

## THE SPIRITUAL SUBSTANCE DEBATE

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In 1915, the General Church underwent a crisis stemming from a debate surrounding the nature of spiritual substance. The ideas, events, and people that made up the spiritual substance debate are as fascinating as they are confusing. The primary purpose of this essay is to help people gain entry into the basic issues, rather than provide solutions. Consequently, this is essentially an historical account, attempting to clearly represent the positions taken by the major players, as well as recount some of the events which transpired between 1900 and 1915.

Bishop Benade, a veteran of the General Church battles with the Convention and Conference, aptly foresaw such an event, saying “The danger will come in the future, when an attack on our principles and fundamentals comes from within our body.”<sup>†</sup> His words were seen to be prophetic when in 1911, Rey Gill wrote an article for *New Church Life* which restated Lillian Beekman’s views regarding the true quality and shape of the spirit after death. This sparked a church-wide dispute over the reality of spiritual substance, the “stuff” that constitutes the spirit after death. For the most part, the ministers and leading intellectuals of the church became polarized into two basic camps, one group siding with the famous New Church scholar and editor of *New Church Life*, C.T. Odhner, the other gathering around the stalwart intellect of Alfred Acton. If the doctrinal debate was not difficult enough, the waters were stirred and muddied by other issues such as mysticism, feminism and academic freedom. At a Joint Council meeting in 1915, John Pitcairn stood up and insisted that “Father” Benade’s prophecy had come true. If it hadn’t been for Bishop N.D. Pendleton’s levelheaded leadership, the disturbance could have divided the General Church as easily as it divided many longtime friendships.

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<sup>1</sup> As was quoted by John Pitcairn in the *Journal of the Fifteenth Meeting of the Joint Council of the General Church of the New Jerusalem* (JCJ hereinafter), (June 26, 1915), 22.

Many may feel the spiritual substance debate is a distraction from the real spiritual work at hand. Granted, it does not make or break the work of repentance and regeneration. Yet, history is vital. Knowing the past helps us know the present, which in turn helps us decide our direction in the future. Our individual and collective responses are based, in part, on what has happened before. Therefore, if we want to know something about the state of the church now, and where it might be in the future, it is important for us to know something about its past.

### **Precursor & the Pre-Theological Works**

By the end of the 19th century the western world was awakening to the intellectual and practical benefits of science. Accordingly, any world view had to account for science and scientific knowledge. Given Swedenborg's scientific background, most, if not all, New Church scholars believed that the Writings were consistent with the whole endeavor of science. This was fueled further by the timely and intense scholarship into Swedenborg's philosophic and scientific works. Many saw Swedenborg's works, both pre-theological and theological, as a kind of bridge between religious and scientific knowledge, a claim most religions could not make. The doctrines of correspondence, influx and discrete degrees were keystone concepts linking these two realms of verity. Yet, these essential concepts, and more, were not peculiar to the revelations in the theological works, but were clearly articulated much earlier in Swedenborg's works. Some saw these earlier works as a prerequisite for true understanding of the theological works. On the whole, many in the New Church became enamored of Swedenborg's science and avidly attempted to harmonize it with New Church theology and contemporary science. The goal was to present to the world a new science to accompany the New Church, a science which accounted for both the phenomenal and spiritual orders of creation and existence.

Excitement and hopefulness filled the air. People gathered in local groups to study and discuss different pre-theological works. The most notable of these groups was the Principia Club, which existed in Chicago and Bryn Athyn. In 1898, active scholars and interested parties began the Swedenborg Scientific Association. In that same year, a new journal dedi-

cated to the investigation and publication of Swedenborg's philosophical and scientific works began, called *The New Philosophy*. In celebration of the re-awakened interest in Swedenborg's pre-theological works, C.T. Odhner even named his daughter "Doris Renee," meaning a gift reborn.

