

REPORT OF GLENVIEW PHILOSOPHY GROUP

Our group has continued its weekly meetings during the church season, though we have adjusted our time and day of meeting to suit the convenience of larger groups. We have continued under the leadership of the Rev. Alfred Acton, and concluded our discussion of a series of New Church treatments of the subject of Evolution before the summer holidays.

In September we began to read and discuss the Rev. William R. Woofenden's "Swedenborg's Concept of Love in Action," in five chapters, as published in the NEW PHILOSOPHY in the last 1969 issue and the first 1970 issue. When this was completed we began to read and discuss Dr. H. L. Odhner's *The Moral Life*. We are in the second half of the book, but do not cover many pages at a meeting, since we find so many interesting points of discussion, ranging far afield.

Cordial greetings and good wishes to the Association.

VICTOR J. GLADISH

EVIL AND EARLY MAN

ALFRED ACTON II

Any monotheist who acknowledges the existence of evil has a problem. If there is but one God, the creator of all things, can we by recognizing evil as a real thing do more than ascribe that evil to God? To assume a God that is both evil and good, assumes, as Revelation testifies, a God incapable of the least action, a monster whose every act is negated by His alter ego. Obviously we worship no such God. God is not the author of evil. Its cause must exist outside the Divine. But what is evil?

Throughout the ages men have defined evil in various contexts. Upon each position taken a system of values was based,

and from it, a way of life evolved. For example, Hindus define evil as "karma" or the natural substance of creation. This substance stains the soul, giving individuality to man. If man, through a series of rebirths into the world, can rise in a rigid caste system until he attains Brahmanship, he can put off at last all karma and so return to the oneness from which evil natural substance separated him. He finds selflessness in Nirvana. The Buddhist similarly holds that nature or karma is the cause of evil, but for him evil is carried by bits of karma which are specific traits called *skandhas*. These skandhas give man individual life. With each new birth he selects a new set of skandhas hopefully reaching a pattern in which they may all be put off forever. Life itself is evil for the Buddhist. It is not worth the pain and struggle it requires. Man by ignorance has accepted life, and to attain bliss must learn how to put it off by following Buddha's eightfold path. Again Nirvana or nothingness is the goal, but unlike the Hindu, no caste system is required to attain it.

I mention these two oriental positions because they seem to reflect a very ancient feeling that evil exists in nature, a feeling which expresses itself in Sumerian lore, later Babylonian myth, and in the Genesis story of creation by "the deep." Scholars believe the Hebrew word for the deep, "tehom," is linguistically related to Tiamat, the chaos monster referred to in Babylonian myths. This ancient tradition seems to have its seat in the Ancient Word from whence both the oriental and ancient religions sprang, and so should not be taken too lightly. Indeed the New Word gives us two references to an original chaos which support acceptance of the doctrine. We read: "Every one who traces effects back to their causes may know that the consistence of all things depends on order; and that there are many kinds of order, general and particular; and that there is one order which is the most universal of all and on which depends the general and particular kinds in connected series; also that this most universal order enters into all the others as the essence itself into its forms, and that thus and not otherwise do they make one. It is this unity that effects the preservation of the whole, which would otherwise fall asunder, and relapse not only into primal chaos, but into nothing." (TCR 679, Cf. Can., God VI: 2, here chaos is mentioned but primal is omitted.)

