

## Part II

“Nature red in tooth and claw” is a common enough mantra that seems to imply a similar sentiment.<sup>1</sup> But it is clearly not the same thing at all, since nature (as separate from the human being) finds moments of “repose” as Swedenborg puts it, while the appetites and the desires of humankind know no limits in their entirely physical incarnation. Clearly, this is not a view that too many would subscribe to since most people suspect that humankind must have redeeming features; yet there is little, if any notion of the spiritual source from which those features must emanate, but the obscurity of that suspicion is enough to disregard the notion that man is essentially evil. The fact that this is a necessary prerequisite of a spiritual life has little bearing on modern views since the spiritual elements within us lie there for the most part in a state of redundancy—in effect, waiting in the sidelines for an acknowledgement of this. Indeed, it is in that very acknowledgement that the turning-around truly begins, which is the meaning of repentance, and which is the essential beginnings of influx, for which everything prior had been a preparation.

Yet this lack of awareness is troubling in these so-called enlightened times, for more often than not that intrinsically appetitive nature exists subliminally as part of the fabric of current life, rising into an obscure awareness in many different ways. For instance, consider the notion of a black hole as it is often described in scientific texts. There it is perceived as the end-state in the evolution of a star or galaxy, yet more often than not, its description cannot avoid the language of the appetitive: it has an

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\* Continued from July–December 2012, p. 324 where the symbol for completion □ was erroneously placed.

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<sup>1</sup> See close of Influx part I (July–December, 2012 pp. 323–324), quote from *The Spiritual Diary* 2029 on page 323 in reference to animal behavior “when pressed by hunger . . .”

insatiable hunger, it swallows stars whole, nothing can resist its all-consuming craving. At the same time, we observe the attractive element in the blockbuster movies, aliens and monsters whose emphatic qualities are those of destruction and consumption. “Alien” itself, is the creation of an expressionless, pitiless, monster which gestates inside a human being and rips its way out, whose blood is acid and whose sole intent is destruction. Any number of examples can be cited that exemplify the ideas and thoughts in the human imagination that ultimately become realised on the screen, all of which subscribe to Swedenborg’s view. But it is not fiction alone, since the black hole is deemed to be a “real thing.” Even at the level of common experience, the current economic crisis, brought about by inflated notions of value, and the notion of interest rates themselves, are a reflection of the desire for gain and the swelling of profits that have no boundary. No “real thing” has led to the difficulties, only a real thing concerning the value of things at a future date. Who cannot be struck by the fact that the land of Canaan, representing a spiritual reality, is actually a land of trading etymologically. Yet the world we inhabit is hardly a reflection of heaven on earth. Quite the opposite.

By and large, this interior motivation is more or less treated as a natural state of affairs that requires no consideration of value, and turned into an indifferent view deemed to have no real relevance or existence. In the scientific realm, in which “desire” as an idea is something of an embarrassment, the way forward is to create a complex of additions, such as the multiverse, in order to deflect any attention from a reality that may be animated by some kind of inner conatus, such as suggested by desire or endeavour. The result is an etiolated and impoverished conception of reality that is entirely purposeless and random, and configured with as many dimensions as are needed to support it. It is such a view that conceals the emotive core of reality and makes it prey to our own appetitive instincts, unrecognised in the inertial view, and which subsequently dominate the form of reality. This is why it is far more than a merely intellectual exercise to not only explore the mechanics of influx, but to re-introduce it as the only viable way out or “great escape” that is implied by regeneration. Without it, it is surely clear that the black hole of current wisdom, formed with the deliberate exclusion of the spiritual mind, will

certainly continue to reign as all the lights of the heavens begin to wink out, and the ensuing darkness taken for the only light.

### **The demise of influx**

It is no mystery that in our time the field of thought that holds centre stage in terms of its influence is science. The modern world is shaped by it. Its successes have been such that every other field of thought has by and large imitated its methodology and its underlying philosophy in order to explore the possibility of attaining similar successes in application. But it has come at a cost. It has led to the ruination of such subject areas as philosophy and religion in the sense that these, too, have succumbed to system-building in a similar form, oblivious to the fact that their roots lie in a different direction, and are lost sight of in their modern pursuit. We can know this superficially in that the word “metaphysics” has become somewhat derogatory in meaning, since it infers the opposite of what is considered to be the scientific mantra: no evidence, then no existence. Yet while this critique is aimed at such philosophical systems, it disguises the fact that its own outpourings are becoming largely metaphysical. This is because science itself has already reached its apex in terms of scope; even by its own strict standards of evidence, it is no longer capable of producing unambiguous or realistic confirmations that describe a coherent and actual aspect of the real world. At one extreme, there is string theory and its offshoots. This may be the rarefied end of modern thought, but it applies equally as strongly to a great deal that we take for granted as understood, such as gravity, for it is essentially a word used to describe a behaviour, but the force to which it refers remains tenaciously unobserved. Building on the foundations of its tacit truth, however, the whole scientific enterprise turns out to be largely metaphysical since un-evidenced.

The reason for this preamble is to emphasise not only how little we actually know, but that what we assume to be known in reality is not the case. The strength of any system lies within its ability to present as complete and coherent a picture of the world that corresponds to our experience of it.

Because the character of the foregoing remarks will be largely speculative, there will exist an automatic tendency to ignore them since the appeal

will be inherently metaphysical. Yet as embarrassing as it is intellectually to the scientific community, its own course of exploration is equally metaphysical. Matching one system of metaphysics against another, it becomes clear that the favoured brand of it, the one that roots itself in evidential methodology, has succeeded in seducing the mind at a great cost. This perhaps requires some clarification.

