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LECTURES ON THE PHILOSOPHY OF SWEDENBORG'S *PRINCIPIA*

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ASSUMPTIONS OR POSTULATES ON WHICH SWEDENBORG BASED ALL HIS THINKING

1. That there is a God and that He is one. [Letter to Dr. Beyer November 14, 1769] (TCR 16)
2. That God created and perpetually maintains the universe. (*Principia*, Part I, Chapter 1, pages 36, 37)

(*Ed. Note.* These lectures were delivered by Bishop de Charms at the Educational Council meetings of Schools of the General Church of the New Jerusalem held in Bryn Athyn, in August 1963. The first two lectures are here published. It is planned to present the remaining lectures in the 1964 issues.)

3. That in God there is nothing geometrical or mechanical, yet in Him is the cause of everything that is geometrical and mechanical. (Preface to the *Principia*, page xvi)
4. That in the created universe also are things which are not geometrical or mechanical. (*Principia*, Part I, Chapter 1, pages 25–28)
5. That the force which created the universe was not mechanical, but was the force of love, or the Divine will. (*Principia*, Part I, Chapter 2, page 50)
6. That because there are things in the created universe which are not geometrical or mechanical, there must be a spiritual world, and in it a spiritual or “moral” sun. (EAK Vol. II, nos. 238, 251; *Principia*, Part III, Chapter 1, Vol. II, pages 231, 232.)
7. That there must be an unbroken chain of connection from the outmosts of creation, even to the infinite. (*Principia*, Part I, Chapter 1, pages 20, 21)
8. That the chain of connection between the Infinite and the outmosts of creation is effected by a series of discrete degrees. (EAK Part I, nos. 621, 622, 625, 626)
9. That between these discrete degrees there is an understandable relationship, so that from the knowledge of the ultimate degree it is possible to attain a knowledge of the higher degrees. The pathway to this higher knowledge, Swedenborg discovered by means of the doctrines of forms, of order and degrees, of series and society, of communication and influx, of correspondence and representation, and of modification. (AK Vol. I Prologue, page 11)

LECTURE I

INTRODUCTION. THE ASSUMPTIONS ON WHICH SWEDENBORG BASED ALL HIS THINKING

We have accepted with considerable trepidation the kind invitation of the Rev. David Simons to give a series of lectures on the value and importance of Swedenborg’s philosophical works to the development of New Church education, because we hardly feel qualified to do the subject justice. Although we have been deeply

interested in these works, and have been fully convinced of their importance, the duties to which we have been called have left us but small opportunity, over the past many years, to give concentrated study to them. Others have been more fortunate in this respect, and in consequence have been able to acquire a far greater mastery of the subject. I wish particularly to acknowledge my own indebtedness, and that of the General Church and the Academy, to the late Bishop Alfred Acton, whose profound study of Swedenborg's life, and of his philosophical works, is well known and deeply appreciated by the Church. I would also express grateful recognition of Dr. H. L. Odhner's work in this field. In connection with his teaching in the Theological School and in the College, he has made a truly scholarly study of Swedenborg's earlier works. Finally, I would give expression to the delight with which I have followed the articles written by Prof. E. F. Allen in the *NEW PHILOSOPHY* and elsewhere, in which he has endeavored to bring the scientific knowledge of modern physics to bear upon the more accurate understanding of Swedenborg's philosophical system.

Because it is impossible to give anything like an adequate account of Swedenborg's philosophical works within the time available, I have found it necessary to confine myself to a consideration of the *Principia*, with only a brief reference to the even more extensive areas of physiology and psychology. I shall therefore start at the beginning and advance as far as the time may permit, because the *Principia* theory of Divine creation is basic, and without it the works on physiology and psychology could hardly be understood.

I am well aware that at these meetings I shall be addressing some who are well versed in Swedenborg's philosophy, and also some who have very slight knowledge of it. This poses a problem, and I must ask the indulgence of both as I attempt to make the highly abstract concepts involved understandable at all without overtaxing the patience of the initiated.

For reasons that will become abundantly evident as we proceed, Swedenborg's *Principia*, when viewed in relation to the teaching of the Writings, is open to various interpretations. As a matter of fact, among the leading New Church scholars who have essayed to discover and define this relationship, there has been considerable divergence of opinion. Each one has assumed certain premises from which a logical system of interpretation has been adopted.

But as is inevitable, because our present knowledge is so limited, each such interpretation leaves serious questions still unanswered, and reveals apparent contradictions with the plain teaching of the Writings. This fact obviously points to the need for further exploration, study, and analysis. My own attempts to discover a solution are equally open to the same objection. They admittedly represent no more than certain hypotheses which it seems to me are clearly indicated by Swedenborg's own statements, and from which there appear to follow certain unavoidable conclusions. These conclusions, however, are fully acknowledged to be tentative and subject to change, because they are based on altogether insufficient evidence.

