

A General Doctrinal Class

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In the *Spiritual Diary* we read:

They said that those things which I have written are so rude and gross that they judged that nothing which was interior could be understood from those words or from the sense of the words. I perceived also from a spiritual idea that it was so, that they were very rude; wherefore it was given to me to reply that they are only vessels to which purer, better, and more interior things could be infused, as a literal sense.

(*Spiritual Diary* 2185.)

In the *Arcana Coelestia* similar things are said:

When spirits of Mercury were with me while I was writing and unfolding the Word as to the internal sense, and perceived what I was writing, they said that the things which I was writing were very gross, and that the expressions almost all appeared as material. But it was given to reply that the men of our earth ever see these things which have been written as subtle and elevated, many of which they do not grasp.

(*Arcana Coelestia* 6929.)

The same things as are here said in *Arcana Coelestia* are said in the *Earths in the Universe* 27.

In the number quoted from the *Spiritual Diary* a warning is given lest in remaining in the sense of the letter they be like those who formed their ideas from the sense of the letter of the prophets in which were many unclean things. One may wonder how it would be possible to come to any comparable thing from the sense of the letter of the Third Testament. But one would not have to look very far. Consider the teaching that the New Church is the Crown of all the Churches. (*True Christian Religion* 786-790.) From that teaching all New Churchmen have supposed that they are members of the Crown of all Churches. The Crown of all Churches is that Church which is the Bride and Wife of the Lord, the Holy City, Nova Hierosolyma, descending from God out of Heaven. Everything of that Church is the good of love, inflowing together with light out of Heaven

from the Lord. (See *Apocalypse Revealed* 912.) Much has to take place before any such state of the Church comes into existence. It can be very harmful indeed for those in the present state of the New Church to suppose that they are in the Crown of the Churches. As has been sometimes said, this body of the Church takes its Name not because it supposes itself to be such, but because it believes that such it can become from the Lord. So it ought to be with the whole New Church, namely, that it has a right to that Name in the sense that that is what it can and ought to become.

In the *Apocalypse Explained* 670, in explanation of what is meant by the man-child being caught up to God and His throne (Apocalypse 12:5) it is said:

This Church, which is called Christian, has at this day come to its end; wherefore now the arcana of Heaven and of the Church have been revealed to serve the New Church which is meant by "Nova Hierosolyma" in the Apocalypse for doctrine and life. This doctrine also has been taken up into Heaven lest before the instauration of a New Church it should be harmed by the evil.

(*Apocalypse Explained* 670.)

It is evident that the books of the Third Testament were not taken up into Heaven, but that the Doctrine which is their internal sense has been so taken up into Heaven.

Again in the *Arcana Coelestia* 3398[4], in speaking of the danger of profanation, the following is taught:

This was also the reason why the Lord did not come into the world and reveal the internal things of the Word until there was no good whatever remaining with them, not even natural good, for then they could no longer receive any truth with internal acknowledgment...thus could not profane....It is for the same reason that the arcana of the internal sense of the Word are now being revealed, because at this day there is scarcely any faith because not any charity, thus because it is the consummation of the age; and when this is the case then they can be revealed without danger of profanation, because they are not interiorly acknowledged.

(*Arcana Coelestia* 3398[4].)

The internal things of the Third Testament are not seen in its letter unless the danger of profaning them has been removed by the regeneration of the mind of man by the Lord. Without this protection there would take place the most horrible profanation that could be imagined.

All in the New Church are familiar with the teaching given in the *Doctrine concerning the Sacred Scripture* that the Doctrine of the Church must be drawn out of the sense of the letter of the Word. (S.S. 50-61.) This has commonly been understood to mean that the Doctrine of the Church must be drawn from the Old and New Testaments. In other bodies of the Church it has been maintained that the first duty of the Church is to open up to their internal sense those books of the Old and New Testaments which have not been so opened in the Third Testament. Two hundred years have passed since the beginning of the New Church, and in those two hundred years no one has ever drawn anything out of the Old and New Testaments which they could claim to be Doctrine. Nor will they ever do so unless first they see something of the internal sense of the Third Testament. This is not just according to my judgment. As far as I know, no one has ever brought forth any doctrinal truth from those Testaments, nor has ever claimed to have done so. The fact is that they do not even know where to begin. The prevailing thought has been that the *Arcana Coelestia* has given the internal sense of Genesis and Exodus, and that therefore the Church should begin to unfold Leviticus. The assumption has been that there is a series of the internal sense of the Word from Genesis to Malachi, and that the *Arcana Coelestia* gives the beginning of that series in expounding Genesis and Exodus. Certainly there is a series of the internal sense from Genesis to Malachi, but the explanations of Genesis and Exodus in the *Arcana Coelestia* are not of that series. The *Arcana Coelestia* is in its own series. It treats of the whole glorification of the Human of the Lord, and it is impossible to suppose that the series of the glorification of the Human of the Lord, and of man's regeneration in the image of that glorification, is continued on from what is revealed in the *Arcana Coelestia*.