Prior to Enlightenment thought, the business end of philosophy had been distinctly separate as a brand of learning from science and religion, but not entirely or actually separate. Since its absorption into what became science as a methodological procedure, it lost its connection with religion altogether, and also lost its distinctive independent character. These remarks may not appear to be particularly relevant to the subject of influx at first glance, yet in fact they are extremely important since it accounts for the reason why any mention of influx as a spiritual process is generally treated as an intellectual affront. After all, there is no doubt that psychological and philosophical explorations of conceptions of consciousness are undermined by it, which should not surprise us. The scientific program, and the philosophical principles it has commandeered, are driven by the desire to create a representation of reality that refers to nothing outside itself (meaning the natural world and hence the universe) as possessed of any relevant explanatory power.

Since it has been argued both here and elsewhere that the success of science has been achieved by the lack of reference to endeavour as conatus within every bit of reality, it is hardly likely that science would ever develop a representation including it subsequently since it was the first casualty of its prime directive. This in itself would not matter by and large, if such a programme limited its perspective to the local and practical fields of operation that are its proper focus. But given the secret dimension of desire that colours every activity, the reality is that any system of thought, after an initial period of familiarisation, imagines that its scope of application has universal proportions as its principles are applied to ever-widening parameters. It is this attitude that is implicitly contained in the last quotation from Swedenborg: “grows and increases till he comes to aspire at the possession of heaven itself.”

It should not come as a surprise then, when considering philosophy generally, with its roots in both science and religion, that its ruination in

terms of its modern emphasis and placement is reflected in the fact that there is virtually no awareness at all of influx as a principle of life—that is to say, that “life” itself is determined without reference to anything other than consumption, social conditioning and rudimentary evolutionary theories. In short, the exclusion of reference to any spiritual elements has guaranteed the demise of influx, and therefore the significance of religion in general.

One should be aware in any discussion or exploration of the principles of influx that the kinds of intellectual pressures that are brought to bear are often unconscious and related to self-preservation. In other words, influx implies a complete inversion of perspective, since it is an inclusion in the mixture of that which has been historically exorcised. Consciousness studies, for instance, is a thriving academic cottage industry commanding both funding and prestige, particularly given the developing network of interests from other subject areas, such as brain studies. These tend to suggest that a cross-border fertilization is going on that breaks down traditional barriers, when in fact barriers are simply becoming harder to overcome. It should be kept in mind that any academic pursuit is not so much concerned with reality but with the models and representations of it that tend to define the pursuit, and it is the models, not reality itself, that feels the threat.

## Coherence

The word “coherent” has been used twice so far, and generally suggests something understood or understandable. We get this sense more from its opposite associated with the slurred speech of the inebriated. Technically speaking, however, it is much more than this, for it also has a meaning suggesting “joined-together.” This sense of cohesion is in many ways the holy grail of any perspective that represents reality, for the hope is to attain integrity within the parts of that perspective that, bound together, reflect something that is greater than the sum of its parts, which is its vision.

To sidetrack momentarily, when John is instructed in Revelations to write the things he sees in a book, the explanation is that it is for posterity. There is a sense in which some visions do not accord with the over-riding

wisdom that is abroad in its time. It is more or less recognised that in some respects the wisdom of the perennial philosophy is preserved in Swedenborg's writings, much like a Noah's Ark repository, for use at a later time when presumably the excesses of Enlightenment thinking were past their peak. Something similar may have occurred in the earlier part of the twentieth century with the work of Alfred North Whitehead, particularly his book *Process and Reality*, for it is in this book that Whitehead seeks to re-establish an intellectual provenance for a more integrated perspective that included both religious and scientific elements in its philosophical perspective. On the very first page of this book, in setting the terms of operation and the elements necessary for a revised philosophy, the first term that is discussed as a vital element is just this term "coherence":

"Coherence," as here employed, means that the fundamental ideas, in terms of which the scheme is developed, presuppose each other so that in isolation they are meaningless . . . In other words, it is presupposed that no entity can be conceived in complete abstraction from the system of the universe, and that it is the business of speculative philosophy to exhibit this truth. This character is its coherence.

Of course, every system of thought, whether containing elements of the spiritual or not, would share this view. What was exceptional in Whitehead's work, which like Swedenborg's moved against the prevailing zeitgeist, was the necessity of a spiritual input as part of the larger picture in precise and "coherent" terms. The reason for this is that philosophy includes the immediacy of experience as part of that coherent view, something that is disregarded in science generally in which the fundamental aim is to picture a world that is unpeopled:

Religion is centered upon the harmony of rational thought with the sensitive reaction to the percepta from which experience originates. Science is concerned with the harmony of rational thought with the percepta themselves. When science deals with emotions, the emotions in question are percepta and not immediate passions—other people's and not our own; at least our own in recollection, and not in immediacy. (p. 16)

For present purposes, one should note here the more emphatic position of the immediacy of experience that an objective study automatically strips off, in order to be left with “bare bones” so to speak, or that which, built up from the principle of inertia, science is able to cope with. “Immediacy” in itself has to be excluded, and so the whole ethos of spirituality could never be a true subject for its particular form of study. Consequently, what we find in Whitehead is the transmutation in thought of an “objective thing” into an “actual entity,” and it is the latter that is then enthused with a “subjective aim.” It is not difficult to see why, in the current ethos, not too many scientists or philosophers could subscribe to such a view. But Whitehead is not making ad hoc additions to the subject of philosophy, but attempting to rediscover its roots of true meaning. What science has stripped out, philosophy must try to put back. He finds some justification in the philosophies of both Locke and Spinoza—in Locke, the use of the term “power” is an integral part of the notion of an “idea,” while in Spinoza the notion of modes and attributes are regarded as inherently dynamic processes within actual entities.

