.

Nothing is more futile than to attribute to people views which they later dispute having held. We must also allow others the right to change their opinions. But it is at times needful to restate our own doctrinal positions in contrast to what we do not believe to be true, giving our own summary or interpretation to teachings which we believe to have been contorted or taken out of connection. This is what we now propose to do in the case of a few disputed topics.

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(1). The first of our doctrinal points is of theological and abstract nature, yet is fundamental in our thinking.

The infinite Esse or Being of God cannot communicate itself to any one except through the Divine Existere or the Divine Manifesting (@AC 6880). The Divine Existere is also infinite. It is the Divine truth which manifests Divine Good (@AC 10158). This Divine truth proceeds into creation, thus into heaven and human minds, and what is living in man or angel is from the proceeding Divine which is conjoined with man by contiguity (@DP 57[e]). The Lords presence with man is thus an adjunction, through which life appears as mans own (@AR 55[e]). The infinite Divine Existere touches man, and is indeed present in the finite; and this Infinite present in the finite, is what makes man, a finite being, capable of adjoining himself to the Infinite although of himself he is not capable of the Infinite (@DP 53[3], 54).

The human mind is finite. It has finite ideas and is incapable of seeing the infinity of God as it is in itself, but it can acknowledge Him from things visible in the world and perceptible in the Word. And this is enough (@TCR 28). It is vain to wish to know the infinity of God from within (@TCR 28).

Yet, although the finite is not capable of the Infinite, finite things can receive the infinite, or be formed into receptacles of the Infinite (@TCR 33). How this is possible is illustrated by light and heat from the sun which affect material substances, yet are not material (@AE 1131[4]). The infinite is contiguous to the finite, and the finite is not continuous with the Divine, for what is continuous from God is God or is the Divine proceeding which is infinite. Man is in no wise part of the Divine proceeding (@DLW 55, 56).

Mans esse, or mans being, is nothing else than a receiving of the Divine Existere, which proceeds from the Lord (@AC 3938). Man does not receive the Divine Esse which is solely in the Lord but the Divine Existere, which is the Lord standing forth. Reception of life is therefore predicated, with man, of the Divine Existere. The Lords Esse can be communicated to no one, but solely to the Lords Human, which was made Divine Esse or Jehovah by glorification. Since the glorification, we cannot speak of the Divine Existere except as something that proceeds from Him and causes man, spirits, and angels to



exist, or what is the same, to live (@AC 3938). But note that mans esse is not infinite, nor must it be comprised with the Divine Existere. Men have, in their esse, nothing of God that is God (@DLW 55). Man is a recipient by contiguity. Mans esse is to receive. Yet esse and existere ought to be predicated of created and finite things also. Obviously, mans being and existence are finite and limited, and are sustained by the Divine (@DLW 53).

Man is therefore a state of reception. When he receives the infinite truth which is the Divine Existere, it does not mean that he holds or contains the infinite or that he becomes infinite or Divine, but that the infinite touches him or affects him, changing his finite state into a state of Divine order, the order of creation.

Truth is itself infinite. But when from a love of truth, we read in the Sacred Scripture and the Writings, where this infinite truth is contained and expressed in the form of appearances of truth accommodated to our natural and rational mind, this infinite truth acts upon our minds and impresses it with a state which corresponds to the Divine order and is felt by us as an understanding and perception of truth. This state, produced through the appearances of truth, is not a transfer of anything Divine or infinite to man, but a correspondence created in the finite receptacle by which it invites an influx of the Divine Existere.

It is this state of the finite vessel which is man: indeed, the regenerate man, who adopts the Divine order of faith and charity as his own, and so far forsakes his former proprium which was corrupted with evil and unable to be moved by the truth. The truths perceived from the Word go to compose a genuine understanding a genuine state of faith in which the Lord can operate to instil His gifts of charity and love.

The states of understanding with the men of the Church form what is called the doctrine of the Church. In a true Church, composed of regenerate men, we may conceive this doctrine to be genuine consisting of principles drawn out of the word by men in illustration and perception. The Word itself is of course the infinite Divine Doctrine. Can it be said that the genuine understanding of the Church, or the doctrine of the Church at any given time, is the Existere of the Divine Doctrine, and thus also Divine, although admittedly finite and limited? Can it be said that the Writings are the Esse of the Divine Doctrine, and that the doctrine of the Church is its Existere?(\*20)

\*20 Article by the Rev. Theodore Pitcairn, published by mimeograph, January, 1951, page 3.

On the face of it, this may seem a merely theological and academic question of terminology. But if we once admit that the mans understanding and reception of genuine truth is Divine, or is the Existere of the Divine esse, we would have to endow with sanctity and relative infallibility (\*21) and human statement of doctrine which we accept as true and accept it on the same basis as we accept Divine revelation.

\*21 De Hemelsche Leer, fasc. J. J. p. 79.

The General Church from its inception, has universally approved those statements of Bishop W. F. Pendleton which are called The Principles of the Academy. For we have always felt that they were in harmony with the Writings, and expressive of genuine truths revealed in the Writings.

But it has been urged if the doctrine of the church be Divine, then it must follow that a purely Divine origin, a Divine essence and Divine authority must be ascribed to the Principles of the Academy as far as in the future they will prove imperishable. (\*22)

\*22 De Hemelsche Leer, fasc. I, p. 9.

That this cannot be said of any human production, no matter how regenerate the man who composed it, would seem to follow, not only from common perception, but also from the fact that there is in man's essence nothing that is Divine or continuous with God, and that his existence or what comes forth from his essence, can therefore certainly not be Divine.

But it should be noted, for clarity's sake, that the Divine Essence is the Divine of love and the Divine Existence is the Word, the infinite Divine truth. This Word is said to be received by man. Yet it is not made finite by reception, but remains infinite. All good and truth are indeed Divine in origin and in themselves infinite. There is no good itself or truth itself in man. But there are states of reception, which are called love and wisdom, and into these good and truth inflow from the Lord. The influx is Divine, but the states are human. The states are what constitute man, and reception is man's very being.

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The teaching of the Writings is that man's faculty to receive is from the very presence of the Lord in him, that the faculties of rationality and liberty, and the power or ability to understand and will and are in themselves Divine. They are in man, yet are not a part of man. They are a perpetual loan, to all men, good or evil (@DP 88). What is man is his use of these faculties. For he may use them for good or evil; this power to reciprocate the Lord's love is from the Lord but the use of the power is his, his reciprocal, his freedom, and the sole source of his human responsibility (@DLW 116; @DP 219[4]).