But let us ask at the outset just what we mean by philosophy. Strictly speaking, the word means the love of wisdom, and it implies the search for truth in an endeavor to understand the nature of the world in which we live. It seeks to penetrate beyond the knowledge of sense experience, and to explore causes through the exercise of logic and reason. It seeks to discover the deeper meaning and purpose of life by means of intelligent observation, reflection, and deduction. What we know as modern philosophy had its rise shortly before the time in which Swedenborg lived. It began when men challenged the authority of dogmatic theology, and insisted upon freedom to draw conclusions directly from scientific observation. It was the product of the scientific attitude of mind which has dominated philosophical thinking ever since. It has developed hand in hand with science, and has been modified progressively as scientific knowledge has increased, and as new theories, based on more modern discoveries, have been adopted.

Modern philosophy began with an effort to explain the process of creation; but this endeavor was later abandoned on the ground that the purpose of scientific investigation is to explain phenomena rather than to speculate in regard to things that transcend the realm of physical sensation and experimental proof. Even the earliest modern philosophers refrained from any attempt to explain how God created the universe, or how He continues to influence His creation. This is on the ground that what lies beyond the perception of the senses transcends all human understanding, and that therefore there is no way in which the relation of natural things to things supernatural and Divine can possibly be discovered. The

existence of such things may be taken for granted; but what they are, or how they operate, must be regarded as miraculous and altogether unknowable.

We would recall to your minds the leading philosophers with whom Swedenborg was or at least could have been familiar, in order to give some idea of the intellectual environment in which Swedenborg lived, and the climate of thought in which he worked. The sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries are a remarkable period in the history of philosophic thought. An astonishing number of men lived during this period whose writings on the subject of philosophy have left a lasting impression upon succeeding generations—men whose works are still read and highly esteemed. They were truly pioneer thinkers, who essayed a task never before undertaken, and one that had always been considered impossible, namely, to discover causes by the analytic or the scientific method alone. We can of course give no more than a bare suggestion of what these philosophers contributed to the development of modern thought; but we take for granted that most of you are more or less familiar with their works. Our purpose is merely to draw a sharp contrast between the early attempts of these men to solve the mystery of life, and that entirely different approach which characterized Swedenborg's philosophical thinking.

SIR FRANCIS BACON (1561–1626) has been called the “herald of modern philosophy.” He rejected the syllogism, which had been the accepted basis from which to reason, and attempted instead to establish his conclusions on careful and painstaking experiment.

RENÉ DESCARTES (1596–1650) began with the necessity of doubting all things, and of accepting only what can be indisputably proved. He concluded that the only thing certain is that he exists because he thinks and is conscious. From this he proves the existence of God, but attempts no explanation of how God operates. He affirms a great distinction between mind and matter, the latter consisting of parts, and the former having no parts.

THOMAS HOBBES (1588–1679) did not treat of cosmology, but explored the nature of the human mind, of government, of society, and sought to discover the secret of mutual cooperation, whence comes peace and happiness. He tried to analyse the instinctive curiosity that leads men to search out causes.

BARUCH SPINOZA (1632-1677) stressed the necessity of a universal substance from which all things are, and the need for an unbroken chain of connection, through successive causes, running through all things of this primal substance. He conceived of the operations of God as being fixed and unalterable, and on this ground denied the reality of free will.

JOHN LOCKE (1632-1704) wrote on the human understanding, contending that there are no innate ideas. He sought to define the nature of ideas, both simple and complex.

GOTTFRIED WILHELM LEIBNITZ (1646-1716) postulated the existence of *monads* or simple substances as the first elements of all things. He held that matter is the product of motion, and believed in pre-established harmony between the mind and the body.

SIR ISAAC NEWTON (1642-1727) discovered important laws of mathematics, and in his *Principia* explained for the first time how the movements of the stars and the planets could be understood according to these laws. His theories were at first rejected; but later they were almost universally accepted and for more than two hundred years all ideas of cosmogony have been based on the principles which he laid down.

CHRISTIAN WOLFF (1679-1754) is mentioned adversely by Swedenborg because he postulated simple substances or *monads* which were created out of nothing, and which he said were indivisible.

GEORGE BERKELEY (1685-1753) did not, as some have charged, deny the existence of matter, but did contend that what we can know of the external world is only what is revealed by our sensations.

EMANUEL SWEDENBORG (1688-1772) must be placed here in the chronological sequence of philosophers with whom he was acquainted; but he was probably familiar also with the writings of the two who immediately followed.

DAVID HUME (1711-1776) is considered to be one of the most important of all British philosophers. He was characterized by extreme skepticism.

IMMANUEL KANT (1724-1804) reacted strongly against the skepticism of Hume. His *Critique of Pure Reason* exerted a profound influence upon all subsequent thinkers.

Swedenborg's philosophy was similar to that of the other thinkers of his day in this, that he sought, as they did, to discover the deeper truth concerning the world and human life by the way of experience and human reason. However, Swedenborg, unlike the others, based all his thinking on the teaching of the Word. In this respect his philosophy was in accord with that of the New Church, which we would define as being a search for the true relation between the facts of science and the teachings of Divine revelation. In the Writings we now find universal principles on which we seek to base all our thinking. Because of this we enjoy a tremendous advantage which the philosophers of Swedenborg's day did not possess, and which Swedenborg himself lacked. We must bear this in mind when we pass judgment upon their efforts to penetrate the secrets of nature.