It is when such an “empowerment” is stripped away that one begins to think about reality in terms of a “stuff” that one assumes was always meant by the word “substance.” Yet this is not the case. We have little idea what is meant by empowerment in some respects, since ours is an era that has accustomed itself to the fundamental notion of an inert substance. It may not have been a familiar idea in Swedenborg’s time, for it had not yet had enough usage to take root; but for us it is so familiar that we assume it as some kind of truth since ours is an age clearly rooted in it, and with the products and concepts that have grown out of it. Yet quite clearly, both Swedenborg and Whitehead have something in mind that was quite different. For Whitehead, an “actual entity” is not a separate thing definable in its mode of separation. Consequently, to avoid the notion of such an idea, he subsequently refers to “entities” in composite terms and refers to them as “actual occasions.” In this way an entity is both conjoined as well as relatively separate. But it is this inner power, referred to as a subjective aim, which draws many entities together to form actual occasions to form a complex that Whitehead refers to as a “nexus.” This word is effectively a “togetherness,” and one can note here a similarity with Swedenborg who has also used this word, but in whom we also find a more direct reference.

That is to say, the “subjective aim” in Swedenborg is will-related and directed, has its ultimate definition in the term “love,” and which Swedenborg refers to as “spiritual togetherness.”

We should also note that in Whitehead, religion is an essential and vital part of the philosophy he is proposing. Without this component, the notion of subjective aim, an integral feature of the immediacy of experience, becomes self-destructive. Note particularly the reference to the term “self-defeating” in this passage:

Philosophy frees itself from the taint of ineffectiveness by its close relations with religion and with science, natural and sociological. *It attains its chief importance by fusing the two, namely, religion and science, into one rational scheme of thought.* Religion should connect the rational generality of philosophy with the emotions and purposes springing out of existence in a particular society, in a particular epoch, and conditioned by particular antecedents. Religion is the translation of general ideas into particular thoughts, particular emotions, and particular purposes; it is directed to the end of stretching individual interest beyond its self-defeating particularity. (p. 15; added emphasis)

Forget for the moment that this is a particular statement by Whitehead, and what we discover is a reasonably concise summary of Swedenborg’s schemata in a more recent language form. Where Whitehead speaks of philosophy, Swedenborg would speak of the rational mind possessed of a dual function. That function is one of receivership, and therefore of activation as a result of that receivership. Furthermore, it is evolutionary, for one begins later in life than the other. On the one side, it is activated by the senses on the natural mind and forms a conceptual framework, while the other adopts and adapts that framework later in life as a means of expressing a deeper kind of togetherness, both in thought and in application of thought. The reason why it is later in life is because it is necessary to develop a more independent emotive maturity which comes with growth. Such development is instigated by these “particular” emotions and purposes which are quite distinct from those that Whitehead referred to as “self-defeating” in their particularity. Here, we can

virtually recognise something of the larger vision in Swedenborg in that he had a word to describe the actual propensity that is implied by self-defeat. He called it the *proprium*. Yet the implication is the same in both of them. Without religion as an integral part of the conceptual scheme, the natural mind (or science) with its own modes of perception (or the senses) will tend to pass itself off as the complete picture. Without a notion of a rational mind (expressed as philosophy in the manner of Whitehead) there will exist a tendency to take the partial view as the totality, and this leads ultimately to what Whitehead called the fallacy of misplaced concreteness. In effect, the natural mind will feign rationality, just as tares are indistinguishable from wheat. The ability to see the difference is no longer there since excluded from the rational mind. In that event, self-defeat becomes an inversion of itself since the means of its perception as self-defeat is removed.

But the reason for this comparison between Whitehead and Swedenborg has little to do with establishing the modernity of Swedenborg. The point of involving Whitehead in the first instance was to highlight the importance of coherence in any philosophical scheme, and that where religion is concerned, that coherence must include something of the nature of the emotive as part of the structure.

There is a sense in which one can see the philosopher at work in Whitehead, while most people would tend to think of Swedenborg as theological rather than philosophical. This, however, is erroneous as we shall see in a moment. The comparison was partly intended to dispel this notion for it is clear that Swedenborg's thinking involves a great deal of philosophy when it is considered as go-between in the sense in which Whitehead considers it.

But this, too, was not the point. Generally speaking, the philosophical spirit of expression tends to be non-specific most of the time. Swedenborg's approach, however, is very different. If he discusses notions such as coherence, these are not abstractions but always related to biblical exegesis. As a result, we then come to view within the Bible a philosophical structure that has more or less vanished from sight and which is probably responsible for the inordinate emphasis on literalism. If philosophy and religion are united in the manner discussed here, this is hardly surprising.

Swedenborg has performed a great service in reconnecting the philosophical to the spiritual in this regard. As an illustration, let us see how Swedenborg tackles this question of coherence.

This begins in his exegesis of chapter 28 of Exodus, in which the various garments and how they should be worn by Aaron are described. To many, it may simply be a list—the outer garment called the ephod is described first, with its shoulders and belt. Then two shoham stones inscribed with the names of the tribes of Israel were to be placed in gold sockets on those shoulders. But it is the next line that is of interest:

And two small chains of pure gold; on the borders you shall make them, with the work of slender rope; and you shall put the small chains of slender rope in the sockets. (Exodus 28: 14)

There then follows a description of the breastplate and the stones that were to be set in it. These two were to be affixed to the ephod as follows:

And you shall make on the breastplate small chains on the border with the work of slender rope, from pure gold. And you shall make on the breastplate two rings of gold, and put the two rings on the two ends of the breastplate. And you shall put the two slender ropes of gold in the two rings at the ends of the breastplate. And the two ends of the two slender ropes you shall put into the two sockets, and put them onto the shoulders of the ephod before the face of it. (Exodus 28: 22–25)

Such exquisite detail cannot be glossed over. We may know that all references to clothing pertain to truth, while the symbolism of gold nearly always pertains to good. Yet we should look further than this, since Aaron in turn represents the Lord glorified, and so we can know that these details are not mere literary decoration since these are the garments worn by him. In fact, we should look more closely at these references to the ephod and the gold chains at this point in the Bible, since it has a direct bearing on the nature of influx.