So far as one lays claim that the love and wisdom that come from the Lord by influx are in him as his own, he denies that he lives from the Lord and believes that he lives from himself and therefore has a Divine essence (@DLW 116). But on the other hand the moment we ascribe to the Lord the use of our reciprocal, our free use of the Divinely given faculties, and think that not only the influx, but also the reception, is Divine, then we make God responsible for our use of these faculties and must hold Him accountable for evil as well as for our choice of good! Man's essence which is reception perhaps, and with it the purpose of all creation!

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The Writings teach several things about the internal sense of the Word which may seem at first glance contradictory, and may thus become the occasion for erroneous ideas.

Thus it is taught that the internal sense is now revealed in the Writings and that the explanations given in various expository works is the internal sense, with which the doctrines of the Writings make a one. It is also said that to those who approach the Word from an affection of truth, certain genuine truths of the internal sense stand forth nakedly in some passages of the Sacred Scripture; as the hands and feet and face of a man appear nakedly although the rest of the man be clothed. The clothing of the Scriptural Word is described as consisting of sensual and natural correspondences. When these are

remove, as is done in the Arcana Coelestia, the internal sense appears to men nakedly, or in the form of open teachings, or as doctrines, which are Divine truths couched in rational appearances: for man and even angels are unable to receive infinite truths devoid of finite accommodations such as terms and rational ideas.

Thus the internal sense, in these teachings, means the spiritual natural truths from which doctrine is properly drawn. Doctrine is to be drawn from the open passages or plain teachings of the literal sense of the Word. And in the Writings these plain teachings are gathered up for our use, together with other spiritual-natural truths which became apparent when the Lord inspired Swedenborg to expose the internal sense by explaining the meaning of the correspondences which had concealed them (Cp. @AE 1061).

It is therefore said, sometimes, that doctrine should be drawn for the church from the Word in the sense of its letter; and sometimes, that the doctrine of the New Church is from the spiritual sense of the Word and is the same with the doctrine that is in heaven (@HD 7). Both these expressions describe precisely the same thing: the naked truths which project from the internal sense into the literal sense of Scripture and which are displayed in fulness in the Writings and which are to be the source of doctrine.

But there are also a set of teachings which describe the internal sense as something that is especially for the angels (@AC 2551, 2509, 3085, 3605, 4234, 5307, 5648, 8971, 9166, 9430), while the natural or literal sense is for man (@AC 8443). In such passages it is the spiritual sense as it is perceived in heaven that is referred to. For angels are devoid of natural ideas, and they perceive the Word in terms of spiritual ideas such as are entirely ineffable and imperceptible to men. Men can perceive the internal sense as it is revealed in the Writings in rational terms, but even Swedenborg could not retain or express angelic ideas except in a general and imperfect form, conveyed for our rational comprehension by words of natural language (De Verbo 6). The celestial sense and the spiritual sense of the Word are revealed in the Writings as to their subject matter and doctrinal series and content: and this is the same with the doctrine of the Word in the heavens. And when a man thinks from the Writings his thought is such that it can be associated with the thoughts of angels. But it is not the same in quality or in degree. The ideas of his mind remain in the plane of his conscious rational, which, though in a manner abstracted, is yet tied up with natural ideas.

Thus the internal sense is principally for angels; yet it can be comprehended in some measure by men (@AC 9094, cp 8443). The interior sense of the Word, as they are in themselves, are accommodated to the heavens. For men to comprehend, there must be a further accommodation to the natural rational, which is now provided in the Writings.

But the mind of a man has in it all the degrees of the heavens. While on earth he is unconscious of his spiritual mind and his celestial mind, unaware of what the Lord may be operating in them if man suffers himself to be regenerating. Man, while on earth, does not know whether his interior degrees are opened (@DLW 252). The Writings reveal that while the regenerating man is unaware, the Lord may impress upon the interiors of his will and understanding the spiritual ideas and affections which are contained in the internal sense of the Word. While man is thinking consciously in his natural mind, he is also unknowingly thinking in his spirit, and these spiritual thoughts are stored up in his interior memory for his use after death when he becomes an angel. Thus he can be in the angelic sense of the

Word and in enlightenment thence. But this enlightenment is according to the knowledges that he has (@AC 10400[e]; @HD 259[e], refs.).

These are well known doctrines. But we submit that they contain no contradictions if studied in conjunction. And it is certain that all the Divine revelations given on earththe Old Testament, the New Testament, and the Writingscontain the interior degrees of truth such as they exist in the heavens. But these cannot be expounded by any rules of exegesis. In one sense, therefore, the rational doctrines of the Writings contain within them the celestial and spiritual Words of the heavens. In another sense they are the internal sense of former revelations, and gather up and present as organized doctrine the spiritual-natural truths which these contained beneath a covering of correspondences and sensual symbols and representations.

There is no internal sense to be found in the Writings by translating their ultimate statements, as if they were written in correspondences, into a new series of ideas. We have no authority to engage in such undertakings, which usually lead to absurdities or redundancy. But there are distinct directions given how the Writings can become understood in ever clearer light and how we can approach nearer to the way in which the angels think of the subjects revealed in the Writings.

One direction is found in the Divine Love and Wisdom (n. 51): Do not, I entreat you, confuse your ideas with time and space, for so far as time and space enter into your ideas when you read what follows, you will not understand it.... This does not mean that one should blank the mind, but to elevate the mind from considerations of person and place and time, from the appearances of sense, and especially from the ambitions of the selfish will. To think spiritually is to think of things as they are in themselves, to see truths from the light of truth and to perceive goods from the love of good; also to see the qualities of things and to perceive affections for them abstractly from matter (@HD 39). Such spiritual thought should flow into ones natural thought and be perceived there.

This elevation of the understanding and consequent enlightenment is effected by continuity and while indeed there may be within an opening of discretely higher degrees, the man is not able to see more than that his sight of truth is becoming clearer (@DLW 256, 258).

The search for an internal sense in the Writings is therefore not achieved by the use of the science of correspondences such as is needed to unlock the Scripture. Yet Swedenborg, in his early Diary, was very conscious of the crudity of the human words by which he sought to express the truths he was granted to record. He consoles himself however with the thought that the prophets used even cruder, more vulgar, words, but that these were but vessels of interior truths (@SD 2185, 2270). It is the case with all men, inspired or not, that the things they writeas to each letteris formed by aid of spirits and angels whose abundant fields of ideas are the causes which inflow into mans every thought and action. This is so with you and with me. It is an illustration of how the letter of the Word is inspired and was therefore given Swedenborg to observe. But it is not a proof that the Writings are a sealed letter of the Word such as the Sacred Scriptures.