Bishop W.F. Pendleton was wholeheartedly behind the endeavor to correlate the Writings with both modern science and the pre-theological works. "Pendleton envisioned a future Academy in which the sciences—natural science, Swedenborg's science and philosophy, and the Ancient Church sciences restored—would play a part."<sup>2</sup> With this vision in mind, he actively propagated the credibility of Swedenborg's science in *New Church Life*, as well as in public addresses. He stressed that "the science of God as Man exhibits the universe, spiritual and natural, as being in His image, and all things, from greatest to least, as striving to the human form."<sup>3</sup>

He was not without opposition though. Those most actively involved with the Pendleton's project, especially members of the Principia Club, put great stock in the accuracy of the scientific works. Their critics claimed that they were, in effect, treating Swedenborg's preparatory works with the same authority as the theological works. Thus, questions about the nature of Swedenborg's enlightenment prior to the theological works were raised. Were the pre-theological works truly enlightened science? Should they have the same authority as the theological works? Were they infallible? The sparks began to fly at a Principia Club meeting, where Camille Vinet was reviewing Swedenborg's *Principles of Chemistry*. He "questioned the validity of principles drawn by Swedenborg from discredited scientific 'facts.'"<sup>4</sup> Bishop Pendleton defensively responded, saying that Swedenborg's science is "a foundation and basis upon which the spiritual philosophy of the Writings rest...[and] is the clearest and most precious heritage of the Church next to the revelation itself."<sup>5</sup> The infalli-

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<sup>2</sup> Sanfrid Odhner, *Toward A New Church University, A Centennial Album* (NCU hereinafter) (Bryn Athyn, PA: Academy of the New Church, 1976), 42.

<sup>3</sup> NCU, 42.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

bility question was again raised at the 1899 Assembly, where “it was decided that he was not infallible in the beginning, before his revelations began, that his science was the science of his day and therefore faulty, and that he had grown in illumination.”<sup>6</sup>

By 1903, the debate had flared up in *New Church Life*, the members of the Principia Club squared off against Academy “liberals,” those who believed that Swedenborg’s earlier works were no different in essence than books by any other writer. Alfred H. Stroh, researcher and translator of Swedenborg’s preparatory works, was a spokesman for this position. “His [Stroh’s] researches in Sweden had convinced him that the extreme position held by the Principia Club was untenable—that Swedenborg’s thought showed a perfectly normal development, and that his science and philosophy showed unmistakably the influence of Descartes, Newton, Locke, Leibnitz, Wolff, and Aristotle. In other words, his science and philosophy were perfectly normal products of the human mind, and not a divine revelation.”<sup>7</sup>

This point becomes significant later in the spiritual substance debate because the positions taken by Lillian Beekman, Alfred Acton and Eldred Iungerich drew heavily from the scientific works, accepting that there is at least a strong correlation between the pre-theological works and the theological works.<sup>8</sup> Iungerich maintained the “theorem” that:

Swedenborg was led by the Lord to write nothing but the truth. He received instruction in regard to many of the earlier works. The works whose truth is so miraculously attested are in agreement with the rest. Swedenborg wrote with a conviction of their truth. His ignorance of some doctrines that were afterwards revealed, did not prevent what he did write from being the truth...[thus] the earlier works constitute a true philosophy which is not repugnant to the truth of revelation, but in complete accord with it.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Marguerite Block, *The New Church in the New World* (New York: Octagon Books, 1960), 309.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 309–10.

<sup>8</sup> Just to be clear, Alfred Acton highly regarded the pre-theological works, but never claimed that they were infallible.

<sup>9</sup> E.E. Iungerich, “Testimony of Swedenborg’s Earlier Works.” *New Church Life* (NCL hereinafter) (Dec. 1908): 697–707.

The other side, led by Odhner, Pitcairn and Stroh, would later argue that Beekman, Acton, and Iungerich viewed the theological works through the lens of *The Principia*, thus putting a natural and scientific slant on what is discretely above nature.

### Miss Beekman

W.F. Pendleton's hopes for the Academy and Swedenborg's science were fortified by the intellect and scholarship of Miss Lillian Grace Beekman. Her brilliant work and personality could be considered the epicenter of the whole spiritual substance debate.

In 1899, at age 40, Miss Beekman came to Bryn Athyn on the recommendation of W.F. Pendleton and at the expense of John Pitcairn. She had been living in Chicago and was recently separated after her doctor husband aborted their child.<sup>10</sup> She became educated in anatomy, physiology, physics, philosophy and the arts; all combining into a graceful, attractive and compelling personality.