Knowing the significance of Aaron at this point, it is not difficult to see that the three layers of clothing—the tunic, the robe and the ephod—represent the three layers of reality discussed in terms of the spiritual, the

rational and the natural (which Whitehead points at with religion, philosophy and science). The specific quality of clothing, as just mentioned, is truth. "Truth," however, is a general term, and should be understood as part of a dynamic in which any "real thing" such as a garment (and even a "name") derives its quality from a more substantial reality of which it is an expression. The nature of that substantial reality can be expressed as that original "being" from whom all "coming into being" is drawn. That origin is represented by the slender rope of gold, but for the moment the focal point is the ephod, which most significantly is the outer garment.

To understand the significance of this outer garment requires almost a total re-evaluation of the meaning of religion as it is currently perceived. There is a sense in which the common view perceives religion as an "other-worldly" concern, while all other subject areas are devoted to "this-world" interests. This had not always been the case, but it is an attitude that has been fostered for the last three hundred years or so, in which "this-world" interests have prevailed. The expression "far from the truth" describes it very well, for in an inverted order, such a perception is pushed away to the outer limits of concern while other things are allowed to take centre stage.

To understand Swedenborg's exegesis, it is necessary almost as a prerequisite to hold this view as an inverted percept, in which the reverse is the actual case. Consequently, in Swedenborg we find almost uniquely in modern times the constant reference to the natural level, the senses, the natural mind, and how supremely important these are as the necessary prerequisites for a truly spiritual life. Secondly, whatever might be understood as influx, the reality is that it is a projection from a deeper or inner level of being to the outer or natural world where it finally comes to rest. If we imagine the birth of a cloud in the highest mountains of a remote region of the earth, ultimately it provides for the well-being for the little bit of grass in one's own back yard, and falls upon it in a manner that does not flatten it or destroy it. In other words, the expenditure of so much effort is to create an amenable influx in the most remote region in the triune which is this physical level where such influx terminates. Thirdly, the word "religion" itself has an etymology which is already suggestive of the kinds of interconnection that exists between the different levels since it means "to link back." Consequently, while the ephod is the outer garment (and therefore seemingly the least important) there is a sense in which it is the

most important since it is for the sake of this “outer” that all that is inward look towards. Indeed, it is the reason why the Lord became human, and why the parable of the lost sheep is more significant than we can imagine. But not to stray too far from the subject in hand, this is how Swedenborg describes the matter of the ephod:

“And an ephod” means Divine Truth therein an outward form, in which inner things terminate . . . The reason why “an ephod” has this meaning is that Aaron’s holy garments represented forms of Divine Truth in the spiritual kingdom, in their proper order, and the ephod was the outermost of the three garments . . . Not only what is outermost contain inner things, but inner things also terminate in it. This applies to the human body, and therefore also applies to the heavens, to which aspects of the human body correspond.

Since the ephod represents the most external part of the Lord’s spiritual kingdom it was holier than all the other garments...The reason why the most external part is holier than the things within is that what is outermost contains all inner things in their proper order. It contains them in an outward form and in a connection that are so perfect that if what is outermost were taken away the things within would disintegrate; for the things within not only terminate there, but also exist together there . . . Now since inner things present themselves together in what is last and lowest, then if the order is perfect that which is last and lowest is said to be holier than the inner things, because it is there that the holiness of the inner things exists in its fullness . . . For when the Lord is present in what is last and lowest, He is at the same time present on all levels; and when He is present in it inner things are contained in their proper order, connection and form, and are under His control and guidance, subject to his good will. (AC 9814)

There are a number of extremely important ideas that run through this passage, particularly since we encounter them again and again throughout Swedenborg’s exegesis, and which highlight the fact that they are essential to understanding influx. Firstly, that the physical level, that level at which human life exists and which takes place in the familiar state known to all human beings, is of an importance that is unprecedented and

largely unknown to the categorical forms of knowledge that define the subject areas that we largely refer to as knowledge. Secondly, and this will become more apparent later, is the principle of order. To many people, these may seem paradoxical or even incoherent, since “order” tends to be associated with processes of regimentation and almost slavish obedience, yet this is not its meaning. Even so, note here for the time being the use of this word. Thirdly, and most importantly, we should note how the mention of the Lord at the end of this quotation highlights the fact that whatever the subject-matter may be, such as the ephod in this case, unless it bears witness to something even deeper, then it could hardly be significant. As Swedenborg constantly asserts, every single word in the Bible has the Lord, His kingdom and our salvation in constant view. Whatever else might be said about influx, it is driven by these three which are both its source and constant motivation.

Bearing in mind that the ephod is the outer garment, and that the subject here is coherence, this now is what Swedenborg has to say about the slender thread which is attached to it:

“And two small chains of pure gold” means coherence with the good of the whole kingdom. This is clear from the meaning of “small chains” as coherence. The reason why “small chains” has this meaning is that such chains serve to join things together, and when joined together those things cohere, coherence with the spiritual kingdom being meant here because the small chains were fabricated to make the shoulder pieces cohere with the ephod. (AC 9852)

Notice, then, that “coherence” in Swedenborg has virtually the same meaning as coherence in Whitehead. The difference lies in the fact that it is unpacked from the details in the Bible, revealing the religious roots of a deeper philosophical concern. Not only that, but this coherence, or linkage that joins things together, is absolutely essential to influx as the very next passage in the *Arcana* illustrates. Concerning the placement of these chains, Swedenborg writes:

“On the borders you shall make them” means at the most external parts through which influx comes. This is clear from the meaning of the

borders as the most external parts. The reason why these are the parts through which influx, the influx of good, comes is that coherence is meant by “the small chains,” and all coherence in the spiritual world is brought about by means of influx. (AC 9853)

Before looking at influx in more detail, it would be useful to try to picture what has been said so far in summary form. The creation of something that is separate from God is an essential prerequisite in understanding the nature of God since, as separate beings, we can to some extent be aware of this since we are not-God. The reason for this is simple enough, for an immediate creation without an intermediate state, such as ours, results in pure self-expression and creation, and therefore nothing added to the original state. The work becomes one of unifying this separate existence in a way that protects the separation and which is yet at-one. (It should also be noted that even though separate, there exists a connection in kind in that whatever is separate it is nonetheless motivated by desire, or endeavour to be more, which in the un-atoned state is expressed as a sense of gain, or being more, hence an essentially wilful state as opposed to rational.)