# XIII - THE SIGHT OF TRUTH

It is provided by the Lord that man should be able to see truth. This is for the sake of his salvation, for without truth no man can be saved or introduced into heaven. Truth in its origin and essence is Divine, nay, it is the Lord Himself, in His divine Existence or Manifestation. To reveal His Essence, the Lord even came on earth, so that man may not worship God as visible. He has made Himself visible, not indeed before our physical senses as to the apostles but to our spiritual senses, or our mind. It is so that we can now see Him, as He presents Himself in the inspired Word of Law, Gospel, and Doctrine.

But how does man see the Lord in His Word? The teaching (at first glance) may seem contradictory. For it is stated that the Lord is present with man and enlightens him and teaches him the truths of the Church, in the sense of the letter of the Word and nowhere else (@DSS 53). But it is also said, Elsewhere than in the Word the Lord does not reveal Himself, nor does He reveal Himself there except through the internal sense (@AE 36). This is what is meant by His coming in the clouds of heaven with great glory, when every eye shall see Him, even they who pierced Him (Matthew 25; Apoc. 1).

The Lord, as Divine truth, is seen in the Word. But by whom? The Word of Scripture and Doctrine is broadcast over the world. All who are in truths from good will indeed eventually acknowledge the Lord. But those also will see Him who are in falsities from evil. Yet the falsities of the consummated church will oppose (@AE 36-39).

There are indeed different kinds of seeing. Those who have a blind faith can see with their memory but not with their understanding; and the memory is not the man, while the understanding is (@AE 1100[e]). The memory can be taught like a parrot to speak and recollect either truths or falsities, and to see whatever is placed before it, even the image of the Lord and the knowledges of the Word. Even man's understanding is only half the man for the real man is the will when conjoined with the understanding. What man's understanding sees, may not be of man's will. The understanding may entertain and ponder many things, examining it in a cold, wintry light without accepting it as final truth or taking it to heart.

It is of the Lord's mercy that this should be so. It is necessary for the man of the spiritual church, the man of an evil race, to detach his understanding from the brooding passions of his will, from ideas of self-interest and material gain, from the discomforts of the body and the lure of repute and consider truths and falsities in the calmer light of reason and if he will in the light of Divine revelation. Unless this were possible, the word of God would be of no use to men.

This faculty of rationality is the saving grace which the Lord bestows on every man. It enables the Lord to operate His virtues of reformation and regeneration in man, if man believes in Him and despises himself to prepare an abode for the Lord; which is done by means of Divine truth, and with Christians by means of the Word: for this is the only medium through which man approaches to the Lord and into which the Lord enters (@TCR 142).

The Lord is seen only by faith. Real faith is more than an intellectual admission, or even reflection. It is the sight not only of the understanding but of the will through the understanding. Therefore the Arcana says that faith is the eye of love (@AC 3863). We know that this is true seeing not the cold

recognition of something, but a revelation. Only the eye of love can see the true qualities of a friend. Hatred blinds, closes the eye. Love opens ones eyes, finds in another depths of character hitherto unsuspected or not appreciated. Love enlightens.

Now the reading of the Word must be for the sake of seeing the Lord. We do not mean the seeing of the Lord only as a person; although he so appears especially in the pages of the Gospels. For every truth and the truths of the Word are infinite is a mirror of the Lord, adding to the image of Him that we have in our mind (@AR 938; Inv. 41, 42). The Nunc Licet inscription seen by Swedenborg over a temple in heaven was explained by an angel to mean: Enter hereafter into the mysteries of the Word, which has been hitherto closed up: for its truths, one and all, are so many mirrors of the Lord (@TCR 508). Every truth of revelation, in the Scriptures or the Writings, reveals the Mind of God in ever clearer fashion; whether it treats of creation, redemption, heaven or hell, or of mans soul, or the life of charity, or of influx, or of the Lord Himself. To see truth is to see God. And the pure in heart shall see God.

This is perhaps too obvious to dwell on. The Word can be read by critics or skeptics, and they may indeed read of the Lords coming and of His life on earth, without seeing God, without seeing anything except the historical truth about a man and perhaps even doubting that. Men may study the Writings, and see nothing of Divine truth, but only the philosophy and theological reasonings of a man; whether they approve and admire, or whether they reject, their reading yields no sight of God, no vision of the Divine Human, unless their heart is engaged and gives them the penetration to see the purpose of this new revelation and unless they themselves are willing to live the truths they recognize therein.

Even those who are inwardly in evil can have a rational perception of the truths taught in Divine revelation. They can have a certain conviction, or self-persuasion, about the doctrinals which they accept, can preach and convert, can reason and even appear learned in doctrine. Their understanding can be elevated into spiritual light, so as to perceive heavenly arcana. Yet this state is transitory. It is sustained by a merely natural love of knowing, and thus by a mans ambition and by a desire for honor or respect from others. And when his evil loves can no longer be kept dormant, his understanding falls down from its height and his perception of truth is dispersed (@DLW 256, 244; @AR 940). That an evil man can see truths even to the point of acknowledgment, is explained by the law that the Lord inflows with truths, or with heavenly light, into every man whatever his quality, through the soul, or through his interior degrees even if they are not opened; but not with goods or with spiritual heat, except so far as one shuns evils as sins and looks to the Lord (@DLW 242; @AC 1707, 1725).

The evil man has nothing within him that leads him to the truth or that holds him in it. He is dependent on the spheres of others and on external pressures and influences, and on his own desire to appear rational. Every adult has a rational mind, but he is not always compelled to use it. If his urge for evil delights is greater than his fear of appearing irrational, he will contort the truth or reject it for falsities. If he then reads the Word in such a state, he will be blind to any real truth therein and see and accept only such truths as will not interfere with his secret delights of evil; and he will explain the rest away. This the Writings call having faith from self, or from proprium (@AC 3863, 9039, 8868-8869).