Again this can be seen from the commonly acknowledged truth that the Third Testament is the revelation of the Divine Human of the Lord. If it were true that the series from Genesis to Malachi was in the same series with the *Arcana Coelestia*, then the Third Testament would not be a revelation of the Divine Human of the Lord, but a revelation of only a small beginning of it. Anyone who has read the *Arcana Coelestia* knows that this is not true, and is an utter impossibility. And from these considerations it

can be seen that the idea that it is the first duty of the Church to open the books of the Word from Leviticus onward is a misunderstanding of the nature of the *Arcana Coelestia*. It is no wonder at all that no one has ever tried to attempt such a thing.

From all this it can be seen that the teaching that the Doctrine of the Church is to be drawn out of the sense of the letter of the Word cannot apply to the Old and New Testaments. In the whole history of the New Church it is evident that Doctrine has been drawn out of the sense of the letter of the Third Testament, and not from any other source. When the Church has come into the internal things of the Third Testament, then it can come to see the real meaning of things in the New Testament and Old Testament. Now, at this time, no one even knows why there are four Gospels in the New Testament. In fact, very few even *wonder* why there are four Gospels. The answers to such questions come not from direct thought or study on that subject, but from the opening of the mind by man's living according to the sense of the letter of the Third Testament.

In the Third Latin Edition of the *Arcana Coelestia* there are notes and corrections from the handwritten copy of the *Arcana Coelestia* which Swedenborg retained, not sending it to the printer. There, on the margins of the Contents of the 18th Chapter of Genesis, there are remarkable notes made by Swedenborg. In that Chapter, Abraham has been pleading with Jehovah concerning Sodom and Gomorrah, asking if the cities would be spared if there were 50, 45, 40, 30, 20, or even 10 just ones to be found there. In the Contents, and in the text of the Chapter itself, all these numbers are said to refer to different kinds of men. But in the notes made by Swedenborg in the margin they are put in such a way as to apply to one man. Thus, under 50 it is written, *If much of Good*, under 45, *adjoined*, under 40, *through temptations*, under 30, *or combats*, under 20, *or other states of the affection of good*, and under 10, *or of the affection of the true*. Put together it reads: *If much of good adjoined through temptations or combats, or other states of the affection of the good or of the affection of the true*. Thus all those things are thus applied to one man. This is not other than an example of Swedenborg drawing Doctrine out of the Third Testament. I do not know of any other example such as this one. However, from things said in the Appendix to the *Arcana Coelestia*, there are explanations given concerning the proprium which are not retained in the original edition of the *Arcana Coelestia*, but which shed much light on the things said about proprium in the published text. This also indicates an

understanding on the part of Swedenborg drawn from the things that were to be published.

There are other teachings which should be taken into consideration in relation to this subject, that is, the teachings of the Third Testament concerning its internal sense. One such teaching is that in the beginning of any Church the Church takes its Word to be its Doctrine:

The Word is said to be closed when it is understood only as to the sense of the letter, and all that which is there is taken for what is doctrinal.
(Arcana Coelestia 3769.)

Of this it is said again:

In the beginning when any Church is being instaurated, then first the Word is closed to them, but then it is opened, the Lord so providing, and thus they learn that all doctrine is founded on these two commandments, that the Lord must be loved above all things, and the neighbor as themselves.
(Arcana Coelestia 3773.)

From this it can be seen that it was inevitable and even in order that the Church for a time saw the Third Testament as the Heavenly Doctrine, the Doctrine of the Church, and that only later was it possible for the Church to see that it was not her Doctrine, but the Word Itself.

The Third Testament is that in which the Lord has made His Second Coming. All the Good and the True of His Divine Human is in that Testament. It is there in all its infinity, and in the indefinitely many goods and trues which can be received by the human race. These things are there in its internal sense, and they shine through the bosom of the sense of its letter for those who follow the Lord in keeping the precepts of this Word. The hands and the face of the Lord are visible in the bosom of the sense of the letter in this Word for those who love Him and keep His commandments.