After becoming interested in Swedenborg through Emerson's *Representative Men*, she was guided to the *Principia* by the Reverend Lewis Mercer. She later became a charter member of Chicago's Principia Club. At the club's inaugural meeting, she gave her first paper on Swedenborg's science, "The Solar Vortices and the Development of Suns," which appeared in *The New Philosophy* in 1899. This caught the interest of Academy scholars who were keen on harmonizing Swedenborg's science with modern science, most notably the Bishop, W.F. Pendleton. After one year of classes, she proved herself to be outstanding in the fields of science, philosophy and especially Swedenborg's scientific works. She soon taught in the Normal School and later in the Theological School.

It was not until 1905 that Alfred Acton and C.T. Odhner learned exactly what she was teaching in her classes. Both quickly became sympathetic to her ideas. Shortly afterward, "Odhner suggested that Miss Beekman write a book on the Process of Creation as she had developed it

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<sup>10</sup> Alfred Acton II, "What Were They Fighting About?: A Review of the Argument Over the Nature of Spiritual Creation." *The New Philosophy* (NP hereinafter) (Jan.-June 1995): 47.

from the Writings and the earlier works, particularly *The Principia*, and Miss Beekman took up the suggestion."<sup>11</sup>

In 1907, *Outlines of Swedenborg's Cosmology* was published by the Academy, complete with color illustrations. In it, she isolated certain principles in the scientific works with corresponding ones in the theological works. She equated the first natural point of *Principia* with "the first things which form the Sun of the angelic heaven..." found in *True Christian Religion* n. 33. Thus, the first natural points could be seen as a scientific way of describing when "God first limited His infinity by substances sent out from Himself" (TCR 33). And "From these arose the first sphere encompassing Him, which constitutes the Sun of the spiritual world. Afterwards, by means of that Sun, He formed the rest of the spheres, even to the last, which consists of inactive matter" (TCR 33). Miss Beekman then interprets how the first natural point is not a "fallacy springing from the idea of space" warned of in the Writings (DP 6, TCR 20):

These simples, primitives, or points, are therefore not dead, but are living, life itself, infinite. They are not the fortuitous points "of no predication and therefore not in themselves anything," nor the atoms of Epicurus, nor the monads of Leibnitz, nor the simple substances of Wolff; and so are not what is condemned in "The True Christian Religion," 20, and "The Divine Providence," 6, that are the infinites of God-Man and the origin of the finites of the universe."<sup>12</sup>

In effect, she ingeniously applied the *Principia* concept of creation to spiritual as well as natural things, thus rectifying works which had been generally seen as incommensurate.

With the release of this book, the debate over spiritual substance was just being primed. *Outlines of Swedenborg's Cosmology* was received quite well, as there were many in the church eager for confirmation of the pre-theological works. For example, Dr. J. B. King enthusiastically wrote, "The tide of interest in scientific works of Swedenborg which has been rising for

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<sup>11</sup> Alfred Acton, "Lillian Grace Beekman." (NP 1953): 113–114.

<sup>12</sup> Lillian Grace Beekman, *Outlines of Swedenborg's Cosmology* (Bryn Athyn, PA: Academy Book Room, 1907), 17–18.

several years...now seems to have culminated in Miss Beekman's book on Cosmology..."<sup>13</sup> Yet, at that time, there were few scholars in the Church that were willing or ready to challenge whether this application was valid. Alfred Stroh was such a scholar, and disagreed with Miss Beekman's thesis. But the force of his opinion was not sustained, as he was off on assignment in Sweden, collecting and copying material for the Swedenborgiana collection.

Even C.T. Odhner's review of the book in *New Church Life* was also quite positive, saying it was "a practical demonstration of the complete harmony existing between Swedenborg's earlier works and the inspired Writings."<sup>14</sup> As we can see, early on in these studies, Odhner, and most others, were in favor of harmonizing the Writings with Swedenborg's science. He himself wrote an article for *New Church Life*, called "The Natural Point as the 'Nexus.'" He begins by saying:

In the *Principia*, Swedenborg clearly demonstrates that the first natural Point of Divine creative Conatus is the medium between the Infinite and the finite...It is the purpose of this paper...to show that the *Principia* system is in entire harmony with the Word of God in its spirit and its letter. The first natural Point is one and the same with the purely simple; and this again, is identical with the nexus, the only begotten Son, the Divine Human from eternity.<sup>15</sup>

Miss Beekman wrote more on this topic, most notably, "The Kingdom of the Divine Proceeding," which was published seriatim in the *New Church Life* in 1910. Here, she also correlated the first natural points specifically with the Divine Human which proceeds from the Infinite Esse. She describes how this is the basis for all of creation, simultaneously making the natural and the spiritual. In this way, the Infinite may be present everywhere and in all of creation, which also explained how and why all of nature aspires to the Human form, that is, because the Divine Human is present in all of creation, both natural and spiritual. She writes:

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<sup>13</sup> J.B.S. King, "The Uses of Natural Truth," NCL (Jan. 1908): 3.