I shall refer to this concept of chaos shortly, but first to further definition of evil. Dualistic religions such as that of Zoroaster, the modern day Parsis, avoid the monotheistic problem of evil by ascribing it to an evil god, a god who, by the way, will fail at the last judgment when the good god will bring perfect order on earth. As the Parsis, who have refined the original two god concept, now put it: Ahura Mazda will defeat that part of his own being which is evil, namely Angra Mainyu and Spenta Mainyu who because they were a part of him have foiled the work of his creation with the introduction of evil. Christians such as the heretical Manicheans adopted this dualistic position into their Godhead. Jehovah, the Father, was the evil creator, Christ, the Son, was that part of His being which would conquer evil and bring about a new era. Both the heresy of the last judgment and that of the vicarious atonement stem from this Zoroastrian misconception. But Christian thinkers could see that evil cannot be ascribed to a merciful God. It cannot be created by God. To answer this problem they postulated creation, *ex-nihilo*, out of nothing, a heresy roundly condemned by the New Word. From nothing, nothing comes. Still other definitions of evil have been offered by different religions. The Jews for example saw evil as disobedience to Divine law. When Adam disobeyed God, evil resulted. So when we disobey God we are evil. The concept is, of course, true, but it does not account for the existence of evil animals, disease and the like, unless we assume that God created them as a punishment for a disobeying mankind. Perhaps this is the context in which the devout Jew hears the words of Isaiah, "I am the Lord and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things." (Isa. 45: 6, 7) The New Word tells us that this passage reflects the appearance, not the reality. God is the creator of all things, but He did not create evil.

Philosophers have not done much more with the question of evil than have theologians. There are basically two schools of thought here. The one is that evil is entirely relative to man. Protagoras said, "Man is the measure of all things"; Spinoza added, "The terms good and evil indicate nothing positive in things considered in themselves, nor are they anything else than modes of thought. . . . One and the same thing may at the

same time be both good and evil or indifferent." Beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Mill went on to say that "the ultimate sanction of all morality" is "a subjective feeling in our minds."¹ Other philosophers see the "goodness" or the "evilness" of a thing as an absolute determined by its place in the scale of creation. So there can be a highest good which is a thing in itself, not a subjective opinion. What this highest good is has been differently defined by different philosophers. Some make it pleasure, some the greatest good for the greatest number, some truth, and so forth. Still there is a scale of good into which all things fit. In this position evil can be nothing. As Augustine said, if things "be deprived of all good they shall cease to be," there is "nothing whatsoever evil." Aquinas adds "no being is said to be evil, considered as being, but only so far as it lacks being."²

This metaphysical concept of goodness also allows for a moral concept of goodness which depends upon the relation in "which a thing stands to human need or desire, and according to the estimation placed upon it by human reason."³

Both these philosophical concepts, that evil is purely relative to man's subjective feeling, and that evil is a thing in itself, seem to find some support in the New Word. There we find many definitions of evil. "Evil is falsity in act." (AC 4823) "Evil is nothing but aversion and hatred against the good and truth of the church." (AC 4836e) Evil is that in man which destroys the delight of his affection. (Cf. DP 195: 3) "Evil is disjunction from good and consists in disunion." (AC 4997) Evil is the adulteration of good, (AC 5156) or the lack of reception of good, (AC 5585) or a turning away from good, (AC 5746) which comes from the love of self and the world (AC 4997). Contrasted with good, evil is an opposite and will destroy good. (AC 8700: 4) Evil is contagious like a disease, catching if association with it be prolonged. (AC 6666e) That which is of man, or that which is of proprium is evil. (AC 9229) But perhaps the most inclusive definition of evil is that which is contrary to order. What is actually said is that all things of the universe

¹ *The Great Ideas, A Syntopicon of Great Books of the Western World*, pp. 606, 607.

² *Ibid.*, p. 610.

³ *Ibid.*

which are against Divine order *have relation* to evil and falsity. (Cf. AC 7256, HD 17, TCR 388: 7, AC 4839) These definitions of evil illustrate the metaphysical concept of evil, but other statements concerning evil show its relation to man. Disease for example, and we would note here the term seems to be applied to the diseases which harm man, arises from hell. Disease is the result of human embrace of evil. (Cf. AC 5711-5726) Evil animals and evil uses also have arisen as a result of man's free choice of evil. We are taught that all evil comes from hell, and there would be no hell unless man had inhabited it. All such things are called evil today because they hurt man, that is they are evil in relation to man. (Cf. AC 6071)