Man can acquire the knowledge about the Lord from a merely natural affection, an affection of knowing, a pride in learning. Something of this clings to every human love as a surface (@DLW 413). The quality of a mans love of truth is gradually purified as he shuns evils as sins, and it is purified by truths. Man can be admitted into the wisdom of spiritual things, and also into a natural love of them,

and yet not be reformed. But only if he receives from the Lord a spiritual love can be admitted interiorly into the truths of faith and the goods of charity; for if his love contains what is spiritual the Lord can keep man in them to the end of his life so that he does not profane (@DP 221-222).

It is therefore provided that mans love should serve as a guard lest he profane the things of religion. This was signified by the cherubim that stood on guard at the entrance of the garden of Eden and also above the ark in the tabernacle of Israel. Man may from various loves see truths sensually, naturally, and even rationally. But to see truth spiritually, his love must be spiritual. The elevation of his understanding into heavenly light results only in an external seeing of interior truths, unless his will, or love, is at the same time elevated into spiritual heat, or into the good of charity, that is, into a spiritual love of the neighbor from a love to the Lord. This external seeing is a seeing of truth as an object outside oneself, without any admission of the truth into ones will. Even evil spirits can, under certain circumstances, be lifted up into heaven and be able to see all the externals of heaven and learn angelic arcana of wisdom, and be momentarily convinced of their truth. Yet these things they reject and banish into oblivion when they return to their own loves.

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Thus there are as many ways of seeing truth as there are loves. And the love of truth is ever such as is a mans good of life. Those who have no affection of truth for truths own sake or for the sake of the good of life, are not at all enlightened when they read the word, but are only confirmed in doctrinals no matter of what kind whether false as heresies are, or entirely contrary to truths.... For they seek fame, not faith, earthly not heavenly riches; and this search leads eventually to the denial of all things (@AC 7012). But those who are in good and thence in an affection of truth have revelation when they read the Word. They are taught from the Word. The angels who are with the man then perceive the Word according to the internal sense and this is communicated to the man... (@AC 8694).

The cited teaching goes on to specify what is thus communicated: The quality of the revelation possessed by those who are in good and thence in the affection of truth, cannot be described: it is not manifest, neither is it completely hidden; but it is a certain consent and approval from within that the things is true or disapproval if it is not true. When there is approval, the mind is restful and serene, and in that state there is the acknowledgment which is of faith....

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The state of those who in this manner really are taught from the Word is called illustration or enlightenment, for such receive spiritual light in which there is the warmth of charity and love. This causes them to recognize genuine truth and discriminate between real truths and apparent truths, as well as between truths and falsities. But note. Mans understanding when thus enlightened does not judge about real truths in themselves (in se) (@AC 7233). For of course, truths in themselves are Divine and beyond the scope of human judgment. If the regenerate understanding could judge about Divine truth, it would itself be Divine. But that is not so.

Nor can the angels communicate to mans conscious mind the spiritual sense such as the angels themselves perceive it; but they can only insinuate a certain consent to and approval of the genuine truths which man can see openly taught in the Word.

Therefore it is shown in this connection that the internal sense means two distinct but related things. First, it means the sense that lies concealed in the external sense, and which is seen by the angels who are in spiritual ideas, but not by men. Secondly, it means that sense which results from a number of passages of the sense of the letter rightly collated, and which is discerned by those who are enlightened by the Lord as to their intellectual (@AC 7233).

It is also explained that the Word in its literal sense contains a thick veiling of correspondences as in the Old and New Testaments; and these properly are what constitute the letter or the sense of the letter. But the literal sense also contains certain naked truths or genuine truths which are not veiled, and in and by these open truths the spiritual sense breaks through the appearances of the literal sense. These naked truths are the source of doctrine, and are called spiritual-natural truths (De Verbo 26). In the Old Testament there are but relatively few such open truths, in the Gospels there are many, and the Writings consist of hardly anything else than these spiritual-natural truths, either expressive of the internal sense or organized into the doctrine of genuine truth; wherefore the Writings are, by their own claim, a revelation of the spiritual sense of the Word in a language adapted for rational understanding. For the same reason, the Writings do not class themselves with the merely literal sense but as a natural sense from the spiritual sense or as the spiritual-natural sense (@AE 1061).

It is spiritual-natural truths that lie open in the Scriptures and that must be rightly collated by those who are enlightened. They are rightly collated only when viewed from charity and love of truth. It is therefore said that the doctrine of love and charity is the same as the internal sense of the Word. When charity waxed cold in the Christian Church, these genuine truths as found in Scripture could no longer be rightly collated or brought together to form a doctrine of love and charity. Wrongly collated, some of these truths were formed into a doctrine of faith, but many truths were not seen, because not looked for; and so a consistent doctrine of spiritual charity could not be formed, nor a true doctrine of the Lord.

This was the urgent reason why the Lord in the Writings Himself collates the open truths of the Word into a Divine doctrine of genuine truth. Be it known, the Writings say, that all the truths of the Word, which are the truths of heaven and the church, can be seen by the understanding, in heaven spiritually, in the world rationally (@AE 1100). The doctrine of genuine truth may be fully drawn from the literal sense of the Word, i. e., from the Old and New Testaments. But only those who are in illustration from the Lord can recognize the genuine truths, and gather doctrine from themselves, which they may use as a lamp for further progress. In the light of the clear teachings, which are seen as taught directly and openly by the Lord in His Word, they can penetrate into some other teachings that are thinly veiled yet discernible.

We are warned not to try to read the clear teachings in the dim light of those that are veiled, obscure, and thus not clear. To derive a spiritual sense from the Word by translating its correspondences, and then formulate a doctrine from this man-made spiritual sense, is to proceed in a false order (@DSS 26, 56) For correspondences only corroborate and illustrate what you already have adopted as doctrine. One's concern must be that one has the doctrine of Divine truth seen in revelation itself, in naked truths as the lamp which (by means of one's knowledge of correspondences) may open up further truths by a comparison of passages.

This teaching is given in respect to the Sacred Scriptures. In the Christian Church the spiritual or



prophetic sense of the Old Testament was to some extent perceived by this mode, since the Lord expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself (Luke 24:27). To the New Church, the doctrine of genuine truth is openly revealed and the science of correspondences restored, so that we can, so far as illustration is granted, see the inner thread of doctrinal truth within the entire biblical Word, and thus see the application of the Heavenly Doctrine to ever-changing human states and conditions.