Swedenborg based all his thinking on certain assumptions or postulates by which he was sharply distinguished from the philosophers of his day. It should be noted that no one can produce any philosophy without starting from certain assumptions. There must be something fixed and positive from which to reason. Just as no surveyor can plot a chart with any meaning unless he has a bench mark to start from, a knowledge of the four quarters, and perhaps a measure of altitude above or below sea-level, so no one can successfully construct a reasoned argument without some hypothesis which is assumed to be true. The philosophers of Swedenborg's day based their reasoning on certain assumptions, the most prominent being this: that a philosophic understanding of the universe may be achieved by the exercise of human reason founded solely upon the evidence of experience, and without resort to Divine revelation. This was because they were in revolt against the dogmatic interpretations of Scripture which had been accepted by the Christian Church, and which had been insisted upon in defiance of any scientific discovery to the contrary. Swedenborg, by contrast, while ignoring the dogmas of the Church, acknowledged the necessity of Divine revelation, and based all his thinking in the first place upon the Word.

It is extremely important that we have in mind those things which Swedenborg assumed to be true, because they have a vital bearing upon our interpretation of what he wrote. I wish to call them to your attention therefore, at the outset of our enquiry, and

I would urge you to keep them actively before you in connection with what is to follow. These are not assumptions that I have merely ascribed to Swedenborg. They are quoted literally from His pre-theological works, and record what he thought as a philosopher before his spiritual eyes were opened.

SWEDENBORG'S POSTULATES

I. *That there is a God, and that He is one.*

From my fourth to my tenth year I have been even in thoughts concerning God, salvation, and man's spiritual passions. (Letter to Dr. Beyer, dated November 14, 1769. See *Letters and Memorials of Swedenborg*, Vol. 2, page 696.)

From my childhood I have not been able to admit into mind any other idea than that of one God. (TCR 16)

II. *God created and perpetually maintains the universe.*

Now as all nature—the whole mundane system, is the work of God; as all contingent circumstances, before the world was produced and completed, are to be ascribed solely to His wisdom; so also, in case He should be pleased to display by other contingent causes new phenomena, whether foreign and contrary to the nature of our world, or agreeable to it, yet such as cannot be produced by any other active principle than the Deity,—to the same Infinite Wisdom must these also be ascribed. Thus true philosophy leads to the most profound admiration and adoration of the Deity; nor can anything be found to diminish, but infinite things to increase, this admiration: as when a man sees that all things are of the Infinite, and that in respect to the Infinite he himself, as a finite being, is nothing: when also he sees that all his own wisdom and philosophy are, in respect to the Divine, in the same proportion as the finite to the Infinite,—that is, as nothing. (*Principia*, Part I, Chapter 1, pages 36, 37)

III. *In God there is nothing geometrical or mechanical, yet in Him is the cause of everything that is geometrical and mechanical.*

In a Simple, however, in which there can be nothing substantial to be put in motion, nor any medium in which motion can exist, we must conceive that instead of a mechanical and geometrical motion, such as there is between parts and in a medium, there is as it were a total or pure motion, that is to say, a state and a conatus hence arising from a similar into a similar *quasi* motion; in which is latent the one only cause and primitive force that produced all the entities subsequently existing. (*Principia* Preface page xvi)

IV. *In the created universe also there are things which are not geometrical or mechanical.*

But though the world is constituted in a mechanical manner, and is composed of a series of finite things which have their origin by means of the most various contingents; and though the world, being of such a nature, may, with the aid of geometry, be explored by means of experiment and the phenomena that exist in it; it does not therefore follow that all things whatsoever that are in the world are subject to the empire of geometry. For there are innumerable things which are not mechanical, nor even geometrical; such as the Infinite, and whatsoever is in the Infinite. Geometry is conversant only with things that are finite and have limits, and with the figures and spaces thence originating, together with their several dimensions; but that which is infinite is without and above the sphere of geometry, being regarded by it as its origin and first beginning. For the finite has its origin in the infinite without which it can neither begin nor continue to exist: to this infinite it is that everything finite has reference, not excepting geometry. Geometry, therefore, is itself subservient to that most vast Infinite, from which as from their fountainhead such an infinite number of finite things emanate, and owns that there is nothing in itself either similar or analogous to it. There is then an Infinite, which can by no means be geometrically explored, because its existence is prior to geometry, as being its cause. There are also many other things, the nature of which, though they originated from the Infinite, and began to exist together with the world, has not yet been discovered by any geometry or any reasoning philosophy: for instance, that intelligent principle which exists in animals, or the soul, which, together with the body, constitutes their life. . . . In the soul of brutes there is some idea of this intelligence: in man it is more distinct and rational: in the Infinite it is infinite, and infinitely surpasses the comprehension and sphere of the most rational intelligence. There are also many other things which occur in the world that cannot be called geometrical. Thus there is a Providence respecting all things, which is infinite in the Infinite, or in the Being who is provident in the highest degree; and there follows from hence a connection or series of consequents, according to which all circumstances are determined and arranged, by causes and the causes of causes, toward a certain end. We see from experience, and *a posteriori*, that there is such a connection of contingencies, from causes and their causates, in producing a given end; but to know the nature of this connection, *a priori*, is not within the province of man or of geometry. There are also innumerable other things which we in vain endeavor to explore by geometry and *a priori*; as, perhaps, the nature of love. We see, *a posteriori*, that it has its consistence in the connection of things; that it exists independently of the organic body; is antecedent to corporeal pleasure; and, being conjoined in the animal with intelligence, produces everything which can conduce to the preservation and continuation of its kind. The ancients regarded love as being of great moment, attributing to it the production of the universe; and many will assert that traces of intelligent love are to be found in vegetable and inanimate subjects. There are probably infinite other things, of which