Thinking from this truth, evil can not arise until man enters hell. This tragic event took place at the fall of man, that is at the time of the Most Ancient Church. Disease, evil animals, indeed evil in any form, could not antedate hell. By definition the New Church man is committed to accept a very late date for the actual existence of evil animals, vegetables, and minerals, things which his senses via the studies of scientists readily acknowledge as much earlier forms. Or is he so committed? What dates are we talking about? When did the Most Ancient Church exist on this planet? We have no clear answer to this question. The Word gives us an account of the *spiritual* character of this church, but its natural history is prehistoric. There are however, certain natural requirements of that spiritual history. Just as the virgin birth is a natural requirement of our doctrine of the incarnation, so are there certain natural requirements of what is said about the Most Ancient Church and its fall. One such requirement fixes a later limit for our dating of that church. We know that the advent of writing was the result of man's fall. It was the church Enoch which first wrote down the things of Revelation for future posterities. This church then must have existed about the time writing first was developed. The fact that the world was in a state of utter decay at this time confirms what the Word teaches, for this was the time of the antediluvians, men who inhabit the worst of the hells. History records the time with no real beauty. Mass murder and religion as a mere business of placating forces for harm is the rule. How aptly knowledge from science agrees with the voice of Revelation!

If we date the end of the Most Ancient Church with the advent of writing (admittedly some earlier writing than that of Mesopotamia and Egypt may one day be discovered, but since Revelation seems to indicate a continuity of the Ancient Church in Egypt this seems unlikely) if this is the date, we can fix the end of that church somewhere around five or six thousand years ago. Such a date concurs well with other statements of the New Word, such as those concerning remnants of the Most Ancient Church existing in Canaan even during the days of David. Goliath, a son of Anak, is said to be an antediluvian descendant, while the men of Shechem descended from Hamor the Hivite, are said to have remains of the Most Ancient Church with them. (AC 4448) These men were of course killed by the sons of Jacob after Shechem ravished Dinah their sister.

Can we fix an early limit to the Most Ancient Church? It is said that the men of the Most Ancient Church ate bread and butter, and lived in tents. The implication of these teachings is that the Adamites were a pastoral people having risen above the food gathering stage into the life of the settled farmer. They are said to have lived apart divided by nation, tribe, and family, which seems to rule out a nomadic way of life. From these it seems that we can set the advent of primitive farming as the advent of this church. Radio carbon dating places the dawn of agriculture somewhere between 7,000 and 10,000 years ago. Granted that this date may be pushed back by future discovery even as the advent of clothing is now placed at at least 30,000 years ago (were the Most Ancients in their integrity naked as it is said of Adam?) still, because of our later limit, it seems unlikely that that church would have existed much before the time mentioned. Modern Man as we know him is dated to around 25,000 years ago. Men of that time looked very like us. Prior thereto they did not resemble us so closely. From the fact that Swedenborg did not note any great difference between the appearance of the Most Ancient people he saw in heaven and us, about 25,000 years ago seems to be the very outside limit for that church to have begun, with the probable date being more likely seven to ten thousand years ago. How can this dating be reconciled with the existence of evil? Since evil came at the end of that church which time we have fixed around six thousand years ago, how can we accept the truth of the Word

in regards to evil animals and the like? The crocodile, the scorpion, poisonous serpents and the like, not to mention the hemlock and other poisonous herbs, or the poisonous earths of the mineral kingdom, all are older than this date, many of them preceding any form of man. How can we reconcile this fact of our senses with the testimony of Revelation? Further, we in the church have assumed that man in his Preadamitic days could not have eaten meat, let alone done evil. How can a food gatherer survive without eating at least some meat? But Revelation says that man *for the first time* began to eat meat after he fell. (Cf. AC 1002) Is there any reconciliation between such paradoxes? Must we simply deny the facts our senses report, trusting obediently and faithfully in the voice of our Lord? Obviously such trust is important, but our church is permitted to enter into the mysteries of faith. We can, if we examine Revelation closely, find light to reconcile sense knowledge with revealed truth. After all there is only one truth. Revelation and science both understood correctly will agree.