The avowed purpose with the Writings is to deliver to the world the doctrine of genuine truth which is the same with the spiritual sense of the Scriptures (@AC 9035). This Divine doctrine is now revealed, presented in fulness (@DSS 25). And as we learned all the truths of heaven can be understood by men in the world rationally (@AE 1100; cf. De Verbo 6). The ultimates of the Writings are rational symbols instead of sensual symbols or correspondences. To understand the Writings, the rational symbols must of course be known, even as the science of correspondences needs to be known if we are to interpret Scripture. The rational symbols are not an unknown language, although some terms may prove difficult at first acquaintance. But Swedenborg himself wrote: A revelation has been made by the Lord ... and this has been done fully and manifestly, so that any one who understands the Latin language may know (Preface to De Domino).

If a science of correspondences were needed to obtain the doctrine of genuine truth from the Writings, it is obvious that the doctrine is yet to be revealed. But it is now revealed, and it is known. It is not in heaven, that those shouldst say, who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us.... The Word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it (Deuteronomy 30:12, 14).

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But it must be kept in mind that it is one thing to know genuine doctrine and another to receive it interiorly. The same doctrinal statements will have different depths of significance to people in different states. Although the Writings contain an abundance of clear doctrinals which inmosty form a consistent whole, all readers differ as to how they collate them, that is, how they order them in their minds. Concerning certain statements about mediate and immediate influx, the Arcana Coelestia says: But these arcana scarcely any one can understand except one who is in enlightenment from the Lord and thence in perception.... They can indeed be described, but still they do not fall rightly into the thought unless there is perception from heaven. And this is not given ... unless they are in the love of truth from genuine good (@AC 8685). Thus it is that man form for themselves various ideas of doctrinal things, which sometimes are of such a nature that they surpass all apprehension (@AC 3085, 4234, 9094). Of what quality such ideas are is not revealed until after death. And even angelic ideas are continually being perfected by being purified from the fallacies and scruples that the angels had entertained while on earth (@AC 2249).

The fallacies and errors which enter into our doctrinal conceptions have, as we know, many origins. Some come directly from our evil loves and prejudices. Some come from ignorance and from false reasonings. Some come from others, or from the doctrine of the church in which we have received our instruction.

The Writings indeed say that a man should learn the doctrines of his church from parents, masters, and priests. It is normal for him, as he grows up, to adopt the religious ideas of his church by a

historical faith, a faith which takes its truth for granted. Unless he does this, his spiritual progress is endangered, and he comes prematurely into conflicts which he cannot bear. Such spiritual conflicts in the home, when parents are divided in their religious allegiances, are particularly unwholesome and tragic.

The doctrine of a church (such as the Writings refer to) is derived from the Word, yet is such as was the faith and charity that existed with the founders. Such a doctrine and this holds true of every church of spiritual genius is not that of truth Divine itself, because the spiritual have no perception such as the celestial have, but guide themselves by conscience formed from the particular kind of truth and good active in their own church. So it comes about that people come to acknowledge as truth whatever the founders decreed. If they search the Word as to whether it be really true, they usually fail to do more than confirm their doctrine from the literal sense, and this even if they have formed a new will or conscience, for this also would be formed to accord with the truth accepted in the church. But if a man be regenerated and given a peculiar enlightenment, so that he took love to the Lord and charity as the essentials of the church, he could go to the Word and draw doctrine from the internal sense as it appears in naked passages rightly collated (@AC 7233).

The specific reference in these teachings is to those in churches like the Lutheran or Calvinistic denominations, which were rooted in falsities from the start. But the same principle holds for every new Church organization. In each, the special doctrine preached is apt to take color from the particular faith and zeal that its founders had a goal for missionary work or for education and scholarship, a faith in the Writings as the essential Word or as only a commentary, etc. All professing New Churchmen hold to the main essentials of the Church and the general teachings of the Writings. But each organization of the Church has also a distinguishing doctrine of the Church.

The quality of a church-body is primarily from its revelation; in our case, from the Writings. But it is the understanding of the Word that makes the Church, as to its state and soundness. And this is reflected in the purity and soundness of its teaching or in the accepted doctrine of the Church (@TCR 245). For this shows what it has gained from the Word, and how much it has drawn from the spiritual-natural truths now openly offered in the Writings.

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Our series of addresses on Faith and Falsity opened with the statement that there is but One True Faith, and then gave instances of how this one true Faith had been perverted and adulterated by human additions or evasions into falsities and fallacies destructive of the Church. Our next task would be to examine how the one true Faith, which we acknowledge to be taught in the Writings in its fulness, can be preserved in the Church from generation to generation, and how the spiritual truth of the Divine doctrine can be rendered up immune from the rational, that is, untainted by mens rationalizations (@AC 2533).

Common perception answers the problem very simply: Shun evils as sins; love truth; be loyal to the plain teachings of the Writings, and put no final authority in human opinions. But this simple answer has recently been challenged with an elaborate build-up of teachings and arguments. The challenge is based mainly on an erroneous identification of the doctrine of faith which lodges in the Word, with the doctrine of the church which is what the church has acquired and teaches; and also on a confusion

between Divine influx and human rational reception.

# XIV - PRESERVING THE INTEGRITY OF DOCTRINE

The Writings teach that the Church is from the Word and that it is such with man as is his understanding of the Word (@TCR 243H). The things which essentially make the Church are the things which appear in the Word to those who love truths because they are truths, and do goods because they are goods. For only such see the doctrine of love to the Lord and charity towards the neighbor which is the internal sense appearing in the literal sense of the Wordthe doctrine taught in those two great commandments on which hang all the law and the prophets. All the doctrine of the Church must be from the Word. Doctrine from any other source than the Word is not a doctrine in which there is anything of the Church, still less anything of heaven (@AC 9424). Yet the fact that doctrinals may have been derived from the Word does not make them Divine truths, because from the sense of the letter of the Word men may hatch all manner of fallacious notions if they read it to confirm their own natural affections and prejudices (@AC 7233, 4783). Thus the doctrine of the church may become falsified instead of genuine. For the doctrine of the churchthat is, the doctrine accepted and preached in the churchtakes its quality not only from the Word but from human states and attitudes. It marks the Churchs reception and understanding of the Word.

For this reason it is of paramount importance that the doctrine of the Church should be sound and pure, that it may carry the one true faith to the people of successive generations. It is of natural order that everyone should be brought up into an affirmative attitude to the doctrine of his Church. The Church in which one is born is more the neighbor even than ones country, for by regarding the Church one has regard also for the souls of men. Therefore every one must first obtain for himself truth from the doctrine of the Church, and afterward from the Word of the Lord; this must be the truth of his faith (@AC 6822).

