

Swedenborg made in his manuscript, but have indicated just how they were made, and where they appear.

The notations the editors have adopted are most helpful, being clear, relatively few and simple, and fairly easy to memorize. They tend to be on the small side and to be easily missed. But it is imagined this tendency would be overcome as a student became used to looking for them. Besides, their being inconspicuous would be most welcome to the reader who did not want to be distracted by notes.

The only complaint this reviewer has—and it is a very minor one—is that on occasion the reader is referred to notes appearing earlier in the volume, and at least on one occasion (see p. 230) to a note appearing in another volume altogether. It would have been better, it seems, and quite practical to have repeated the notes even if they were of no great significance. But as was said, this is a minor complaint and in no way takes away from the value of the work, nor from our pleasure in reading it.

The editors and the Swedenborg Society have well deserved the congratulation and thanks of the Church for undertaking to publish this Third Edition and for the fine scholarly work they have put into it.

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PHILOSOPHICAL NOTES

“What Is New?” This question is asked daily not only to seek information but to establish new standards. Thus what is new has become the standard for today to be supplanted by the standard of tomorrow which will be dictated by what is new then.

So often has this criterion been applied that the value attached to “standard” or “principle” is itself being challenged. In its place only that which is new has any importance.

Although examples can be easily drawn from the sciences, in the notes which follow examples are drawn from daily life. They are not trivial; they were pronounced with supposed authority by “leaders” and “scholars.” Therefore the examples serve to show that the criterion of newness is applied in all seriousness in many fields.

"Make All Things New." It is true that the early New Church people used these words over and over as the aim of the Church. Even the name of the church carried the sign of this purpose. But the newness was defined and limited to a revelation that was new. It was the revelation that was the guide, not the newness. The revelation itself depended upon what was old—and also on what had at one time been new—namely the Old and the New Testaments respectively.

It is also true that some in the Church, impressed more by newness than by the connected chain that is in history, have stressed the lack of importance to the Church of the older parts of the Word. But this only illustrates further our theme. Error is still possible even when one has the truth available. This judgment which concludes that the older parts of the Word have little, if any use for the New Church, has no basis in the Writings. It represents an error based upon the doctrine of newness.

" . . . Present Ages Are Distinguished Above Those of the Ancients . . . ". So said Swedenborg in the *Economy*. But we do violence to his idea by stripping these words from the context. In an earlier number (*EAK* 23) he says

I think that I shall not at all detract from the literature of the present day, if I aver with many, that the ancients surpassed us in wisdom. . . .

He then goes on to specify in what respect the ancients did excel. In the next number he says,

On the other hand, I think I shall not detract from the praise due to ancient literature, if again with many I aver, that the late and present ages are distinguished above those of the ancient for the aids they have afforded in carrying to a further extent the developments of genius, or for accumulating experimental facts. . . .

And in the following number he says,

Thus does it seem to be the will of that Providence who rules all earthly affairs, that the one state should be succeeded by the other; that the parents should instruct the children and that the ancients should incite their posterity to the acquisition of the experimental knowledge by which their contemplative sciences may be confirmed; and in like manner that we of the present age should stimulate the generations that follow us. . . .

Evidently Swedenborg believed in the continuity of history, of the application of cause and effect principles in its development, and was hardly carried away by anything resembling the doctrine of newness in his philosophy. New it was, but this newness was not the criterion for its importance, much less its truth.

It might seem naïve to some that we should quote Swedenborg in this connection. But Swedenborg's belief in cause and effect is being challenged on every hand. It is my understanding for example that "cause and effect" is being challenged in particular by historians. Perhaps this might have something to do with the present dogma of newness.

"We Hold These Truths to be Self-Evident." Not too long ago I was present at a meeting where there were also, among others, individuals who had spent much time in studying, writing, and lecturing on the geopolitical situation arising from communism. It was stressed by one of the speakers that a very considerable weakness with the United States position was the lack of a basic principle to guide us in our thinking.

Religion had lost much of its influence, basic philosophical principles were lacking, and even many of the tenets held by the early founders of our country, and those who followed, were weakened by doubts. All this was pointed out. Someone pointed out further that the fear that was among many in the United States today might be somewhat assuaged if it could be realized that our physical strength in our day as compared with the U.S.S.R. is relatively stronger than that of the colonies with respect to England in their day.

One of the speakers said, "Yes, but in Washington's day, it could be said ' . . . We hold these truths to be self evident. . . .'" But this was as far as he got. He was interrupted by a student of history to be reminded that scholarship had greatly modified the importance of these words in the founding of our country.

Scholarship, however acute or learned, cannot deny that these words not only introduced into the Declaration of Independence certain fundamental beliefs held by the committee who drafted that document, but also that they held that these beliefs were among the bases which could be recited as causes which impelled them to separation from the mother land. (For references, see

the opening paragraph of the Declaration of Independence.) It might be added that others as well—not only the writers and the signers of the Declaration of Independence—could say and did say: “We hold these truths to be self evident. . . .”

This is precisely what the philosophy of newness challenges: Namely, any and all forms of belief—except that belief in what is new because it is believed to be new.

“What Does Thomas Jefferson Know. . . .?” Some time ago I visited a meeting held by the local lawmakers of a nearby town. These men were trying to convince the townspeople that the administrators of their town were “reasonable men” and so the new law if enacted would naturally be administered in a reasonable manner. That the law itself had many unreasonable possibilities was being bypassed with this argument.

One of the citizens pointed out that among the letters of Thomas Jefferson there was the statement to the effect that if any group of men in their prime would gather together to sign a compact, it must be remembered that twenty years later, half of them would be dead. How long could we count on the present group of so-called “reasonable men,” was his point.

One of the lawmakers banged his fist on the table and shouted, “What does Thomas Jefferson know about our town?”

It would seem that Thomas Jefferson knew more about the town that did not yet exist when he was alive than some who live there now. It appears also that the incident speaks for itself concerning men who assert themselves to be “reasonable.”

It would seem that there are many in public life today who are benefiting in numerous ways from the teachings and traditions for which Jefferson was largely responsible who would nevertheless be happier to have Jefferson forgotten—to recall him is to call attention to certain responsibilities one has for maintaining these benefits. These responsibilities are in direct opposition to much of what is being taught in high places that is based upon the doctrine of newness.

Apparently, the town official referred to, had this fear of Jefferson to such an extent that he called into question a somewhat pertinent fact about man’s mortality not for any scientific reason, nor reason from insurance statistics, but because Jefferson said so!