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Aspects Of The Internal History Of The New Church

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From its first beginnings a decline in the organized New Church set in, a decline into externalism and ignorance. Finally this decline led to what is known as the New England Celestial heresy.

The doctrine so called was in general that a minister preached truth from his own personal goodness. Along with this went a denial of the Divine authority of the Writings of Swedenborg, and particularly that they are the sole source of truth in the Church.

As well be shown later truth from good is the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church. Thus the New England position set up the Holy Spirit as a thing in the Church separated from the especial Word of the New Church, and the perception of the ministers was in fact placed above the Word and perception was arrogated by the priesthood as their right. In a word the state was identical with that of the Roman Catholic Church which set up an ecclesiastic authority and claimed to themselves the Holy Spirit as something separated from the Word, and in practice, as above the Word.

The Roman Catholics made works saving, but they were external and meritorious works separated from all the genuine internal of the Word. The Convention in like manner said that charity and works were the primary things of the Church, and brought forth passages from the Writings to confirm this idea. But their idea of charity was an external goodness separated from the internal truth of the Word, and was therefore no more saving than the Catholic idea of works.

While outside of New England, lay rule prevailed in the Church, there was an agreement with New England in an internal denial of the authority of the Writings, a making of human intelligence a judge as to the validity of the things contained in the Writings, and the making of merely external charity and love, which was meritorious, the essential of the Church.

This was the prevailing state of the Church when the Academy (took its rise, and the Academy) arose as a protest against this state of the Church.

The essential purpose of the Academy was to establish the Writings as the Word of God and the only authority in the Church; and to protest against the false meritorious idea of charity which ruled in the church; and especially against the false idea of truth from men's own goodness being able to decide in regard to the truth or non-truth of what was taught in the Writings.

In the early part of the year nineteen hundred and thirty four (1934) I asked Bishop N. D. Pendleton why he took such a different attitude in relation to the controversy then existing in the Church from what he had taken in the controversy in the Church in nineteen hundred and fifteen. He replied, that De Hemelsche Leer was subversive of every thing the General Church had always stood for; particularly that De Hemelsche Leer taught truth from good in the Church, and that this was the New England heresy, which the Academy had combated from its very beginning, believing it an essential issue.

The question we ask ourselves is, was the Academy from the beginning opposed essentially to the Doctrine of Truth from Good in the Church? I believe there is sufficient evidence to support this contention; and yet that there must be truth from good in the Church, or what is the same that faith is from charity or faith is the form of charity is a teaching to be found on nearly every page of the Latin Word. In fact it is frequently taught that truth from good or faith from charity is the very foundation of the Church. Quotations to this effect might be multiplied, but we will here quote but two or three.

"Peter represents the Divine Truth from the Lord in the Church and he was therefore called Petra (rock), and it is said thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build My Church, that is upon the Divine Truth from the Lord, or what is the same, upon truths from good for upon these the Church is built". A.E. 411³⁰

"The reason hardness is expressed by a rock is from the correspondence of a rock with truth from good, for all power is from truth from good." A.E. 411³³

"Those in faith from charity are described by the house built upon a rock." A.E. 212²

From the above it is clear that to deny truth from good or faith from charity in the Church is to deny the very foundation of the Church; and where the very foundation of the Church is denied the Church is not a genuine Church.

The Academy in the beginning had a perception that all truth in the Church must be from the Writings, and that the Writings were of Divine authority, and that to place authority in human goodness and the truth thence would be making a second and incompatible authority with the authority of the Writings in the Church. Being confronted with this apparent dilemma, they established the Doctrine of the sole authority of the Writings and denied all authority to truth from good in the Church. Thus they made faith in the Writings the sole medium of the salvation of the Church and thus made charity the fruit of this faith. To deny truth from good, or faith from charity, and to make faith in the Writings the essential of the Church, is the

Doctrine of salvation by faith alone in a different form.

And yet our sympathy is entirely with the early Academy beginnings. They were confronted with evils and falsities in the Church which were obviously destroying the Church, they saw that it was essential for the salvation of the Church to establish the Divine Authority of the Writings, and to deny the authority of the so called truth from good or faith from charity upon which the Church as a whole relied; and in making this fight they saw no way out but to deny the authority of truth from good in the Church, and thus the seed of faith alone was implanted. And yet on account of the innocence of the state in its beginning and the perception of the importance of the Doctrine that the Writings are the Word of the Lord, the Academy had a commencement of spiritual life, in contrast to the dead state of convention.

We cannot but be struck with the parallel between Luther and the early days of the Academy, the purpose of both was to reestablish the authority of the Word and to destroy the false idea of works and charity, which words, works and charity, were being so abused and turned to such destructive things in the Church.