Recall that we have defined evil as the perversion of order. In other words, evil cannot arise until order exists. Now recall the mention made as to original chaos, a state of non-order. Add to these points the teaching of the *True Christian Religion* that God "introduced order into the universe and into each and all things of it at the time of their creation." (TCR 89) In other words the process of the establishment of order was gradual. Order was introduced in a sequential pattern. Although the infinite is absolute, nothing finite can be so; creation is never perfect. The order, or the absolute, is the unattainable, but approachable. We are relative to the infinite as well as to each other. Change towards a perfecting order is the work of Divine Providence, a work that never ceases.

At one time in the history of life on this earth the fish was king. Life, if we accept scientific evidence, developed in the ocean, not on land. True, life may have come from outer space, but it developed in the seas. There were fish before animals or man. Note what the New Word teaches about fish. "Take, for example, the fishes of the sea; if these were to multiply according to the abundance of their spawn they would in twenty or thirty years so fill the ocean that it would wholly consist of fishes, and in consequence its water would overflow and destroy

all the land. But this does not happen, since God has provided that fish shall be food for each other." (TCR 32) God has provided a balance of nature in the waters of the world. It is of providence that fish eat each other. At least in one stage in the development from chaos to mankind Providence wanted natural predators eating each other and also other animal forms in a balancing cycle. Should we suppose that what was good for fish was not good for other animals? Surely the shark would be just as evil an animal today as the crocodile, the tiger, or the scorpion. Why then are such animals evil, while fish are provided for? Obviously we are leading up to a simple fact. Such animals are not intrinsically evil. It is only when they are in opposition to Divine order that they have *relation* to evil. Only when the tiger decides to chew on human bones is it an evil animal. As long as it is performing the important use of balancing nature it is not evil. Although today such uses have become what are called evil uses, they were not such at their creation. Such a natural balance viewed from above appears chaotic. It is not in agreement with spiritual order. Death is the governor of nature. To me the balance of nature and before it, the non-living planet is the chaos described in the Word. It is not something disorderly, rather it is something awaiting the process of time when more perfect order can be established. With the organization of hell something happened to natural order and to its predators. Evil comes from hell. The influx from hell into the existing animal form twisted the use of that form. Natural predators preyed on man who was then spiritual, a clear perversion. From having no natural predators man suddenly looked attractive to certain beasts. He learned to fear the evil beasts of the field. Suddenly the sphere of higher order (that is the spiritual aura around man which had protected him from natural harm), was broken by evil influx. The evil animal existed because of hell. Disease probably followed a similar pattern. When hells arose, germs which had protected man by killing animals who would otherwise have harmed him, beset the human body, causing pain and death. Man became susceptible to disease. Again the evil form preceded the actual evil, but in its preceding state it contributed to natural order, to the balance of nature. Note here how this concept agrees with a general truth of Revelation. The Lord is the Creator.

Evil cannot create, hell cannot create, it can only *pervert what already exists*.

But how did hell arise? It did not do so overnight. Indeed with first evil, hell only existed in the mind of the chooser of that evil. It was not until the judgment of the flood at the end of the Most Ancient Church that hell was organized. For hell to arise, man had to have free choice. Free choice involves rational thought. Rational thought in turn involves the ability to see a ratio. A ratio between what? Obviously a ratio between something higher than man and something lower than man, a ratio between the true human, God, and the purely animal, the natural. Until this ratio was attained, man was not free. Such a ratio did not exist until man knew God, that is until the Most Ancient Church arose. It is therefore quite consistent to find the first fall into evil with the posterity of the Most Ancient Church, since that posterity was the first set of people to be born into the celestial order their parents by regeneration had attained. Of course evil needed to increase greatly after this choice before judgment was necessary, nevertheless the fact remains that freedom begins with celestial order. The Preadamites were not free. They were not in such order. Perhaps it seems harsh to deny freedom to the Preadamites. Yet, is it harsh that a baby is not free? Is it harsh that we are not free until we attain adulthood? To the contrary. It is merciful. (Cf. AC 9009) So too with the Preadamites. Revelation supports this thesis. There are Preadamites in heaven. True they are in a special heaven, a heaven where they are happy in the knowledge that they were the progenitors of the human race, but a heaven where it is also said they have very little of spiritual life. There are no Preadamites said to be in hell. Freedom implies the possibility of hell. (Cf. SD 3390)