<sup>14</sup> C.T. Odhner, "A Review of the Cosmology." NCL (Jan. 1908): 38-41.

<sup>15</sup> C.T. Odhner, "The Natural Point as the 'Nexus.'" NCL (Nov. 1907): 736.

We have seen that the primitives and simples composing the primal reflex sphere, or plane, produced from and in the Infinite, of one substance therewith, and as to their internal conatus eternally existent therein, are presumably the very primes of the Divine Human...these the primes of the Divine Human exist not only in the spiritual world as its inmost, but are the very primes and simples from which nature had its origin...<sup>16</sup>

Miss Beekman provided *New Church Life* with only five of the six promised installments. In 1911, while her last article was being finished, Rey Gill published what is probably the most controversial article ever run in *New Church Life*, entitled "The Bodies of Spirits and Angels."<sup>17</sup> It evoked a landslide of responses clearly precipitating the church-wide disturbance concerning the nature of spiritual substance. Miss Beekman withheld the sixth installment due to C.T. Odhner's biting response<sup>18</sup> to this essay. As we will see below, Gill was essentially restating Beekman's views. Consequently she took Odhner's reply as an attack upon herself. Odhner, who had been preparing Beekman's articles for press, was also beginning to see her "interior views" in a new, unfavorable light. This also sparked the ongoing doctrinal feud between Alfred Acton and C.T. Odhner, who were, at that time, co-editors of *New Church Life*. These men strongly disagreed, as Acton remained sympathetic to Beekman and her general viewpoint. As a result, Acton resigned from the publication.

### The Bodies of Spirits and Angels

Gill's article publicly stated the views that Miss Beekman had been espousing in the classroom for some time. The thrust of the article is that spirits and angels don't actually have bodies such as we have. The appearance of the body in the spiritual world can vary greatly depending on the ruling loves or subsequent affections at the time. It is only when spirits reflect on the subject, that they appear as being clothed with bodies and garments. He emphasizes numbers which testify that the spirits don't

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<sup>16</sup> Lillian Beekman, *The Kingdom of the Divine Proceeding* (Bryn Athyn: Academy Book Room, 1920), 20.

<sup>17</sup> NCL (Nov. 1911): 728–738.

<sup>18</sup> NCL (Dec. 1911): 799–806.



have corporeal bodies such as they once had. Any sense of it is a “corporeal imagining[s]” and is akin to “phantasy.”<sup>19</sup> He fortifies his argument by showing that evil spirits try to trick us into believing that we do have a body which can be tormented (SD 2306). After quoting *Heaven and Hell* no. 75, which says:

that angels are in form entirely men, that they have faces, eyes, ears, [etc.]...they see one another, hear one another, and talk together, that there is nothing whatever wanting to them that belongs to man, except that they are not clothed over all with a material body.

Gill adds:

...the passage just quoted above must mean that this is how spirits appear, and though, as said, they certainly have a body and are in the human form, it is not in the external human shape as we know it. In many places in the Writings where similar passages occur it is distinctly said that angels and spirits “appear” in the human form exactly as in the world; and in these passages *it is not said that they actually are in such form*. The material body is the ultimate human form, and after death spirits appear to themselves and to others to retain this shape, because...all their sensations have been accustomed to, and were formed in, such a body.<sup>20</sup> [My emphasis added]

He goes on to argue that the “actual” shape, not the appearing shape, of the spirit after death is dependent on organic substances, which he specifies as those located in the cortical substances of the brain.<sup>21</sup> Thus, the spirit’s actual shape is that of the brain alone. Let’s take a moment to investigate his point, as it is articulated by Gill himself (my numbering and emphasis):

1. The memory...has its seat *only in the cortical substances* of the brain.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 729.