We read, Luther said to Swedenborg: "Do not wonder that I siezed on faith alone as justifying and that I excluded charity from its spiritual essence, as my end was to break away from the Roman Catholics; and this I could not follow out and attain in any other way. I therefore do not wonder that I erred; but I do wonder that one raver should have been able to produce so many other ravers." T.C.R. 796

In looking back we do not wonder that the early Academy opposed the doctrine of truth from good, or of faith from charity which was being abused to the destruction of the Church. But we do wonder that the teaching of truth from good taught on almost every page of the Writings has since been so ignored.

Concerning the Protestants we read: "For God hath put it in their heart to execute His will, and to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom unto the beast, signifies judgment from the Lord among them, that they might entirely reject and condemn the Roman Catholic Church and blot out and extirpate it from among themselves, and their unanimous determination to acknowledge the Word and thereupon to found the Church." A.R. 749.

"But they indeed acknowledge the Word, and say the Church is founded upon it, and yet they found the Church upon this single statement of Paul entirely misunderstood, that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the Law." A.R. 750

Concerning the words in Daniel: "And He shall confirm the covenant with many for one week; and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the meal offering to

cease." 9:27, We read: "Yet He shall confirm the covenant for one week, signifies the time of the reformation when the Word is again read, and the Lord acknowledged, that is the Divine in His Human; this acknowledgment and conjunction therefrom by means of the Word, is signified by covenant, and the time of the reformation by one week; but in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifices and meal offering to cease, signifies that still interiorly with the reformed there will be no truth and good in worship...The midst of the week, signifies...the inmost of the state of the reformed...There was no truth and good interiorly because they adopted faith as the essential of the Church and separated it from charity...For the inmost of worship is the good of charity, and from that the truth of faith proceeds." A.E. 684⁴⁰

From the above it is evident that where it is not acknowledged that the good of charity is the inmost of the Church, and that the truth of faith proceeds from this, faith alone reigns inmost, in spite of the fact that the Word, and in the New Church, the Latin Word, is acknowledged and the Church is founded upon it, "and the Word (that is the Writings of Swedenborg) are read, and the Lord is acknowledged."

In the council meetings of 1933, as recorded in the May Life of that year, page 160, it is remarkable that Dr. Iungerich compared the position of the General Church to Luther's position. He spoke of "Luther's standing up for the Word of God," as contrasted to those "whose emphasis was in human reaction." Did Dr. Iungerich by human reaction mean the necessity of reception on the part of man?

In reply to Dr. Iungerich I said: "I would like particularly to speak to Dr. Iungerich's remarks. He referred to Luther. The main point of the Protestant Church was that the only authority is the Bible. They denied the authority of the Pope, and thus they got away from certain falsities in which the Catholic Church was; but where they failed was that they did not realize, that what was essential, was not merely the Word, but the genuine understanding of the Word. Therefore the Protestant Church fell into equally serious falsities, and into an equally sad state as that of the Roman Catholic Church.... Their doctrine was false, -that is the great danger. The doctrine of the Word will not be genuine by merely trying to cling to the letter as the Protestant Church did. (By this means) they did not save themselves from false doctrine; and therefore the most important thing is the purity of Doctrine, for apart from the purity of Doctrine the Latin Word is not read in light; or if the doctrine by which the Word is read is false, then the Word itself in the Church is false. And therefore it is right to give due thought to how the orderly growth of Doctrine should take place in the Church. The reason the New Church will endure forever, while no other Church has endured, is because the Lord will provide that the understanding of its Word will be genuine.

The primary end of Divine Providence will always be the purity of Doctrine in order that the Word may be understood. If the Doctrine is misunderstood or misinterpreted the Church is no longer in pure Doctrine. It therefore becomes necessary for us to shun all those things in man's mind which would lead to misinterpretation of the Word. That is the primary duty of every member of the Church, -that he be on his guard against that danger. We are given the Word, which gives us the laws of life but we do not see how these laws apply to the internal things which tend to pervert Doctrine. We see the external things, but our eyes must be opened to see the internal evils which tend to make man pervert his understanding of the Word. So far as these interior evils are shunned, so far the Word will be the Word in our mind."

We will now return to the dilemma of the early Academy, namely as to how it was possible to establish the sole Divine authority of the Writings of Swedenborg as the Word of God and still give to truth from good the rightful place assigned to it in the Latin Word, without falling into two divergent authorities.

There is only one genuine authority in the Church, namely, the Word genuinely understood. The Word not understood has no authority in the Church, and the Word falsely understood has a false authority in the Church. Or what is the same, the only true authority in the Church is the Word seen in the light of Heaven; the Word in darkness has no authority; while the Word seen in the light of the world, or in merely natural light, has a non-genuine authority.