We know of at least two levels of spirituality defined as the celestial and the spiritual (other traditions might call these by other names such as the astral and ethereal), and we also know of the human or physical level. It is also clear that while the spiritual levels have an eternal source and structure, the human level is temporary. But since this level is essentially appetitive, that appetite itself (the means by which we make things our own, or which become us) mirrors the spiritual in that these levels too require nourishment from a deeper source, and hence the principles of correspondences and how they connect these two entirely distinct domains. Therefore, it becomes clear that this physical level is the most important in terms of overall structure in that it is that level towards which all things on the spiritual level are bent. The Great Desire is to form a connection or relation between heaven and earth, and earth and heaven. This is the deepest and most significant message in the Bible, and is a meaning carried in its true name which is the Old Covenant and the New Covenant, the word “covenant” meaning a joining together, much the same meaning as coherence. Consequently, it is very important to see that

“coherence” is no mere philosophical abstraction, but a word loaded with spiritual intent. So when looking at the vestments of Aaron, and the celestial, spiritual, and natural states of being they represent, we find that coherence, or influx shines out on the natural level which is represented by filaments of gold joining all things together, and gold represents the love of the Lord in the highest degree or level.

This connectivity that is brought about by gold now begins to show its deeper meaning in “order.” In thinking about the notion of separation and conjunction simultaneously, we are often mistaken in imagining such a state in terms of a drop of water that loses its separate identity when put into the sea. Instead, it is more useful to see that every separate entity is not only separate by the distinction of being temporal, or temporary, but that each particular separate entity is of an entirely different order of persuasion such that no two are identical. The rule is for variety, not sameness, and it is this variety that would be lost when trying to consider the said drop in the sea. Consequently, every single individual has a unique fingerprint, both physically and therefore spiritually, and it is towards the particular interests within each individual that influx turns itself. Consequently, when Swedenborg writes that the purpose of the Lord as the Divine Human was to put all things into order, then the word “order” is charged with an enormous meaning. For we must see that the opposite of this, which is disorder, represented a great danger to the human level of existence (a danger, incidentally, that humanity is barely aware of), for not only does that disorder prevent influx (therefore closing heaven and leaving us prey to appetites that would swallow universes given the chance), but in a spiritual sense it would also render us mindless. It is this latter state that Swedenborg defines as the truly “dead” state, and which is the consistent meaning of the word “death” in the Bible. Consequently, the subject of influx is no mere intellectual exploration, rather it is (especially in our times) a blueprint for survival—that is to say, without it, or with its rejection, we are left prey to the excesses of the most basic of desires which can know no other function than the heaping up of acquisitions, or acquisitionism per se. But here we should consider that this in itself is not a bad thing, since it is where all things begin. Rather, just as looking at the bronze serpent cured “snake bite” in the desert, so also the principle of acquisitionism teaches us how we make things our own (the

symbolism of buying and selling, Cain and Canaan, and all eating and drinking), and so how more spiritual domains can also be made our own through the correspondence of the latter in symbolic form. After all, why else should the Bible have an inordinate number of references to these, if not to show us the way.

### **Images and representation**

Given our predilection for precise meaning, no doubt an effect of Enlightenment motivation, when thinking of correspondences we might imagine the construction of a dictionary in which the spiritual connotation of words could be laid out in a form much like this:

Egypt: the natural mind

Gold: Divine love

Serpent: sensory powers

Tree: Intelligence

All individual words and phrases can be defined in this way, but Swedenborg more than once expresses a concern about such a methodology, even though he himself explains virtually every word in Genesis and Exodus in this way. For instance, having analysed the whole of chapter 14 of Genesis, he then concludes it with this passage:

All these matters presented above are those which in general are embodied in the internal sense of this chapter; but the whole train of thought, and its beauty, cannot be seen when every single thing is explained according to the meaning of the words, as they would be if they were comprehended in a single idea. When all are comprehended in a single idea those things which hitherto have lain scattered now appear beautifully joined and linked together. (AC 1756)

From passages like this, and there are many of them, we should not imagine that the purpose of Swedenborg's visions/dreams was to gain access to some kind of celestial dictionary which he pored over and memorised. Besides, very little that is learnt in such a rote fashion endures

for very long, for it is experience itself that produces that cohesive order. Such things as listed here of physical things and places have no spiritual meaning in themselves, but in so far as they are used to communicate something other than physical facts, they take on a quality beyond the limits of language, becoming visually real in terms of a spiritual expressionism that communicates in this way, and it is in this way that spiritual ideas become “real things,” when symbolic meanings create the cohesive order. So we should not imagine that there exists a “Judah” who is now in some heavenly realm who was the very person so named in the Bible, but that the meaning of his name as “confession” represents a spiritual quality he represented at times in terms of the arrangement and structure of all truths represented by the number 12 and also by the word “tribes.” In effect, it is a kind of spiritual objectivity.