we have no knowledge whatever, that own no obedience to the known laws of mechanics. Hence we may conclude, that there are qualities in the soul that are still very remote from mechanical apprehension: so that, did we even know all the mechanism and geometry of the visible world, of animal organization, vegetation, or any other department of nature, there still are infinite things with which we are unacquainted. (*Principia* Part I, Chapter 1, pages 25–28)

V. *The force that created the universe was not mechanical but was the force of love, or the Divine will.*

If then it be admitted that the first simple was produced by motion from the Infinite, we are at the same time bound to suppose, that in the producing cause there was a will that it should be produced; something of an active quality, which produced it; and something of an intelligent nature, determining that it should be produced in such a manner and in no other, or in one mode in preference to another; in a word, something infinitely intelligent, infinitely provident, infinitely active, and infinitely productive. Hence this first point could not exist by chance, nor by itself, but by something which exists by itself; in which something there must be a will, an agency, and an intelligence, to produce the effect in one mode rather than in another. There must likewise be something of a provident design, that the effect produced should be successively modified in a given series; and that, by means of a series of modifications, certain specific contingencies should take place rather than others. All these must of necessity have been in some sort present in this first mode of motion; for in respect to this single and primitive motion of the Infinite, things future and contingent can be considered in no other light than as actually present and already in existence. (*Principia* Part I, Chapter 2, Number 5, page 50)

VI. *Because there are things in the created universe which are not geometrical or mechanical, there must be a spiritual world, and in it a spiritual or "moral" sun.*

(Referring to the statement that "Nature, in respect to life, is dead." EAK Vol. II, page 224)

Hence we must look higher for its principle of life, and seek it from the First Esse or Deity of the universe, who is essential life, and essential perfection of life, or wisdom. Unless this First Esse were life and wisdom, nothing whatever in nature could live, much less have wisdom; nor yet be capable of motion. God is the Fountain of Life, the Sun of Wisdom, the Spiritual Light, the Very Esse, and I AM; in whom we live, and move, and have our being; from whom, by whom, unto whom, or for the sake of whom, are all things; who is the First and the Last. This we are forbidden by Holy Scripture to doubt; we are forbidden also by sound reason; for the ancient philosophers acknowledged it out of the mere light of their own understandings. (EAK Vol. II, number 238, pages 227, 228)

But to know the manner in which this life and wisdom flow in, is infinitely above the sphere of the human mind; there is no analysis and no abstraction that can reach so high: for whatever is in God, and whatever law God acts by, is God. The only representation we can have of it is the way of comparison with light. For as the sun is the fountain of light and the distinctions thereof in its universe, so the Deity is the sun of life and of all wisdom. As the sun of the world flows in one only manner, and without union, into the subjects and objects of its universe, so also does the sun of life and of wisdom. As the sun of the world flows in by mediating auras, so the sun of life and wisdom flows in by the mediation of his spirit. But as the sun of the world flows into subjects and objects according to the modified character of each, so also does the sun of life and wisdom. But we are not at liberty to go further than this into the details of the comparison, inasmuch as the one sun is within nature, the other is above it: the one is physical, the other is purely moral; and the one falls under the philosophy of the mind, while the other lies withdrawn among the sacred mysteries of theology; between which two there are boundaries that it is impossible for human faculties to transcend. Furthermore, by the omnipresence and universal influx of this life into created matters, all things flow constantly in a provident order from an end, through ends to an end. (EAK Vol. II, Number 251, page 236)

Now inasmuch as man is not created prone to the earth like beasts, but is endowed both with an upright mien in order to enable him to look upward to the heavens, and with a soul derived from the aura of a purer and better world, in virtue of which he is allied to heaven; let us avail ourselves of this privilege to exalt our thoughts to the regions above. Perhaps some one may observe—Supposing we do, what then? Shall we be wiser?—Alas! we are but finite beings, and the objects we survey are themselves but finite. Our wisdom therefore will be but that of a finite man; a wisdom derived from a knowledge of finite things, which must itself be consequently finite, and which therefore in relation to that which is infinite must be nothing. In this case, what remains for us to do? To let all our wisdom terminate in admiration of that Infinite Being who is the author of the finite universe; even as when our survey of a skillful piece of mechanism leads us into admiration of its maker. (*Principia*, Part III, Chapter 1, pages 231–232)

