

A Letter to the Editor of New Philosophy  
by Rev. Theodore Pitcairn, 1947

In an editorial in the NEW PHILOSOPHY, April, 1947, page 35, it is stated:

"But while acknowledging the value of Dr. du Noily's book, the thought persists that it may also be a strengthening of materialistic thought in that it is an attempt to prove the existence of God from science. It is a 'scientific' voice, 'declaring all the old beliefs to be true' - now at last we have the authority of science! The voice of science can indeed confirm belief in God-Man; it can never bring convincing perception. Being 'scientific,' that is, basing itself on the facts discovered by man, it is open to 'scientific' objections; and the 'scientific' materialist will have little difficulty in advancing counterarguments which, if they do not overthrow Dr. du Noily's arguments, can bring them into the arena of discussion and doubt." The Editor has here expressed a very important principle which we do not believe is open to doubt.

In the New Church, by God we understand the Lord Who has revealed Himself in the Word, and, in particular, the Lord Who has come again in the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg, which are His Word, yea, which are Himself; for it is written, "Hic Liber est Adventus Domini"-"This Book is the Coming of the Lord."

As the Writings of Swedenborg are God with us, it follows from the principle set forth by the Editor that "it may also be a strengthening of materialistic thought" to attempt "to prove the existence of God (that is, the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg as being the Word and thus the Lord Himself) from science."

"The voice of science confirms the belief in God-Man [that is, in the New Church, the Writings of Swedenborg as the Word and thus as the Lord Himself] ; it can never bring convincing perception. Being 'scientific,' that is, basing itself on the facts discovered by man, it is open to 'scientific' objections; 'scientific' materialists will have little difficulty in advancing counter-arguments which, if they do not overthrow du Noily's arguments, can bring them into the arena of discussion and doubt."

In the paper of Dr. C. R. Pendleton, in the October 1946 number of the NEW PHILOSOPHY, and in the editorial in the April 1947 number, it appears to me that just such "scientific" arguments which bring this matter into "the arena of discussion and doubt" are brought forth.

In the Doctrine of the Sacred Scripture, under the heading "The sense of the Letter of the Word is the Basis, containant and support of its Spiritual and Celestial senses," it is stated: "When these things are comprehended, it is also comprehended that every Divine Work is complete and perfect in its ultimate" (n. 28).

As with those of the New Church there is no doubt but that the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg are a Divine Work in the fullest sense, it necessarily follows from the above

quotation, "that they are complete and perfect in their ultimate." To question the completeness and perfection of this Divine Work, is to weaken and finally to destroy the basis and support, until finally the whole temple falls.

The whole work can only stand where there is what the Editor calls "a convincing perception," a convincing perception that the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg are a Divine Work and therefore complete and perfect in ultimates. The "voice of science" and the critic can readily advance arguments to the contrary, for there are strong appearances to the contrary, and these are present, as the Editor pointed out, in order to leave man in freedom to accept or reject. In this respect, the Word in which the Lord has made His Second Coming is similar to the Old and New Testaments.

In the NEW PHILOSOPHY, January, 1947, page 1, the Editor quotes the late Rev. William H. Acton, as follows: "In this as in most cases, Swedenborg relied upon the accuracy of the facts observed by others; nor was he gifted with any internal illustration that would enable him to distinguish between true and false 'facts'."

It is a law of the giving of the Word, that the Word was clothed with the knowledges which existed with men at the time that it was given; this is obviously true of all Three Testaments. No one in the New Church would dare suggest that one of the writers of the Old and or New Testament was not led by the Lord to write just those things which were in the Divine Providence of the Lord down to the least particular and singular thing. We are frequently told that it is a falsity to believe in the Divine Providence in generals and not in particulars and singulars. This falsity is at its worst when applied to the Word, a common fault in the old churches in regard to the Old and New Testaments, and a fault that is becoming more prevalent in the New Church in relation to the Latin Word.

It is clear from the statement of Rev. W. H. Acton that he by no means regards the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg as a Divine Work, and therefore complete and perfect in ultimates, but that he regards them as the work of a man not even in illustration as to the examples he gave.