The cited passage also notes that if in the Church anything is called truth which leads away from good, this is not worth mentioning, for it is not truth. The doctrine of ones church, which should guide one in youth, is therefore not to be taken as a final authority. Ones eventual faith must be derived from the Lords own Wordseen by ones own eyes, not merely through the eyes of others. For that which is seen by ones own understanding is the only thing which enters the mind interiorly and is accepted in real freedom; and it is this that can form a spiritual conscience.

It is easy to see that this applies not only in a church whose doctrine contains destructive falsities, but also in a Church where the doctrine preached is sound and genuine. Even a true doctrine becomes dead and lifeless if believed merely on the authority of men, or because parents and revered teachers have professed it. The understanding of the Word must become progressively deeper and wider as the years pass. What a pass generation drew for its needs out of the well-spring of revelation may not suffice in meeting new states, new temptations, or in facing new situations and carrying out more complex uses.

And the illustration of the Church would fade, if coming generations simply defended whatever their fathers had believed. For different interpretations of doctrine are bound to occur, and it is a human tendency to read such interpretations into the text of the revealed doctrine, confirming each view by

the Word.

It is therefore obvious that as far as the doctrine of the Church, or traditional interpretations, are given the weight of authority in the Church, this will tend to divide the Church into parties and antagonistic groups which eventually may splinter off into separate movements. On the other hand, if all in the Church recognize that there must be a great variety of opinions and interpretations but that the final truth, the complete truth, the one true faith, and the only Divine authority, lies in the Word itself, and (with us) in the Writings; then it is to the Writings that the Church will look for its enlightenment, and its teaching will be drawn afresh with every man and every generation from the Divine source. And that this should be the case is indicated not only by direct teachings, but by the signification of Benjamin, who represented new truth. It is shown in the Arcana that the new truth which a man sees in the Word from an affection of truth, or a love of use, is the only truth that makes a man to be a church (@AC 5806, 5822). By such new truth is not meant any novelties or innovations, but a truth which affections man interiorly because it is perceived as derived from the Lord and taught by Him out of the Word.

Let us note that there is wisdom to be gathered from the past. A generation which scoffs at a truth because it is old, and which believes that it can set out to construct its doctrine without the background of traditions, is not only foolhardy but bound for disillusionment. In a sound Church, tradition gives momentum and direction to progress. It keeps the Church on an even keel. It provides the capital wealth by which its uses can be extended. And the doctrine of the church is therefore to be honored and respected. It has a proper office which carries authority with it. But note that this authority is in no wise Divine, but merely rational, and thus vanishes if it is not continually sustained by new truths from the Word of revelation. The doctrine of the Church is therefore believed so far as it is convincing, and so far as it shows that it is warranted by the Divine authority of the Word, which alone can lend it credence.

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There would be no genuine doctrine of the Church unless the Word was Doctrine itself, or Doctrine in its Divine origin. It is in the Word that we have the doctrine of faith in its infinite fulness and entirety.

In certain chapters of the Arcana, the internal sense there laid bare describes how the Lord, while on earth, meditated concerning the relation of the Divine truth as it is in its origin, to the human rational mind. His concern was how the rational might receive the Divine doctrine without drawing the false conclusion that it had originated that doctrine.

It is noted that the Lord, as He grew up from childhood, progressed into goods and truths in respect to the doctrine of faith, even as do men. But differently from any man, the Lord was instructed by continual revelations, by Divine perceptions which sprang from His inmost, or from His infinite love. Thus His thoughts transcended all human understanding. Yet His human was such that it could only gradually remove the obscurity that prevented the rational (with its fallacies and appearances) from receiving the doctrine of faith (@AC 2500, 2517, etc.).

These circumstances caused the Lord to reflect on the inability of the human rational to apprehend any doctrine that is purely spiritual and celestial, that is, Divine; because the Divine infinitely

transcends its apprehension and belief (@AC 2553). It is for this reason that the Divine, cut of its love for the human race, provides that the Word, or the Divine truth, must be accommodated to mans mind. The doctrine of faith, such as it is in infinite form, must be veiled in finite things or clothed in natural and rational appearances. This is why the Word in its letter contains so many historicals and prophecies which apparently treat of worldly events. Even the prophetic visions, the laws of the Hebrews, and the parables of the Lord, are couched in earthly imagery and concern natural acts and objects obviously taken from the minds of men.

The rational mind therefore tends to conclude that the doctrine of faith the teachings of the Word are nothing but rational truths, which had their origin in mans reason, and that the rational mind can therefore be consulted as to the doctrine of faith. But as the Lord in His Human examined this claim of the human rational, He perceived that doctrine would be null and void if the rational were consulted, or if nothing is acknowledged as truth of doctrine except what can be comprehended by the reason (@AC 2516, 2510). For there is no doctrine of faith from the rational. The doctrine of faith is Divine truth from Divine good, thus spiritual from a celestial origin; it is wholly Divine the Divine spiritual from the Divine celestial. And although it is thus in itself totally incomprehensible, this Divine can inflow into mans rational through the Divine Human (@AC 2531). For the Lord is the word, and as the Lord is the word, He is also doctrine; for there is no other doctrine which is itself Divine (@AC 2533[e]).

Therefore, the spiritual truth of doctrine must be rendered up by man without taint (immune) from the rational, or for mans understanding, or from the rational things of the doctrine of the church (@AC 2533).

In the Arcana, this teaching is developed as an internal sense of a thrice repeated theme in the history of the patriarchs. Abram on a visit to Egypt had Sarai pose as his sister. When Abraham later had occasion to dwell in Gerar he again passed Sarah off as his sister. And similarly Isaac claimed that his wife Rebekah was his sister when staying with Abimelech in Philistia. In each case this was done because of fear that the beauty of the wife would cause the patriarch to be killed. In each case a king takes the supposed sister into his harem. But always the king has a dream warning him of the truth and thus the wife is restored unharmed to her husband (Genesis xii, xx, xxvi). The wife, in each case, represents celestial truth, or truth Divine itself; and her being presented as a sister, signifies that the Divine truth can enter human life and rational thought only through accommodations, or veiled in the appearances of mans knowledge, or in natural and rational appearances. The peculiar story is repeated three times; which can be explained only by its internal sense. For in mans spiritual progress, truth appears first as knowledge, then as doctrinals, and finally as rational things enlightened by the Divine. And it is only when man is brought to acknowledge that his reason, his knowledge, his ideas have no part in the doctrine of faith, which is Divine (@AC 2546), that his mind is enlightened to see that the truth of faith is from the Lord alone. Not only is the truth, as seen in accommodated rational and natural form in the Word, from the Lord; but also mans faculty to rationally grasp the truth is from the Lord (@AC 2557).