VII. *There must be an unbroken chain of connection from the outmosts of creation, even to the Infinite.*

As nature operates in the world in a mechanical manner, and the phenomena which she exhibits to our senses are subject to their proper laws and rules, it follows, that nature cannot thus operate except by means of contiguity and connection. Thus the mechanism of the world consists in contiguity, without which neither the world nor its mechanism could exist. Unless one particle were to operate both upon another and by means of another, or the whole mass were to operate by all its particles respectively, and at the same time at a distance, nothing elementary, capable of affecting or striking the

least organ of sense, could exist. Contiguity is necessary to the production of every operation. Without a perpetual connection between the end and the means, the existence of elementary nature, and of the vegetable and animal natures thence originating, would be impossible. The connection between ends and means forms the very life and essence of nature. For nothing can originate from itself; it must originate from some other thing: hence there must be a certain contiguity and connection in the existence of natural things; that is, all things, in regard to their existence, must follow each other in successive order. Thus all things in the world owe their existence to their mutual dependence on each other, there being a connection, by mediums, from ultimate to ultimate, whence all things have respect to their first source from which they derive their existence. For if all things had not respect to their first source, but only to some intermediate link, this intermediate would be their ultimate: but an intermediate cannot exist but from something prior to itself, and whatever exists from something prior to itself cannot be the ultimate, but only an intermediate; or else if it were the ultimate, the world would stop short at this ultimate and perish, because it would have no connection with its proper ultimate by something antecedent. These remarks have reference to the subject of existence. With respect to the subject of contingencies, or modes and modifications, which exist both from ultimate and simple, and from intermediate substances, neither can these be otherwise than continuous and mutually connected, depending successively on each other from one end to the other. Thus must all things, both such as are essential and such as are contingent, necessarily have a connection with their first substantial principle: for they proceed solely from simple or compound substances; and as these substances depend for their existence, mutually upon each other, it follows that the modifications related to those substances must be dependent on the same connection. (*Principia* Part I, Chapter 1, pages 20, 21)

VIII. *The chain of connection between the Infinite and the outmosts of creation is effected by a series of discrete degrees.*

By the doctrine of series and degrees we mean that doctrine which teaches the mode observed by nature in the subordination and coordination of things, and which in acting she has prescribed for herself. Series are what successively and simultaneously comprise things subordinate and coordinate. But degrees are distinct progressions, such as when we find one thing is subordinated under another, and when one thing is coordinated in juxtaposition with another: in this sense there are degrees of determination and degrees of composition. In the mundane system there are several series, both universal and less universal, each of which contains under it several series proper and essential to itself, while each of these again contains series of its own; so that there is nothing in the visible world which is not a series, and in a series. Consequently the science of natural things depends on a distinct notion of series and degrees, and of their subordination and coordination. (EAK Part I, number 580)

IX. *From a knowledge of ultimate creation it is possible to ascend to a knowledge of the higher degrees by means of doctrines which Swedenborg propounds.*

But since it is impossible to climb or leap from the organic, physical, and material world—I mean the body—immediately to the soul, of which neither matter, nor any of the adjuncts of matter are predicable (for spirit is above the comprehensible modes of nature, and in that region where the significations of physical things perish); hence it was necessary to lay down new ways by which I might be led to her, and thus gain access to her palace,—in other words, to discover, disengage, and bring forth, by the most intense application and study, certain new doctrines for my guidance, which are (as my plan shows) the doctrines of forms, of order and degrees, of series and society, of communication and influx, of correspondence and representation, and of modification; these it is my intention to present in a single volume under the title of *An Introduction to Rational Psychology*. (AK Prologue, page 11)

From these postulates we conclude that Swedenborg was set apart and distinguished from the philosophers of his day, and indeed from the scientific philosophers of our own day, by his attitude of profound humility before the Divine Creator, and by his insistence that this Divine Being is the actual creator, the actual preserver, and the immediate cause of all created things, and that no genuine philosophic answer to the questions that confront every one who essays to investigate the underlying truth of nature, can be discovered without acknowledging this, and taking it into consideration.

LECTURE II

THE PROCESS OF CREATION IS NOT PURELY MECHANICAL

We have defined New Church Philosophy as the search for the true relationship between the facts of nature and the truths of Revelation. The discovery of this relationship is now possible as never before because the Lord has made His second coming, and has brought the Divine Natural within the grasp of man's rational mind. Is not this what is meant when it is said that "Now it is permitted to enter intellectually into the mysteries of faith"? (TCR 508) Before His Advent the Lord was present with man and angels in the two prior degrees, the celestial and the spiritual;

but He was present in the natural degree only in potency. We take this to mean that although the Lord was actually omnipresent in His creation, even to its lowest ultimates; and although His presence there was known and acknowledged from perception; yet how He was present there was not known. He was not seen in the operations of nature. He was known and worshipped as the Angel of Jehovah who appeared in spiritual vision; but He was not seen as a Man on earth. He could not be known as the risen Lord Jesus Christ who is the Divine Human, in whom was fulfilled the prophecy of the Apocalypse: "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He shall dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God." (Rev. 21: 3)

When He came into the world and glorified His Human, the Lord took to Himself the power to reveal His presence in nature, to make known the relation between the spiritual and the natural worlds, and thus to disclose the laws of His providence, and the modes of His operation for the regeneration and salvation of man. For this reason it is said that now, for the first time, He can be worshiped as a visible God, an Infinite Divine Man.