On page 4, the Editor states: "As to the third point, that Swedenborg might have detected the truth or falsity of observations by inspiration, this can at once be rejected. Swedenborg was prepared to be the medium for the giving of a rational revelation; a revelation clothed in the language of rational truth discernible by men of enlightened reason. Such preparation could never have been accomplished by an inner dictate not flowing from a mind previously prepared by study and reflexion."

The Old Testament descended through the Heavens and was clothed with the sensual and civil things of the Jewish Church, which were representative, and corresponded to the Divine Celestial and Spiritual things which were in its bosom. The New Testament also descended through the Heavens, and was clothed with the moral, as well as the civil and sensual things in which the Disciples were; these things also represented and corresponded to the Divine Celestial and Spiritual things in the bosom of the Word.

In the case of the Third Testament, the descent was not mediate through the Heavens, for Swedenborg's mind was open even to the Lord; the Revelation was therefore immediate, but was clothed through the natural mind of Swedenborg with rational clothings, as well as with things of moral, civil, and even sensual truths. All these clothings represented and corresponded to the Divine Celestial and Spiritual things which are in the bosom of the Word.

In each case the Divine Providence so operated that it was "complete and perfect in its ultimate," that is, "complete and perfect as basis, containant and support of its spiritual and celestial senses." Where there is a "convincing perception" that the Writings are the Word, and this principle rules in the mind, this is obviously true.

If the essential of the Writings is placed in the "rational truths," and not on the fact that they are the Word of the Lord, there necessarily follows either a kind of deification of Swedenborg's mind, or a making of his Writings human, thus a denial of them as the Word.

We read: "The angelic spirit said, Here also is a building which we call the Temple of Wisdom; but it is not visible to anyone who thinks he is very wise, less to him, who thinks he is wise enough, and still less to one who thinks he is wise from himself... Genuine wisdom consists in a man seeing from the light of Heaven that all the things which he knows, understands and perceives, are, in respect to what he does not know, understand and perceive, as a drop to the ocean, consequently hardly anything. . . . As I had often thought this, and from science, and afterwards from perception, and lastly from seeing from interior light, acknowledged that man had so little wisdom, behold, it was given me to see that Temple" (A. R. 875). This acknowledgment on the part of Swedenborg, that what he knew compared to what he did not know was as a drop to the ocean, was not merely an expression of humility, but, as is said was with him from "perception" and from "seeing it from interior light."

To anyone who believes that the Lord has made His Second Coming in the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg, there is present the acknowledgment that these Writings are Divine and Infinite, that they contain all Truth in its Infinity for all in Heaven and earth to all eternity. To place the emphasis on Swedenborg's rational understanding, and on the rational forms in which the revelation is clothed, results in a loss of the perception of their Divine Spiritual and Celestial contents, in a loss of the perception that they are complete and perfect in their ultimates, and thus in a loss of a convincing perception that they are the Word of the Lord; and when this is lost, an essential development of the Church is no longer possible, but instead the Church turns to the rational and scientific things of the clothing of the Word where they engage in interminable arguments.

We are taught that "The Father is the Lord the Creator, the Son, the Lord the Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit, the Lord the Regenerator;" these are one Lord, and may never be separated in thought without falling into the idea of three gods. Thus we may never think internally of creation or the things of creation, separated from the things of redemption, or of these separately from regeneration and the things of regeneration. To think of

creation or the things of creation apart from redemption and regeneration when considering the Word is not only to think merely naturally, but to think in a disorderly way, and seen in itself this is profane.

This is obvious from this consideration: if a man of the New Church were to consider the description of the creation of the world given in the first chapter of Genesis merely from the point of view of creation, particularly natural creation, and still more if he were to consider it from the scientifics of the world, he could not but profane the truth. Is it not self-evident that this is if anything more true of what is called "the most excellent Revelation" given by the Lord in His final Testament?

If the Church views the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg from without or from the sciences and facts of the world, as time passes and worldly science increases, he will find himself in greater and greater difficulty until finally belief in the Writings of Swedenborg as being the Word of the Lord will perish. For the perfection of the Letter of the Word, whether of the Old Testament, the New Testament or the Third Testament, can never be seen from without or from its external form as it appears to the natural mind, but from within, thus from its Celestial and Spiritual contents.