<sup>20</sup> Rey Gill, “The Bodies of Spirits and Angels.” NCL (Nov. 1911): 733–4.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 735.

2. Thus the *most ultimate human form which man has after he leaves his natural body is the form of the vessels of his memory, or the form of the cortical glands of his brain, as it was infilled and fixed with the purest substances of nature, during his life in the world...*

3. After death the uses of the bodily shape as we know it here are finished, and therefore it is no longer needed except, maybe, in appearance.

4. This being the case it follows that this acquired and infilled form of the cortical glands is the outmost form and shape of man's spiritual body as it is in *reality*.

CONCLUSION: Now as the limbus, or the natural memory plane, is the cutaneous envelope of the spiritual body, it necessarily follows that it is only in *appearance* that our bodies are in like shape to that of the body we know here: otherwise the spiritual bodies would either be outside their own skins, or would have a body like ours, but enveloped in the covering of their brains! <sup>22</sup>

William H. Alden succinctly summarized the view, saying, "Mr. Gill's whole argument rests upon the proposition that the organic mind, the seat of the memory, is confined to the cortical substances of the brain...the mind is the man after death;...the limbus is the cutaneous covering of the mind. If, then, the mind is confined to the cortical substance as contained in the brain alone,...the form of the spiritual body of man and angel is that of the cortical substances of the brain."<sup>23</sup>

Given the fact that Miss Beekman's thoughts on this specific subject were not widely in print, one might doubt the authenticity of the claim that Gill was merely articulating her views, and thus doubt her role in the debate over spiritual substance. But, in 1908, she wrote a little known essay called "Life Conditions and Possibilities of the Human Organic After Death," which was developed from written answers to questions put to her by N.D. Pendleton. In her perplexing style, she writes:

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<sup>22</sup> Rey Gill, "Man's Memories, Before and After Death." NCL (Jan. & Feb. 1913): 89–90.

<sup>23</sup> William H. Alden, "The Shape of the Spiritual Body." NCL (April 1913): 241.

The mind, formed in the cortical glands of the brain (and stamped and habituated there, through the association, experiences of natural life, to an intro-organic sensation—habit of corporeal play accompanying its very modification) *is* the Spiritual body after death and the only Spiritual body there is. Its real shape is about that of the complex of gray cells of the brain.<sup>24</sup> [Beekman emphasized “is”]

Where Gill only hints at the idealistic or imaginative quality of spiritual substance after death, Miss Beekman is forthright in her opinions:

...in relation to the departed, i.e., the organic human Existent after death,—bodies and minds, are synonymous!—And [the] use of both words is thus merest tautology!<sup>25</sup>

Furthermore:

For that...after death world of conditions is the world preeminently, on its lower organic plane, one of unchecked sensation, and uncheckable, unverifiable sensation. The world of imaginative subjectively produced sensory experience.<sup>26</sup>

There can be no doubt that it was Miss Beekman who began shaking the earth of the General Church. Basically, she was saying that there is no real spiritual substance which is discretely different than the stuff that constitutes natural substance. The stuff that makes up the gray cells of the brain is the real substance. Thus, the spiritual world and all that appears there is ideal or an appearance. In other words, it is lacking any of its own, real, spiritual substance. Its substance is essentially the same as what makes up the brain. Everything else there is just an appearance.

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<sup>24</sup> Lillian Beekman, “Life Condition and Possibilities of the Human Organic After Death.” Sec. I: 16.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. Sec. I: 8. One may notice the difficult grammar used here. This quote was also used in the JCJ (Nov.): 77, where word for word, it is the same as the original document. This is understandable, given that it was an unpublished paper, and therefore unpolished.

Upon reflection, it is ironic that such an emphasis on matter, on the primes and particles of creation, would result in a kind of idealism. One might say her view was both materialistic and ideal.