Even though the Second Advent had not yet taken place, the search for this relationship was the inmost purpose and the distinguishing characteristic of Swedenborg's philosophy. As we have pointed out, Swedenborg lived at the beginning of the scientific era, when men first began to consider factual evidence as the paramount requirement in the search for truth. Philosophers tried for the first time to explain the origin and the nature of the world by logical deduction from the facts of experience and experiment. Although they professed a belief in religion, and in this were quite sincere, they did not base their investigations or their theories on the dogmas of the Church, nor did they reason from religious principles. They believed that everything super-natural was mysterious, miraculous, and unknowable, and that it stood in no understandable relation to the things of physical sensation. Swedenborg, on the other hand, believed that while things supernatural were transcendent, they were nevertheless the actual cause of natural things, and that, because of this there must be a discoverable relation between the two. To demonstrate this relationship was the whole purpose of his philosophy.

In regard to the origin of all things, the philosophers of Swedenborg's day adopted various theories :

Spinoza postulated an original substance from which all things were derived ; but he did not attempt to define that substance, or to explain how it came into being.

Leibnitz said that matter was the product of motion, but left unanswered the question as to what kind of motion it was, or what force propelled it.

Euclidian Geometry was based on the idea that all things arose from a mathematical point of no dimension. As this point moved it produced a line of one dimension, namely length. As the line moved it produced a plane of two dimensions, length and breadth. And as the plane moved it produced a solid of three dimensions, length, breadth, and thickness. According to this theory the universe was created out of nothing, since a point of no dimension is nothing. Nor did the theory include the concept of any power capable of moving the point.

Wolff supposed that there were "monads" or "simple substances" which were uncreate, and thus present from the beginning, and which he said were indivisible.

None of these philosophers suggested any part that God might play in the process of creation, or in the operation of the created universe, but attempted to explain everything by the exercise of human reason unaided by Divine Revelation. Swedenborg, on the other hand, began, as we have already pointed out, with the assumption, not only that God exists, but that He is the actual Creator of the Universe, and that He created all things from love by wisdom, and thus with a definite end or purpose in view. Swedenborg accepted the necessity of basing all his reasoning on factual evidence ; but he insisted upon interpreting this evidence in accord with the principles of religion derived from the Word. His oft-repeated purpose was to check the trend toward skepticism, unbelief, and atheism, which was so apparent in the thinking of his day, by proving the existence of the soul, and inmosty the existence of an immanently present God, on the basis of factual evidence.

These pages of mine are written with a view to those only who never believe anything but what they can receive with the intellect ; consequently, who boldly invalidate, and are fain to deny the existence of all super-eminent

things sublimer than themselves, as the soul itself and what follows therefrom—its life, immortality, heaven, *etc.* These things, perhaps, since such persons do not perceive them, they reject, classing them among empty phrases, *entia rationis*, phantasms, trifles, fables, conceits, and self-delusions; and consequently they honor and worship nature, the world, and themselves; in other respects, they compare themselves to brutes, and think that they shall die in the same manner as brutes, and their souls exhale and evaporate; thus they rush fearlessly into wickedness. For these persons only I am anxious; and as I said before, for them I indite, and to them I dedicate my work. For when I shall have demonstrated truths themselves by the analytic method, I hope that these debasing shadows, or material clouds, which darken the sacred temple of the mind, will be dispersed: and thus at last, under the favor of God, who is the sun of wisdom, that an access will be opened, and a way laid down to faith. My ardent desire and zeal for this end is what urges and animates me. (*AK Prologue* pages 14, 15)

This being the case it is obvious that Swedenborg had to present his case in the language, and the only language, which those to whom it was addressed were able to understand. This explains why, to all appearance, he sets forth the whole of creation in terms of geometry and mechanics.

Swedenborg agrees with Leibnitz that all creation is the product of motion; but he differs from Leibnitz in holding that the origin of all motion is in the Infinite, that is, in God, and indeed in the Divine love. In the Infinite, he says, there is only "pure and total" motion, by which he implies that it is motion without limit and without direction, yet containing the potency of all limited and directional motion, being in the nature of a "conatus" or endeavor to motion. The first proceeding from this "conatus" he calls the "first natural point." The mental picture of how this "point" is formed is that of a whirlpool within the Infinite Substance—a whirlpool that produces a point, which is said not to be finite because it has only one limit, and according to Swedenborg's philosophy, nothing can be called finite which does not have at least two limits. This first natural point differs from the mathematical point, which is said to have no dimension, in that it does have one limit. It is said to be intermediate between the Infinite and the finite in that, although it is infinite, it still is pointing, or looking toward the finite. It differs from the "monads" of Wolff, which were said to be solid and indivisible, in that it is infinitely active, and contains all things within it in potency. If we think of this in a human way, rather than as something purely mechanical, we

can regard it as the Divine intention, the focusing of the Divine love upon the supreme end or purpose of creating a heaven from the human race. This Divine love contains all things within it in potency because it has within itself the infinite wisdom required to produce all things essential to the achievement of its purpose.