In the council meetings 1933 Mr. Pfeiffer said: "This is really the question: What is the Doctrine of the Church? Is the Doctrine of the Church the Third Testament understood, or is the Doctrine of the Church the Third Testament not understood?"

To which Bishop N. D. Pendleton replied, "We are going to take it for granted that the Doctrines can be understood."
N.C.L. May 1933 Page 261 and 262.

No man can take the understanding of the Word for granted, any more than he can take regeneration for granted. For the teaching given in the Word is that the Word may be seen in natural light alone or it may be seen in spiritual light, that is, the light of heaven. To see the Word in the light of heaven is to see it by enlightenment from the Lord, (and this no one can take for granted), while to see the Word in the merely natural light of the world is not to genuinely understand the Word.

We read in the Doctrine of the Sacred Scripture, "The genuine truth which must be of Doctrine does not appear in the sense of the letter of the Word to any but those who are in enlightenment from the Lord. Enlightenment is from the Lord alone, and exists with those who love truths because they

are truths, and make them uses of life; with others there exists no enlightenment in the Word." 57

Again, "The intellectual can be enlightened only from Heaven; and no one can be enlightened from heaven but he who is in heavenly love, thus who is in the life of good....They who are in worldly love can not be enlightened, because they are in the light of the world and not in the light of heaven." S.D. 5671.

Truth from good is enlightenment when the Word is read. To deny truth from good, makes one with the denial of enlightenment.

Enlightenment is the same as the sending of the Holy Spirit, for we read: "The Divine Virtue and operation which is meant by the sending of the Holy Spirit...is enlightenment." T.C.R. 146 If man by a direct approach can take the understanding of the Word for granted, there is no need for the Holy Spirit. When this state rules, man trusts in his own faculty of understanding in place of putting his trust in the Lord and His presence in the Holy Spirit, such a one sees, not one genuine truth, in the Word.

As quoted in the early part of this paper: "Upon Divine Truth from the Lord, or what is the same, upon truths from good." A.E. 411¹³. Here it is said that Divine Truths are the same as truths from good, and such truth in the previous quotation is said to enlighten man when he reads the Word and is the operation of the Holy Spirit.

The General Church has now accepted the Doctrine, that the goods and truths of the Church are human goods and truths as is evident from the account of the ministers meetings of nineteen hundred and thirty seven and from subsequent articles in the New Church Life. Thus in place of truths from good, which the Word teaches are Divine truths, and are of the Holy Spirit, and are "from the Lord alone," the Church has substituted human goods and truths.

It is generally known that the Word is read according to Doctrine; if the doctrine according to which a man reads the Latin Word is a human doctrine, in the light of this he can never possibly see any but human things in the Word. In other words human goods and truths make the genuine Word entirely invisible and man falls into an idolatrous worship of the letter that killeth. Thus it can be seen that by setting up human goods and truths in place of the Divine truths of the Church, treated of in the Word, the General Church has separated itself from the Lord and brought on itself a final consummation.

The Latin Word teaches that genuine Doctrine is from and makes one with the internal sense of the Word, although it is drawn from and confirmed by the sense of the letter. But as quoted above, "The genuine truth does not appear in the sense of the letter of the Word to any but those who are in enlighten-

ment", and "no one can be enlightened from heaven but he who is in heavenly love, thus who is in the life of good." S.S. 57, S.D. 5671.

Truth can be given to the man of the New Church no where except by appearing in the sense of the letter of the Latin Word, but genuine doctrine can not be seen in the sense of the letter except from the light of heaven, and thus by none but those who are in heavenly love and a life of good. This is the plain meaning of the above passages to any one who is not spiritually blind, and yet it is this teaching contained in the Word which is strenuously opposed in the General Church.

The opposition is an opposition to the doctrine of enlightenment which is one with the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit and one with the Doctrine of truth from good; and yet the most simple man can, if he is willing, perceive that there can be no genuine understanding of the Latin Word, apart from the Lord's presence by means of His Holy Spirit; and that where the operation of the Holy Spirit, which is enlightenment, is not present in the Church, the Church is dead, in spite of a kind of acknowledgment of the Word.

We are taught that judgment belongs to the Son of Man, and further that by the Son of Man is meant the Doctrine of the Church, out of the Word.

The state of the historical Christian churches is manifested in the sense of the letter of the Latin Word, and any one reading the Latin Word can see what is there said about the historical churches from natural light. But the Word treats primarily of the New Church, and all the states that it passes through. The Lord manifests the state of the New Church from the Word seen in spiritual light. If it were not for such manifestations and consequent judgment from the Lord by means of the Word, man could never know what was the genuine New Church, for he could not distinguish between living organizations of the Church and those which have died, (for it is known in the Church that any organization of the Church can die), and thus confusion would increase until the New Church like former Churches would totally perish.