### C.T. Odhner Responds

C.T. Odhner found these ideas repugnant, and responded to Rey Gill's article with force, saying:

It may be that we have not correctly understood the arguments of our friend, but Idealism or anything approaching it is in itself so fraught with terrible potentialities to the faith of a New Churchman that it must be handled without gloves.<sup>27</sup>

Odhner's reaction was not only against the idealism, but also against the claim that one can have an interior view of the truth which is at variance with open, general teachings in the Writings. He rejoins:

But why "must" general truths be explained away by some particular statements the bearing of which may not have been correctly understood? To say that spirits and angels only appear on certain occasions to have face and hands and feet, is the same as to say that in reality they do not possess these parts, and this is to contradict the plain and universal teaching of the Heavenly Doctrine.<sup>28</sup>

Odhner tries to take Gill's views to their logical conclusions, asking, "does the spirit see, or does he only appear to see? Does he speak, or does he only imagine that he speaks? Does he write with his hand, or does he only think that he writes? And if so, why are there whole libraries in heaven, containing actual and permanent books?"<sup>29</sup> He confidently writes:

It seems to us that...[these] conclusions are apt to lead to a purely idealistic conception of the other world, making it wholly subjective and deny-

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<sup>27</sup> C.T. Odhner, "The Shape of the Spiritual Body." NCL (Dec. 1911): 805.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 800–801.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 805.

ing its objective reality. If the spiritual brain enjoys no extensions through fibres and nerves, and no organs and limbs clothing those fibres, how can a spirit possibly appear to other spirits, except when he happens to reflect upon his non-existent—shape? There is small comfort in this thought to one who hopes to live with his wife forever, and with his beloved companions in the Church. Is he to behold his wife only when she reflects upon her own form? Is it only in imagination that he is to clasp the hand of a friend? If so, he is surely a “monad” who can never be certain that there are any other beings existing outside of himself.<sup>30</sup>

Furthermore,

Happily there is no need to fear any such direful contingencies...Spirits and angels do possess a brain, and this brain extends itself by spiritual organs and vessels constituting a complete human form with a human figure equally complete and real. This spiritual human figure, moreover, is to all eternity fixed by a “limbus” or border of the purest things of nature (TCR 103), which constitutes “the cutaneous envelope of the spiritual body in which angels and spirits are.” (DLW 257)<sup>31</sup>

He further provides us with a quote from *Five Memorable Relations* which refutes Beekman and Gill’s main point that the mind rests only on the cortical substances of the brain, saying:

the mind (*mens*) remains the same as it would in the world: and because **the mind (*mens*) is not only in the head, but also in the whole body**, therefore a man [in the spiritual world] has a similar body; for the body is the organ of the mind, and is continued from the head.<sup>32</sup> [My emphasis]

Let us briefly summarize this “Odhner position,” which would be taken up by others like John Pitcairn, Walter Childs I, Homer Synnestvedt, N.D. Pendleton, and W.H. Alden and further developed by Hugo L.

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 805.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 806.

<sup>32</sup> Emanuel Swedenborg, *Five Memorable Relations*, n. 5.

Odhner. They held that spiritual bodies retain the full human shape after death, even when they are not reflected upon, because they are constituted of objectively real spiritual material. This “stuff” is discretely different from anything occurring in the natural, such as the matter that constitutes the brain.

As Alfred Acton II, the grandson of both C.T. Odhner and the elder Alfred Acton, points out, the debate was actually over the nature of spiritual creation, and “how Swedenborg’s own cosmology related to statements of his revelatory works.”<sup>33</sup> Odhner, like Stroh, was opposed to the Principia Club view articulated so well by Miss Beekman.<sup>34</sup> That is, he believed that the pre-theological works did not correlate exactly to the theological works, and that any science, even Swedenborg’s, must be seen through the lens of the Writings themselves. Therefore, he maintained that the spiritual degree has its own substance, which is prior to the natural, which weaves and forms natural shapes. The spiritual form or shape, which is one with use, is the “real” shape. A natural form is woven from the spiritual form, resulting in the “actual” shape that appears in the natural. This spiritual material dwells in the cutaneous envelope of the limbus, which is not limited to the shape of the brain, but is in the complete human form as it was in life. Therefore, the “appearing” shape of the spirit in the other life, as Gill and Beekman might call it, is the “actual” shape of the spirit because that is the form of the spiritual “stuff.” Objects in the spiritual world must then be at least as objectively real, maybe even more real, than objects in the natural world. So, according to Odhner, those who believe as Gill and Beekman do, not only reverse the priority and order of creation, but nullify the reality of spiritual life.

### The Acton View

Although many gathered around the Odhner position, Miss Beekman’s point of view had won strong allies at the Academy, most notably, Alfred Acton and Dr. E. Iungerich. These were the days of polemical warfare.