But let us note that while all good and truth inflow from the Lord, and while the Divine can enter into the rational of man, and although the rational is the very thing which receives the doctrine of faith (@AC 2919), and, in true order, may become spiritual and celestial; yet he or his mind never becomes Divine, nor do the goods and truths which inflow ever cease to be Divine. And while, then, he will come to

think no longer from truths, but from good, he will never think from Divine good united to Divine truth, as did the Lord (@AC 2571). Nor can man have any perception from spiritual truth, as the Lord did (@AC 2574), or think from intellectual truth or from the doctrine of faith which is Divine (@AC 2545, 2546). Mans perception or conscience is indeed from the Lord although it is not apparent to him whence it is; but his thought is from the rational, and appears as from himself (@AC 2552). This is also true of the angels. At the best the wisdom and intelligence of angels is finite. The angels are in various interior appearances of good and truth, or what is the same, in rational truths, which are like veils for spiritual truths (@AC 2576, 2577).

The function of the rational mind is not to create truths, but to receive them. The sum of the matter is that in so far as there is what is human, that is, what is of sense, of knowledge, and of the rational, as the ground of belief, so far doctrine is null and void. But so far as these are removed, and doctrine is believed without these things, so far doctrine lives (@AC 2538). But it is a different thing to enter into the things of reason and knowledge from truths. This is of order, and gives enlightenment, opening an almost unbounded field to the rational. It is by no means denied man to cultivate the rational by knowledges; but what is forbidden is to harden ourselves against the truths of faith which are of the Word (@AC 2588).

Rational truth, such as is signified by Sarah as a sister of Abraham, is not united in marriage to Divine good. For only Divine truth is married or united to Divine good. Still the Divine inflows into lower truths. It conjoins itself with the rational appearances of truth and even into sensual truths which are scarcely anything but fallacies, and adapts them for its purpose, so that the Divine truth may appear through them and be received in them (@AC 357, 3207).

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The question now is, how the Lord can be present in the appearances of mans mind. Certainly we know that pure truths belong to the Lord alone, while truths with angels are never pure, or devoid of appearances, and that with man they are tainted with fallacies (@AC 2053, 3207).

But it has already been noted that the Word has been accommodated to human minds by being written in appearances. Even the internal sense is imparted to the angels in the various heavens through rational appearances. The literal sense especially is full of gross appearances. Such appearances, in themselves, are not truths purely Divine. And the same can be said of all doctrinal things which are from the Lord, in the Scriptures and in the Writings (@AC 3358-3364). Yet we are taught that the Lord is doctrine itself, that is, the Word, not only as to the supreme sense therein, but also as to the internal sense, and even as to the literal sense ... for that which is representative and significative is in its essence that which is represented ... thus it is the Divine of the Lord (@AC 3393).

What is it, then, that sets the Word apart from the appearances which are jumbled in mens minds and hinders the reception of Divine truth? For the Word, even in the letter, is holy and Divine.

The answer is given that truths Divine, in the Word, are within the appearances. For these on each plane of the Word are ordered by Divine inspiration to present the order corresponding to Divine truth, and actually guide the open mind to be affected by the order of heaven. Such a mind becomes perceptive of this order of holiness which is within the literal sense; and though it remains in gross

appearances it can then be led by the Lord into good affections and truths.

Let us note therefore that it is not the appearance, whether sensual or rational, that make the Word divine, but the Divine order which is imposed upon these human appearances. The appearances are used only as the words of a language are used in a book where the words receive meaning and direction and quality from the order in which they are placed. One book may be the ultimate vessel for subtly conveying vile and evil ideas, leading the mind through the hells. Another book, using the same vocabulary, and perhaps similar word-pictures, may uplift the mind and inspire moral virtues and tender beauty. Each suggests an order of thought and feeling, dictated by a love, good or bad.

And the Word of God is written in human symbols, but is dictated by an infinite love of all mankind. This infinite love pulsates within every sentence, and makes the appearances transparent with the truth of this infinite love. This inner order within the Word in its letter and spirit which give sanctity or holiness to the appearances of which the literal sense of the Word is made up (@AE 1088[4]). Yet it is the ordering of these appearances in their proper connection that holds the truths of heaven in order, and makes them holy (@AE 1088); so that the very literal sense of the Word can be identified with the Divine doctrine of faith (@AC 3436). The appearances are not holy by themselves or from themselves. It is therefore taught that it is from the spiritual sense which reveals that order that the Divinity of the Word is derived, so as to make it the Divine truth itself.

Man may learn truths from the Word, and these doctrinal things may at first lodge in their memory and later help to compose their understanding. So far as truths from the Word are present in a man's rational, so far the Divine truth, or the doctrine of faith which is spiritual from a celestial origin, being Divine truth from divine good, can be received as an influx which enlightens the understanding, although this Divine truth is in itself infinite and incomprehensible.

It is important not to confuse the influx with the vessel. The vessel is formed as an image of some of the holy appearances of truth which are of the Word; and if man is truly rational, these appearances are from the spiritual-natural truths shining out as naked doctrine. And always, with man, these truths, which in the Word are ordered in accord with the Lord's infinite love, are reordered and perceived according to man's finite love. They compose man's finite understanding. But the influx is Divine and indeed infinite. It is the Lord with man, acting upon him. It is the Holy Spirit of the Word which never becomes man's and does not inhere, neither does it remain except so long as the man who receives it believes in the Lord and at the same time is in the doctrine of truth from the Word and in a life according to it (Canons, H. S., iv.).

It is therefore important that man should come to acknowledge and if possible perceive that all good and truth flow in from the Lord, and that the rational things of man's mind are not truths by themselves, but become true by being enlightened by the Divine of the Lord. Only by this influx of enlightenment do the appearances of truth present Divine truth and the finite mind is affected by the infinite. Thus man's mind can see the Lord see the order of the Divine truth within the appearances, rational and sensual, which compose his mind (@AC 3438[e]). In other words, the Divine truth, in itself incomprehensible and invisible, now presents itself in the form of rational truth. And thus it is said that the Divine truth becomes rational truth with a man when he is regenerated (@AC 3394).