Consequently, when reading *The Spiritual Diary* we find no direct meanings, but many images that act indirectly as the means by which Swedenborg learnt many things. One should note that there is never a hint that he is being dictated to, but that it is for him to “see” the meaning that is being imparted by images and visions. Indeed, these are often left unexplained, or he might say that he “as yet” does not know what some particular experience “means.” Now because the proprium is central to his exegesis, the existence of which is the defining element of temporal life and hence of a separate entity from God, one should not imagine that he was “told” this in a direct manner. There is no single place in *The Spiritual Diary* where we can find such a direct lesson, but instead a rather circular and convoluted way of describing it which is a thing “seen,” and not a thing “explained,” and which does not conclude with a statement like “and this is the proprium.” Nor does it help that the translation itself is somewhat unclear and convoluted, but nonetheless, it contains a number of key elements of meaning which we can easily recognise from his exegesis of the Bible written later, or simultaneously.

Here is such a passage from *The Spiritual Diary*, but note in reading it how your own mind may be steered from the outset by these words, “and this is the proprium”:

Since corporeal and material (things) which are man’s ultimates, are at length subordinated to the Lord’s good pleasure; so that they appear

nothing but obedient (they) are represented in the world of spirits as was shown me. (SD 2762)

(Notice already the emphasis on “showing” and representation as the means of learning.) The text continues:

At first that (they) are, as it were, intestinal forms, conglutinated by various conflux, but without life; thus, have become as it were of a woody or osseous brownish colour. But in those who are deceitful, when (they) are inspected by the angels, there appear as it were other confluxes of serpents of various kinds, according to the nature of the deceit. But in man that is to be reformed (there appear) no serpents, but only wood or bones, thus almost confluent, because his body or corporeal begins to be nothing, thus without life. These things are represented and shown to me. (SD 2762)

What are we to make of this rather archaic phrasing of intestinal forms conglutinated by various conflux? Perhaps one might picture a tray of sausages in a butcher’s window. Yet it is this image that is apparently representing the corporeal, not simply the inner organs below the stomach but the whole of the body. But we should not limit our perception of this reported experience to what we might imagine ourselves, because all these things—serpents, intestines, wood and bone—are all terms found in many different places in the Bible, and so they are pregnant with meaning, not least because these communicate the actual state of the material realm upon which influx is to act. It should be noted, therefore, that the term “dead” should not be confused with its usual connotations, but rather that it has a very specific meaning. A dead state is one that is unreceptive of influx. That it to say, it is dead from a spiritual perspective, but from its own it is nonetheless capable of life. That “life” has already been described as the sense of more, but it is a sense that is realised in terms of mere acquisitionism and appetite, and these are the hallmarks of the proprium. It is this kind of life that is properly called “deceit,” for when it begins to act, it is only then that this semblance of a live state changes from the perception of intestinal forms to that of serpents.

A year after this account in *The Spiritual Diary*, Swedenborg published the first volume of *Arcana Coelestia*. This close proximity in time of these two suggests how Swedenborg came to his exegesis of the person of Eve and the serpent. Not only that, but given the structure of the evolution of the different states of the spiritual / celestial, we should note the centrality of the idea of proprium, and indeed the ensuing corruption that necessitated the need for the formation of conscience as a replacement for the corrupted form of desire which held sway before it, (and indeed, holds great sway in the modern world).

Before continuing further, consider these statements quoted earlier from *Divine Love and Wisdom*:

No one can be created directly from the Uncreated . . . We must be created out of things created and finite.

If they (the images) belong to any category of thought, clearly one might be tempted to call them philosophical or metaphysical. However, compared with the above passage (*At first that (they) are, as it were, intestinal forms...*) one might assume *The Spiritual Diary* has entirely different concerns, with its often very physical imagery that seems to lack what one might recognise as the philosophical spirit of *Divine Love and Wisdom*. Yet the subject matter is in fact entirely the same.

This comparison of styles is very significant. It is our age that has made it a matter of course that any question that we might consider already forms for itself a form of thought within which an answer should be provided. Yet an exploration of the term influx and all that it entails and implies has no single easily identifiable category to house itself in precisely because the implications of its range of influence are beyond the boundaries of the notion of any category whatsoever.

The importance of recognising this can be put in a different way. Suppose the concern here was the existence of God, whether it could be proved or established. Just in the very expression of this objective, it becomes apparent very quickly that such an exploration might involve purely metaphysical considerations, possibly moral or aesthetic arguments about the natural world and so on. But now suppose that by some miracle all the arguments so proposed made such a compelling case that

nobody who thought about such things could have any real doubts about the fact that God existed (or exists). It might seem at first to be a brilliant coup, yet in no time it would act against itself. Why this should be the case could not have been foreseen in the process, but in effect it would be a case of trying to make visible that which is known in some intuitive way. Having been made visible, it would only be so in terms of the system of thought that determined it and in no other way. In effect, it would be the system of thought and not God that would become visible as God.

The advantage, and difficulty, in discussing or exploring the subject of influx is that its implications are too vast for any kind of intellectual containment. This is partially exemplified by the two contrasting statements just cited. In order to tap into this range of meaning, it is important to see that the question concerning the creation of something that is not-God—that is to say—something capable of retaining its own identity separate from God, is a far more fundamental consideration than intellectual speculations concerning God's existence. The sheer physicality of such a not-God entity is implied by "intestinal forms" and one should see in this a "making real" or realisation of a not-God form which plays a pivotal role in Swedenborg's vision and which is called the proprium. Notice, therefore, a dynamic structure inherent in its formation—firstly, any denial of influx is an affirmation of proprial separateness. This is described as deceit, and the intestinal form then becomes serpentine. As mentioned, it is the serpentine form that is encountered by the proprium of Eve, and it is this kind of low level, basic awareness that it represents. Swedenborg refers to it here as sensory awareness.

However, the aim of the creation of such an entity is essentially to create a "many" in the long term, such that ultimately it is connected to the Divine. This is what the process of regeneration entails, and is the business end and inherent intention of influx. Consequently, the beginning of this process, called reformation, is the gradual transformation of the intestinal forms into something akin to "wood or bones" as Swedenborg saw it, the significance of which is the gradual awareness that such sensory life is limited in its scope and vision, and therefore "lifeless" with respect to what is enfolded within influx.