The fact is that the Preadamites started life in natural order, only in time becoming spiritual and at length attaining to the state of the Most Ancient Church. (AC 286) Since the earliest known man, that is, the earliest known toolmaker is at least 2,500,000 years old, and since we have postulated just a scant 25,000 years as the earliest date for the Most Ancient Church, we can see a very long upward climb in the history of the world. More recent fossils worsen this time element. Kenapoi fossil is about 4,000,000 years old while Lothagam fossil is dated

5,500,000 years ago. These fossils looked like man, but I don't know whether evidence of tools has been found with them or not. The scientist uses a tool as a demonstration of humanity since it demonstrates forethought, but remember a tool is only evidence of being capable of satisfying a love by thought. It does not demonstrate the quality of the love. Indeed these first tools, such as the first hatchet, demonstrate merely an ability to satisfy a natural love, hunger. They are not evidence of spiritual life, of charity. Still the time during which Preadamites existed is tremendous. Lest this time element become too overwhelming, however, recall that in an arithmetic progression the last stated number includes the sum of all prior numbers. 16 is greater than the sum of 1, 2, 4, and 8. If the population on this planet has been doubling from its outset then there are more people living now than there are in the spiritual world. What we are driving at here is that although the time sequence for the Preadamites is extremely long, the number of souls involved is likely to be few. What sort of people were these Preadamites, these men who had no freedom since they knew not God? They were of two types. First natural, then spiritual. They were men who rose, or rather who were in providence raised up, until, as revelation testifies, they regenerated even to the celestial, at which time and not before, a celestial soul could be implanted, and note the word, implanted in their offspring. (AC 310) When this implantation occurred they (or some of them) became men of the Most Ancient Church. The rise is described in Genesis chapter one. The natural Preadamites are the men of the first three days of creation, the spiritual men are men described up to the creation of the beasts on the sixth day, while the celestial men, whose children became the men of the Most Ancient Church, were the creation of the sixth day. The seventh day was the church proper. But note several curious teachings concerning these people. In the proper sense of the word they were not men. They have scarcely any spiritual life. Hear these words of the New Word: "That by 'man' is meant the man of the Most Ancient Church, or the celestial man, was previously shown; and at the same time it was also shown that the Lord alone is Man and that from Him every celestial man is man, because in His likeness. Hence every member of the church, without exception or distinction,

was called a 'man,' and at length this name was applied to *any one who in body appeared as a man*, to distinguish him from brutes." (AC 288) What other like-bodied creatures were there who needed to be distinguished from brutes but Preadamites?

Again we read: "For it is the Most Ancient Church that is here treated of under the name of 'man'; and when it is called 'Adam,' it signifies that man was from the ground, or that from being *non-man* he became man by regeneration from the Lord." (AC 312) These two passages to me imply that any assumptions made about Preadamites on the basis that they were like Adamites is most dangerous. In fact I believe that Preadamites were quite unlike Adamites. They were at first in natural order, simple tool makers satisfying their natural loves, beings capable of forethought and so differing from animals, but still chained to nature. Probably in this stage they ate meat as science testifies. The body in which they dwelt and with which they were one (remember no ratio at this time) could not but cater to its natural desires. It was like an animal, but it was not evil since evil did not exist. Only natural order existed. Still nature is what was later perverted. All evil dwells today in the natural.