Swedenborg, however, describes the first natural point as if it were purely mechanical. He postulates that it is endowed with a motion which, once started, cannot fail to continue producing new motions. Thus he describes the point as having a local motion, or a motion in space which produces a perpetual spiral. That is, it moves in a helix like the thread of a screw, but a helix that turns in upon itself, and in so doing produces a global figure flattened at the poles. Furthermore, this motion does not return to the point from which it started, but to a point slightly removed therefrom, and so doing it tends to put the entire globe into a local motion that produces another perpetual spiral, much larger, and much slower than the first. The first globe is called the "first finite" and the second one the "second finite." If we accept this description literally we must come to the conclusion that Swedenborg is postulating a purely mechanical, and geometrical universe. Consider for instance the following statement:

Geometry, therefore, and mechanism, in relation both to the parts and to the whole of a body, and also in relation to the world itself, consists in this, that the first figure of motion, state and conatus is spiral; and that by virtue of such a figure there succeed a motion of the whole composite, or an axillary motion; a motion of its parts, or a progressive motion: and lastly, from or by virtue of these, a local motion. Such is the sum of our whole work and of its principles; and such the cause of all the parts and compositions in our mechanical world. (*Principia* Part I, Chapter 2, page 67)

By "axillary motion" is meant a turning of the globe on its axis, even as the earth turns to produce night and day. By "progressive motion" is meant the motion of the point in successive circles that progress from one to the other until they almost meet at the point from which they started. And by "local motion" is meant the motion of the entire globe in another vortex, similar to the first but much larger. Furthermore, Swedenborg says:

That the first substantial is geometrical; that it is limited, but limited in its least and fewest boundaries. This follows from what has been said, since it is the least finite; being finited or limited in its least boundaries. It follows also that it is the least geometrical finite. Nothing is geometrical

which has not limits; for geometry treats of the variations pertaining to limits, together with the limits themselves. Geometry, therefore, begins with this first finite; whence this first is likewise the least geometrical finite. (*Principia* Part I Chapter 3, page 75)

There are indications, however, even in the *Principia* that when Swedenborg refers to the figure of this first finite he has in mind something which can be called geometrical only in potency, or by analogy, for he says:

In the series of finites there cannot possibly be a more perfect figure than that of the finite which comes proximately from the most simple, or from points; which cannot admit into themselves anything but what is most perfect, because they exist immediately from the Infinite. Now if the figure of this finite be the most perfect of all finite figures, then a more perfect figure will be that of the simple. (*Principia* Part I Chapter 3, page 76)

Note that while the first finite is said to be the beginning of geometry, the "simple" or the first natural point is said to have an even more perfect figure. Since this "point" is above all geometry, it can have "figure" only by analogy.

That there is a higher or more interior form which may by analogy be called geometrical or mechanical is stated elsewhere as follows:

Men doubt concerning God because they are ignorant of the soul, and doubt its existence. Moreover, if a thing is mechanical, they think that therefore it will perish. The soul is indeed mechanical, but there is a mechanical which cannot perish; and if this were shown, I do not think so much doubt would arise. From preconceived ideas, men think that mechanically a communion of souls is [not] possible, and this because they cannot suppose the soul to be mechanical; but if they know, they will think differently. They say that spirits are not material or mechanical, and that therefore they ought to doubt concerning their existence,—at which I do not wonder. For spirits are created, and consequently are finite and not infinite; and therefore, since, according to the common opinion, spirits are neither finite nor infinite; and since men know of no third possibility; therefore, being unable to have any conception of them, they come to denial, the refuge and last boundary of ignorance. Since they do not know that the soul can enjoy a most subtle sense,—a sense of things deeply concealed,—therefore, being ignorant, they deny; if this were to be shown of the soul they would not deny. With the opening of the mechanism of the soul, they will come to know the nature of the soul in life, its nature as formed in life by means of the body, and what its nature, thus formed, will be after death. They will come to know that the soul can derive its origin only from the Infinite, in whom is the cause of every finite,—a fact which spirits themselves know, and which consequently they highly venerate. (*Psychologica* Number 52)

If it is shown in this way that the soul and its operations are a mechanism, not only is the doubt removed which we entertain concerning the soul and its existence and immortality, but we shall then be able to make further progress and to learn the nature of the memory, the intellect, the imagination, and the passions of the animus and body, all which are most utterly unknown to us because we do not know the mechanism [of the soul and its operations].

Therefore we doubt concerning the existence of the soul and its immortality; for we reason so grossly as to suppose that everything which is mechanical will perish; that everything of this nature will rot away; that everything of this nature is subject to change;—as though there were not a mechanical which can never perish, and which is immortal. (*Psychologica* Number 116)

It is further stated that this higher kind of mechanical and geometrical, which is ascribed to the soul or spirit, has none of the attributes of matter, but is purely spiritual.

