

The Great Debate: Swedenborg vs. Price

By Flyxion

Setting

A foggy, candlelit tavern in 1770 London. The air smells of ale and existential dread. Emanuel Swedenborg, wild-eyed mystic, sits across from Richard Price, a bespectacled mathematician clutching a worn copy of Bayes' Essay. A crowd of drunk philosophers and curious barmaids leans in, sensing a brawl of cosmic proportions.

Dialogue

Swedenborg (slamming his tankard): The Second Coming has dawned, Price! In this very year, 1770, the Lord has unveiled the spiritual sense of Scripture through my pen. The heavens are open, man! The New Jerusalem descends, and I have seen it with my own eyes—angels, archetypes, the whole bloody celestial circus!

Price (adjusting his glasses, unimpressed): Spare me the visions, Emanuel. Your head's so far in the clouds, you've forgotten how to think on earth. The real apocalypse hit seven years ago, in 1763, when Bayes' Rule saw the light of day. That little formula— $P(H|E) = \frac{\bar{P}(E|H)P(H)}{P(E)}$ —is the true Second Coming. It's not angels singing; it's reason reckoning.

Swedenborg (scoffing): A formula? You think the divine plan boils down to scribbles on a page? The Lord's return is a spiritual earthquake, a new dispensation! I've walked the halls of heaven, Price, while you're playing with numbers like a glorified accountant.

Price (smirking): And I'd rather count truths than chase hallucinations. Bayes' Rule is redemption in action—epistemic salvation. Humanity's been drowning in dogma, guessing at God's will. Now we've got a method to update our beliefs with evidence. That's the real New Jerusalem: a mind that learns, not one that dreams.

Swedenborg (leaning forward, eyes blazing): You profane the divine with your cold logic! The Second Coming is the Word made spirit, not some arithmetic trick. My *Heavenly Doctrines* reveal the inner meaning of Scripture—Christ's kingdom within the soul!

Price (sipping his ale, deadpan): Inner meaning? Sounds like you're just making it up as you go. Bayes' Rule is the Word made algorithm. John 1:1 says the Logos was with God—well, here it is, in black and white: probability as the logic of belief. Your “doctrines” are a fever dream; my equation is a resurrection machine. Every new datum raises a hypothesis from the dead.

Swedenborg (gesturing wildly): Blasphemy! The Last Judgment is a cosmic reckoning, not a schoolboy's sum. In 1770, the spiritual world was reordered—evil cast out, truth enthroned. What does your precious Bayes do? Tally bets?

Price (grinning): Oh, it's a judgment, alright. Bayes sorts the sheep from the goats—plausible hypotheses from bullshit. It's an algorithmic eschatology, Emanuel. While you're chatting with angels, Bayes is quietly powering every rational mind, every machine, every scientific leap. Invisible, yet operative. Sounds pretty Christ-like to me.

Swedenborg (pausing, stroking his beard): You claim your formula is divine, yet it lacks the fire of revelation. Where is the awe, the mystery? My visions stir the soul; your numbers chill it.

Price (leaning in, voice low): Awe? Try watching a mind converge on truth, step by step, as priors shift and posteriors solidify. That's the mystery—the universe yielding its secrets to a recursive dance of evidence. Your visions are a one-man show; Bayes is a universal gospel. And it started in 1763, not your arbitrary 1770.

Barmaid (interrupting, sloshing ale): Oi, you two! If this Bayes bloke's so great, why ain't we all praying to probabilities? And you, Swedenborg—why's your Second Coming so bloody quiet? Where's the trumpets?

Swedenborg (smiling serenely): The trumpets are in the heart, my dear. The Lord works in silence, as do I.

Price (winking): And Bayes works in every decision you make, whether you know it or not. Next time you bet on a horse, thank 1763.

Crowd (roaring, half-drunk): Fight! Fight! Fight!

Swedenborg (standing, dramatic as hell): I'll not brawl with a man who worships fractions. But mark my words, Price: the Lord's kingdom is spirit, not sums!

Price (also standing, cool as a cucumber): And I say the kingdom's in the equation. Bayes is the light, and the light shineth in darkness. 1763, mate. Deal with it.

Conclusion

They storm out into the fog, coats billowing. The crowd buzzes with confusion and wonder. A lone *Philosopher* mutters into his beer: "Maybe they're both right... or both mad."