I should observe here that I see no problem in making natural Preadamites meat eaters. The *Arcana Coelestia* passage we referred to earlier in this connection (AC 1002) says *man* first ate meat, that is the celestial being of the Most Ancient Church, first ate meat when he reverted to his natural type, that is at the fall when he freely chose to be once again like an animal. Note also in passing that this very passage confirms the fact that carnivorous animals existed at the time of the Most Ancient Church. The passage says that these people regarded the eating of meat "as a wickedness and *like* wild beasts." How could man so regard meat eating if animals didn't eat meat? The passage further gives us a clear clue as to how man fell. To return to the animal-like state of his Preadamitic ancestors would be to pervert order, to choose a lower good, a lower order, in place of the higher which he had attained, and so to bring evil into actual existence. The *Doctrine of Charity* teaches "man alienated himself from the Lord, and looked back from Him; and in this way perverted the image and likeness of God in himself, and made it the image and likeness of hell." (Char. 204)

We have not said much of the spiritual or intermediate state through which early man passed on his progression to the Most Ancient Church. Think for a minute what things make the spiritual. Essentially the spiritual man uses symbols. He is an artist. So Preadamites developed art both in caves and in images which represented to them some of the vague powers they felt around them. They did not see God, but felt the spiritual power within nature. How did man rise from being natural to being spiritual? The transition is described in the creation of the sun and the moon, and the fish and the fowl. It is a transition that has a new will and a new understanding, but as yet one not grounded in knowledge of God. Charity is the mark of the spiritual man. The marital relationship, and the raising of children gave early man an easy illustration of what happiness charity could induce. When the mate became more than an object of sex, when happiness in living together involved sharing, man rose to a spiritual state. He need not have known God to feel this happiness. Of course, conjugal love awaited until with the Most Ancient Church knowledge of God opened its hallowed portals, but spiritual or mutual love was awakened with Preadamites. The first recorded evidence of charity is with Neanderthal man, about 60,000 years ago. A skeleton has been found of one such man who, despite the fact that he was crippled, was allowed to grow up and live for some 30 years, being protected and waited on by others. (Cf. *Science News Letter*, November 4, 1961, p. 301)

This transitional stage also provided the men of the Most Ancient Church with lesser goods, a spiritual order below the celestial which could be seen from experience and could be chosen in place of their proper celestial life. Note that each time a lesser good is chosen, that good is in fact an evil in that order is perverted, but an actual evil act which would be evil on the opposite side of a lesser good may not have arisen. For example if a husband of the Most Ancient Church sought simply to satisfy his love of the sex within his marriage he would pervert the conjugal, but if he then went out and satisfied this love with another woman, adultery, the opposite of conjugal love would become fact. The essential doctrine of this choice of a lesser good until it became an evil is found in *Conjugal Love* 444, and is also described in the *Word Explained* 23.

It remains to ask, Why? Why did the Adamites choose to revert to type? We are taught that Providence always leads man forward, but that should it be removed, man would fall back. (AC 8391) There is then something in man that wants to fall back, but this something is constantly counterbalanced by Providence.

We cannot then account for the choice of evil by recognizing this dead natural quality in man, although that quality did give man his freedom to see a ratio between the natural from which he had risen and the celestial in which he was. It was a good thing, a part of man's animal body which gave choice and so humanity to individuals. Today our freedom is a balance of many factors. It was then also. One of these factors was that force which sought to revert to the natural. Another was the fact that animals lived around man showing him the pleasures of the animal life from which he had risen. Still another factor in the fall was probably the influx from the other world of Pre-adamites who could well inflow with natural and spiritual loves that would cloud celestial loves causing a doubt about the value of the celestial. Although this idea, as far as I can determine, is not directly taught in the New Word, it was suggested early in the General Church by the Rev. Carl Theophilus Odhner in his study of the fall. (Cf. *The Golden Age*) He also suggested that the leisure and comparative luxury produced by the performance of use in this pristine age was a further contributing factor.

Note what happened at the fall. A new order became necessary. A perfecting system had crumbled. The human which man had put on by rising to the celestial state, and had made glorious in a return of love to the Lord, was now tarnished. The Lord Himself would have to come and put on the human to bring about a new order in which human freedom could survive. He would have to show men what the human which they had discarded in favor of the animal really was. He would not come to restore the old order, but instead institute a new, an order which would take into account the embrace of evil which early man in his insanity had undertaken.