Consider the remarks that follow immediately from this passage in *The Spiritual Diary* (2762) which continues to outline how the intestinal form is further altered in the course of regeneration:

Then was also shown near the head a small conglutination of similar sticks, as it were little sticks which were gilded or externally covered with gold, which signify his rations. But when corporeals are reformed, so that they can obey spirituals, then they were beautifully represented by various contexture neatly arranged, to wit, at first of a blue colour with points, arranged into various beautiful forms, which were covered here and there with blue spots . . . Thus are represented the corporeals or material things of the regenerated man . . .

This is not the easiest of images to comprehend, unless one keeps in mind that this is a visualisation of a spiritual process which is generally understood by the word “repentance,” but in this case freed from its usual connotations. That is to say, repentance generally means to “turn around,” and what we find in this image is a change of state occurring, like a turning around, in which, once the intestinal form becomes woody, (or aware of its lack of life) so the appearance of blue spots, (blue always representing the spiritual) begin to appear or emerge on the surface of it. More importantly, it should be noted here that these are “neatly arranged.”

Now consider the following passage from *Apocalypse Explained*. In some respects, this passage represents the other end of the spectrum of influx, which is included here to give something of the idea of the end-state of influx:

The reason why the Lord spoke of his conjunction with the Father, that is, of His Human with the Divine which was in Himself, is that the Lord is not conjoined with man’s proprium, but with what is His own. The Lord removes man’s proprium, and gives from His own, and in that He dwells. (AE 254: 2)

By comparing the development of this proprium in its early beginnings to the ultimate purpose of the Messiah who evolves into the Christ

of the New Testament is something of an oversimplification without some awareness of the intermediate process. Even so, we can see in the Bible that its great theme of salvation can actually be seen as the evolution of the proprium which through influx is transformed from a distinct temporal entity into a non-temporal entity, one in which the apparent distinction makes way for something entirely different, a difference in which the distinctiveness actually becomes a seed-bed for conjunction.

While this is paradoxical, nonetheless it highlights the importance of separation or distinction as a principle of being. It is one that is an initial state of life in that in the early stages of reformation (spiritually) selfhood seems so real that giving it up for something like a group mentality seems like the slavish obedience of automata. For that reason, a key feature of the Divine Providence is that the effects of influx (in the process of regeneration) should be very gradual and not at all immediate, as the seeds of a spiritual perspective are planted in the soil of life gradually prepared for them. Meanwhile, it should be noted that while Swedenborg uses the word “removed” in the above passage his meaning is actually not one implying excision, but rather that the human proprium becomes overlaid in such a way that its motivations die down in the presence of intentions and purposes that are more expansive in their vision and scope, for which the human proprium had always been a “ground” or base. That is why the ephod was of absolute importance in its physical form as the outer layer, and that is why the condition of the ground features so much in the language of the Bible, and not simply that it is a poetic metaphor.

We can get something of the flavour of this transformation with reference to the two memories which feature in Swedenborg’s work as a key to understanding something of the relation of the eternal to the temporal. That is to say, it is easier to understand how the proprium is altered when considering the function of memory in both its spiritual and physical senses, and how one dies down in emphasis as the other rises:

These two memories [interior and exterior] are entirely distinct and separate from each other. To the exterior memory which is properly man’s while he lives in the world belong all the expressions of earthly languages . . . To the interior memory belong the ideas embodied in the

language spirits use, which belong to interior sight, and all rational things from whose ideas all thought is formed . . . (AC 2471)

And a little further on concerning the same subject:

While people with whom love to the Lord and charity towards the neighbour exist are living in the world they have angelic intelligence and wisdom with them and within them, but it is concealed within the inmost parts of their interior memory. This intelligence and wisdom cannot possibly be seen by them until they cast off bodily things. When they do so the memory of particulars, referred to above, is *put to sleep*, and they are awakened to the interior memory . . . (Added emphasis)

This phrase “put to sleep” is important, for note that it is not “removed.” If it were to be removed, that distinctive feature that defines a particular person and their separateness would be destroyed, since it is into this from which and within which the influx acts in effectively “creating a new heart” and effectively creating a miniature heaven. Indeed, if there were space here, one could easily see how this is actually the essence of the macrocosm/microcosm which any individual part of the whole reflects within itself. But this would stray somewhat from the subject of influx. It is enough to merely note it for now.

While these thoughts may seem somewhat speculative, it is actually their meaning with respect to the bigger vision contained in the Bible that they have much bearing. Consider, for instance, the incident in chapter 23 of Genesis in which Abraham buys a field from Ephron in order to bury Sarah. In that deeper sense, the formation of a spiritual church is the subject, and clearly, Ephron and the Hittites represent this new church. It should be noted that while this process begins with such a desire on the part of Ephron, nonetheless there is resistance to beginning this church from anything other than their own proprium, and they have to be led towards the appropriate stages of humility, and accept that this can only be achieved through the acknowledgement of the Lord as sole giver of life to it. This is not easy, and is a gradual process, which Swedenborg explains in this way:

It is the remnants, that is, the goods and truths from the Lord stored away in a person, which receive life at that time. The goods and truths acquired in the period from early childhood to when reformation takes place are with one person more, with another less. They are preserved in his internal man, and cannot be brought out until his external man has been brought into a state of correspondence with the internal, which is effected chiefly by means of temptations, and by many kinds of vastation. *Indeed, until bodily desires which are contrary to goods and truths—as is the nature of desires which constitute self-love and love of the world become dormant, celestial and spiritual desires that belong to the affection for good and truth cannot enter in.* (AC 2967: 2; added emphasis)

These passages clearly show the importance of piecemeal change, and the gradual dying down of one type of person (physical) as opposed to the eradication of what is physical. It is this process that ensures our identity while yet adjoined in an incredible way to the spiritual, something only possible after the Lord was glorified and intent on making his home *in* us, and not *with* us. “With” is a presence, but “in” a conjunction. This is the entire function of influx—beginning in darkness, becoming a presence and ultimately joined to us, which is the entire content of the Bible in a short sentence.