Since it is impossible to climb or leap from the organic, physical, and material world—I mean the body—immediately to the soul, of which neither matter nor any of the adjuncts of matter are predicable, (for spirit is above the comprehensible modes of nature, and in that region where the significations of physical things perish); hence it was necessary to lay down new ways by which I might be led to her, and thus gain access to her palace,—in other words, to discover, disengage, and bring forth, by the most intense application and study, certain new doctrines for my guidance, which are, (as my plan shows) the doctrines of forms, of order and degrees, of series and society, of communication and influx, of correspondence and representation, and of modification; these it is my intention to present in a single volume, under the title of *An Introduction to Rational Psychology*. (AK Volume I Prologue, page 11. See also *Rational Psychology*, Preface, page 3)

Finally, Swedenborg's contention is, that from a knowledge of natural things, that is, of geometry and of mechanics, spiritual things can be inferred and understood by analogy.

Inasmuch as the soul is the model, the idea, the first form, the substance, the force, and the principle of her organic body, and of all its forces and powers; or, what amounts to the same thing, as the organic body is the image and type of its soul, formed and principled to the whole nature of the soul's efficiency, it follows, that the one is represented in the other, if not exactly, yet quite sufficiently to the life; and that an idea of the soul is suggested to the mind by elevating the forms of singulars, and extracting from them a higher meaning, and by analogies and eminences, as will be seen in our doctrine of forms, of order and degrees, of correspondences and representations, *etc.* Thus, by the body we are instructed respecting the soul; and by the soul respecting the body; and by both respecting the truth of the whole: and in this way we are led to an ample knowledge of the animal kingdom. (AK Prologue, page 13)

In the light of these quotations the conclusion is inescapable, that although in the *Principia* Swedenborg describes the process of creation in terms of motion producing geometrical figures, yet, back of all this is something deeper, namely, the acknowledgment that God, or the Infinite, is not mechanical or geometrical, although He is the source of both; and also that there is a soul and a spiritual world in which it lives that is purely spiritual, possessing none of the attributes of matter, and yet possessing something which is wholly analogous to the geometrical and the mechanical. In spite of the appearance to the contrary, we cannot possibly believe that Swedenborg intended to convey the idea that energy, mechanical motion, or dead force was the origin of all things. The conclusion is unavoidable that he was speaking philosophically in adaptation to the natural-minded men to whom his writings were addressed, and therefore couched his thought in terms of mechanical motion and geometrical figure. But looking more deeply into his thought, it becomes perfectly evident that he regards this mode of speech merely as a means of helping men to picture the spiritual activity of love. Therefore he describes the first natural point as a finiting motion in the Infinite Substance; yet he insists that this motion is the living origin of all created things. He ascribes to it a goal, a purpose, and a love that embraces the entire universe. He endows it with wisdom to achieve that purpose; and because of this, he thinks of it, not as a mechanical force, but as the spiritual activity of the Divine love. This is specifically stated in the *Principia* as follows:

No rational and intelligent philosopher can deny that the first *ens* was produced from the Infinite, as well as the rest in succession, or all the parts of which the world is composed. . . . Nothing can exist without a cause except the Infinite. . . . What is finite, therefore, takes its origin from what is infinite, as an effect from its cause, and as a thing limited from what is in itself unlimited, yet having the power to limit all other things. Whatsoever of a finite nature was produced, could not be finited by itself; nothing finite can exist by itself, because it must needs be finited before it exist; and if so, it must be finited by something else: whence it follows, that a finite must necessarily exist by that which has the power of finiting it, and which of itself is infinite. (*Principia*, Part I, chapter 2, pages 46, 47)

The Holy Scriptures themselves also give us plain information on this subject, and teach us that the world was created by God, and by the Infinite; that it was created successively: that it was created in time; and that the Infinite is an *Ens* in itself, that it is an *Esse* which is, that it is all in all, that it is the universe. (*Principia* Part I, Chapter 2, page 49.)

Rational philosophy will not admit that anything can exist without a mode; and since a mode in things limited and finite, or in things physical, consists solely in the variation of limits, it therefore follows that nothing can exist without motion. Whatever is void of motion remains just as it is: that which is in a quiescent state produces nothing: whatever is to be produced, must be produced by a mode or by a motion: whatever is to undergo change, must be changed by a motion: for without motion or change of place, or to speak more generally, without a change of state, no new existence, no production, no contingency can be conceived; in other words, nothing is capable either of existence or of change, except by means of motion. It follows therefore that this first simple *ens*, or point, was produced by motion: and since everything is derived from the Infinite, it follows also that this natural point, or simple *ens*, was produced by motion from the Infinite. (*Principia* Part I, Chapter 2, pages 49-50)

If then it be admitted that the first simple was produced by motion from the Infinite, we are at the same time bound to suppose, that in the producing cause there was a will that it should be produced; something of an active quality which produced it; and something of an intelligent nature, determining that it should be produced in such a manner and in no other, or in one mode in preference to another; in a word, something infinitely intelligent, infinitely provident, infinitely active, and infinitely productive. Hence this first point could not exist by chance, nor by itself, but by something which exists by itself; in which something there must also be a will, an agency, and an intelligence, to produce the effect in one mode rather than in another. There must likewise be something of a provident design, that the effect produced should be successively modified in a given series; and that by means of a series of modifications, certain specific contingencies should take place, rather than others. All these must of necessity have been in some sort present in this first mode and motion: for in respect to this single and primitive motion of the Infinite, things future and contingent can be considered in no other light than as actually present and already in existence. (*Principia* Part I, Chapter 2, page 50)