This statement can easily be misunderstood if we imagine that the man in some way becomes



possessed of Divine truth in the form of rational truth. But the reverse is true. It is the Divine which adopts the rational appearances (learnt from the Word) and expresses itself in them. Those who are regenerate, as the celestial, gladly perceive that when the appearances of their minds are ordered from the Word and are enlightened by the Divine, then the Divine truth becomes rationally discernible, and this makes man rational. For the angelic and human rational is and is called rational from appearances of truth that are enlightened by the Divine, and without these it is not rational (@AC 3368).

But it is important to note that Divine truth which expresses itself as rational or perceptible truth through these appearances, does not permanently become a part of the mind which it enlightens. The Holy Spirit does not inhere. It enters and affects man especially when reading the Word from an affection of truth for the sake of life.

It is difficult for those of a spiritual church to grasp that Divine truths can be understood, that is can be visible in the rational. They fear to call revealed truth rational, preferring to accept it by a blind faith, without rational intuition; and this protects them from being mislead by doubts instilled by skeptics who call their faith unreasonable or illogical. But they instead sacrifice all freedom of thought, and may bind their conscience to what is highly heretical (@AC 3394).

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For the protection of the Church doctrine must be received as rational truth. It is admitted by all in the Church that the Divine doctrine is the Word, the Scriptures and the Writings. In the reading of the Word in states of illustration, a regenerating man sees Divine truth and is affected by it. He feels that he has been taught by the Lord. He sees something of the Divinely intended connection between the appearances in which the Word is couched, and from this he has a vision of truth about some spiritual things. He remembers this vision as associated with the expressions of the text and its mental imagery, and yet its clarity fades. If he should seek to convey the truth that he has seen to others, he finds difficulty in selecting words and ideas that can sufficiently suggest what he found. If he is a priest he may aid in formulating some of the doctrines that are applicable to human problems and new uses. It is so that, by degrees, there grows up a doctrine of the church. This is taught to the young and is an important agency so far as it leads them to the Word, where they may find their bread and water of life.

Now the doctrine of the church may be enlightened or it may be obscure and misleading. If it is enlightened it will convey some of the light of Divine truth which those who formulated it had seen in the Word. Yet it is not the human formulation that carries the light, but the recognition that the word actually so teaches. Human words can only appeal to the rational ideas and appearances in the mind of another. They can convey only rational light. It is when there is acknowledgment that the truth presented is really shining forth from the Word from the Divine doctrine that spiritual light is conveyed. Of preachers, the Writings say, They are able indeed to declare the Word and bring it to the understanding of many, but not to the heart of any one.... The Word must be taught mediately, through parents, teachers, books, and especially the reading of it. Nevertheless it is not taught by these but by the Lord through them. The mediation does not destroy the fact that man is taught immediately by the Lord when this is done from the Word (@DP 172).

But how this is done is an arcanum of the arcana of angelic wisdom (Ibid.; @AC 2726[e]). The Holy

Spirit passes from the Word through man to man (Canons H. S. iv). Indeed, the quality of the man who proclaims the word may not interfere, so long as he does not pervert the conveying doctrine. The truth of doctrine may not be judged by our estimate of the man who speaks it; nor do we know whether such a man is himself in enlightenment or not, or if he is regenerate.

On the other hand, there is no Divine authority vested in the doctrine of the church, when by this we mean the interpretations of doctrine that are presented in the church. Even if such doctrine is genuine and conveys light, it has no final authority. It is said that the sin against the Holy Spirit cannot be forgiven, for it involves the denial of the Lords divinity and of the holiness of the Word thus the renouncing of the means of salvation. But he who speaks a word against the Son of Man is forgiven: for to do so means to deny this or that to the Divine truth from the Word in the Church, while man still believes that in the Word and from the Word are Divine truths. The Son of Man is the Divine truth from the Word in the Church, and this cannot be seen by all (Canons H. S., v.).

For the Church, by its councils, to bind the faith of its members to its interpretations, is therefore not wholesome. Trust not in councils, the Writings say, but in the holy Word, and go to the Lord, and you will be enlightened (@TCR 634).

Doctrine is not true because it is popular, nor because the heads of the church have said so and their followers confirm it (@AC 6047). Every one within the church first procures the truths which are of faith from doctrinals, and also must so procure them, because he has not yet sufficient strength of judgment to enable him to see them himself in the Word (@AC 5402). Especially in youth, a man needs a doctrine even if it is borrowed by which to maintain a faith in the Word, and from which he may be led to shun evils as sins. From this there develops a historical faith and this may be only knowledge, not a rule of life. If man merely continues to rely on the teachings of others, and, as he grows up, takes no responsibility in what is really true, because he has no affection of truth, he may ingeniously confirm this inherited belief by various things, from the text of revelation and from reason or science, and will think that he believes in the Church. Yet he has only external reasons of pride and prejudice for his confirmations. He would ridicule and condemn the veriest truths if found in some other church than his own. When such read the Word, they will scan it with the sole purpose of confirming their adopted opinions. And indeed they may become learned and prominent, from such a zeal (@AC 5432).

Quite evidently, the doctrine of the Church would become adulterated with things superadded from the proprium of such men, if their influence was not counteracted. Yet is counteracted, and the Church preserved and its doctrine continually purified and restored, if men when they come into their own judgment, will consult the Word from an affection and end of knowing truths and with devout prayer to the Lord for enlightenment, will procure for themselves the things of faith from the genuine fountain. In this way a man comes to believe truths because they are from the Divine (@AC 5402). And if he then finds that the truths of the Word disagree with what he has taught, let him take care lest he disturb the church. If in truths of charity, he will neither disturb any one within the Church, nor condemn others, knowing that every one who is a church lives from his faith (@AC 6047, 5432).

Thus it is how every one who loves truth reads the Word. But each man has a different responsibility. While priests have the task of gathering doctrine for the Church, each man seeks out truths from the Word to form his own doctrine of life.

The doctrine gathered by those in the spiritual affection of truth serves as a lamp by which light is thrown on all obscurer parts of the Word. And this light can be shared. For the lamp is formed from passages where the spiritual sense stands forth nakedly (De Verbo 26). No man can tell as to the spiritual enlightenment of another, be he priest or layman; nor can we question a mans affection of truth a quality which we take for granted in all. Nor can we judge as to the illustration of the Church as a whole. All we can do to assure us that the one true Faith is the faith of our Church, and not distorted by falsities, is to go to the Word and prayerfully draw our doctrine thence. If the two agree the Word and the doctrine of our Churchall is well.