To bring this section to a close, it might be easier to see how this word “proprium” which is still, generally speaking, unfamiliar and rarely translated to carry its full meaning, that it actually implies something that is fundamental to all living persons, and indeed to any questions concerning meaning. In Genesis 2, recall first that Eve is formed from a rib, and Swedenborg explains this symbolic representation thus:

“A rib,” which is a breast bone, is used to mean man’s proprium when it contains very little life, a proprium indeed that he cherishes. (AC 147)

Notice particularly the kind of equation being made here, by what we commonly understand by the word “wife” and that which is cherished which is not the usual association of “wife,” but what one might call one’s own sense of self that is the proprium, but externalised here to be visible in the form of the wife. This simultaneous meaning then extends into the

notion of the inner and outer selves within a person, quite distinct but qualitatively the same person:

“Bones from bones and flesh from flesh” means the proprium belonging to the external man, “bone” the proprium that has been given not much life, “flesh” the proprium that has been given life. “The man” means the internal man. And because...the internal man was so coupled to the external man, this proprium called “woman” is now called “Wife.” (AC 156)

These details are difficult to digest in one reading, and this is largely due to the tenacious manner in which the habitual method of understanding Eve is unable to release itself from that tradition. However, there is a way in which this can be simplified. In *Apocalypse Revealed*, in the passage dealing with the four animals around the throne in the fourth chapter of Revelation, we read the following:

In the Hebrew language, they are called “chajoth” and this word indeed signifies “animals,” but it is derived from “chaja” which is “life,” *in consequence of which also Adam’s wife was called “Chaja”* (Genesis 3: 20; emphasis added). (AR 239)

When discussing the meaning of Eve in the *Arcana*, we can become accustomed to the technical meaning of proprium, but now, in the light of this reference, that meaning begins to move into a word that is far from technical. It is life. And yet even here, it is clear that something is meant that is also technical from a spiritual perspective. In the common vernacular, it is assumed that “life” is readily understood, that it has something to do with breathing, consciousness, growing and so on. But these meanings are man-made and relate to secular use. “Life” technically speaking belongs to the Lord, that is, the God who is One and that represents the beginning of this discussion. To be alive is to be a receiver of life, and the entity of its reception is the proprium. In Genesis, Eve is called the “mother of all living” and that which proceeds as a result of reception of life is the sense of more that is an inherent feature of all that lives. Consequently, armed with these ideas that look beyond what is possible in secular terms,

the question with which this began (What is the meaning of life?) can now be rephrased in a way that stretches far beyond the considerations of the purpose of existence to become this: how is the proprium turned around from being entirely self-centred to one reflecting a complete change of heart? That is what the question “what is the meaning of life” actually means when thinking about such things from a spiritual perspective. And the exploration of the subject of influx is the path to take in seeking a fuller answer.

### **Future considerations**

To understand influx is a little like the line from Milton in which he defines the aim of his epic poem “Paradise Lost” as being an endeavour to “justify the ways of God to man.” Here, however, the concern has been more low key. The reason for this should by now be apparent, since whatever descends to us from a higher affection must needs find a way into our very physicality. Consequently, the emphasis has been largely to establish the importance of this. We read often enough in Swedenborg of the presence of the Lord in ultimates, but often lose sight of this when considering the inner sense of the Bible, and its deeper meaning. That sense, it is clear, only begins to reveal itself when the physical level itself is involved in the processes of change that is implied by regeneration.

To discuss influx proper involves much deeper considerations concerning the notion of ordering and what is meant by numbering. It concerns the indirect manner in which it occurs involving different spiritual “communities,” a concern that is very difficult to communicate in a coherent way until it is understood that our very lives as physical beings are determined by such associations. There is the principle of inversion, a major subject in its own right. There are subsequently the references to the east wind in the Bible which serve the function of disabling and enabling order, of the role of vastation and much more. But none of this would seem relevant unless there was a clearer understanding of the role of the physical into which all these things pour. Indeed, it becomes apparent in Swedenborg that whatever statements he may make about apparently spiritual matters, they always refer back and root themselves in the physi-

cal. That is the reason why the current article is limited to the association between influx and the proprium.

When we consider the glorification of the Lord, we should note that this process in the New Testament had been played out and tested as an overture in the Old Testament. Therefore we should note that the initial movement of the Divine stemming from the celestial looks all the time towards the natural to realise itself, which is why Jacob is so important to us. And what is notable about Jacob is his own transformation, that the affections that define him need to be altered in dramatic ways in order to represent the higher states that will root themselves in him as the Divine Natural. His glorification is ultimately representative of our own change of state called regeneration. Perhaps, therefore, it is appropriate to end this particular section with a passage from Swedenborg on this subject, and to note the crucial role of the physical level in this process.

. . . Spirits and angels scarcely think in the same way as men do. Their thought, it is true, is likewise based ultimately in the natural; for they have with them the whole natural memory and its affections, though they are not allowed to use that memory. But although they are not allowed to use this, it nevertheless serves them as the groundwork or foundation for the ideas comprising their thought . . . From this it is evident that with them also the nature of their thought is determined by that of the correspondence of their natural with their rational. Evident also is the fact that there are some spirits who are rational and think spiritually, and others who are not rational and do not think spiritually, the difference between the two depending entirely on the nature of their affections and consequent thoughts of things during their lifetime, that is, depending on the state of the life which they have acquired to themselves in the world. (AC 3679:5)

To summarise in a proverb often used by Swedenborg concerning the physical, “where the tree falls, there it lies.”

(To be continued)