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<sup>33</sup> Alfred Acton II, NP (1995): 43.

<sup>34</sup> It is interesting to note that in a 1912 trip to Sweden, John Pitcairn and the young Hugo Lj. Odhner had been converted to this point by Alfred Stroh. Hugo Odhner would later take up the defense of his uncle’s point.

Rev. Acton spared no words at the 1913 Assembly in Glenview, where he took up two whole sessions presenting a thoroughly researched paper on "The Nature of the Spiritual World." Since it was too long for *New Church Life*, the paper was first printed as a pamphlet, and later blossomed into a 200-page book under the same title.

In this work, he tries not to mince any words, saying:

Let this teaching be clear and explicit. The "purest things of nature"—those purest things which by successive creation have risen up from the ultimate world—these are the spiritual body, the body of man's spirit, formed and fashioned by himself either co-operating with the Lord or acting against the Lord. These are the "ultimate spiritual," called the "spiritual natural" which may or may not be separated from "its superior" which is the spiritual itself that proceeds from the Sun of Life. In the formation of these substances by the Lord lie heavenly gifts and heavenly happiness, and in their formation by man alone, lies the rise of evil (DLW 373). This is involved in that universal teaching of our doctrines that man is not life but merely an organ receptive of life, and wherein life is exhibited, set forth to view, according to the form of the organ...<sup>35</sup>

Here, Acton is saying that the spiritual body is in fact constituted of the "purest things of nature." A man's spiritual body itself is not constituted of spiritual "materials," but rises from existence in a natural body, that is, from the materials of the "ultimate world." Despite the terms "ultimate spiritual" or "spiritual natural," this material is not itself spiritual, but merely the container of what is spiritual, just as a wine glass contains wine. Our choices in this life form and shape this material, thus the influx of the spiritual will be according to that so-formed receiving vessel.

He goes on to say:

Organics constitute the bodies of spirits (AC 1378, 2487; DLW 192, 316)...Now "organ" or "organic" can be predicated only of natural substances, or the substances of nature, for these alone can be organically

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<sup>35</sup> Alfred Acton, *The Nature of Spiritual World* (Bryn Athyn, PA: Academy Book Room, 1914), 171–172.

receptive of life in such a way that they can reflect it or pervert it. Spiritual substances proper are the living active finites which are produced by the Creator as means for the creation of matter. But these cannot be perverted; nor can they operate except as finitions of proceeding Divine Life. The organic begins with matter within which is spiritual substance; and the purer the matter, the more it removes itself from inertness, the more nearly it becomes “the purest things of nature,” so much the more may it become expressive and exponent of the living activities of spiritual substance...The spiritual substances which are within his natural substances—substances which constitute those superior degrees in which the Lord dwells, and which cannot be perverted.<sup>36</sup>

Acton emphasizes the point that only the natural can be receptive of life, that is, an “organ” of it. Spiritual substances are real, yet they are purely means for the creation of natural stuff, which in turn contains the spiritual such that man can have life. In other words, man has life because his body is made of natural matter, which has the spiritual within it. Acton links the spiritual stuff received in the material body with “finitions of the Divine Proceeding,” and therefore the spiritual cannot be perverted by man. The life given to man can act upon the “inert” natural materials, thus making good or evil choices possible. Man only acts upon these natural things, not the spiritual stuff. The Rev. E.E. Iungerich would clarify this by saying,

spiritual substance is really the presence of the Lord operating through the organism, and this is why we must not claim it as our own...there are special passages which make it pretty clear that no receptive organs are under the sun of the spiritual world (TCR 35). The receptacles of life are under the natural sun...That brings the phenomena of life into two creations. One is all the created universe which is natural, and the other is the Lord’s activity and operation through that universe—or what we might call the spiritual and celestial.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> E.E. Iungerich, JCI (Nov. 27–28, 1915): 112.



We might restate the view by thinking of man's life as a sailboat. The spiritual is like the wind, supplying energy to be moved one way or the other. Man only has life, the ability to choose one way or the other, if that wind can be "caught" so to speak. Imagine then that a sail is woven from already existing natural materials. When the sail is opened, the boat has the possibility to move and tack to the right or the left. All man's choices are played out on the sail of natural materials, not on the wind itself.

Given all this, Alfred Acton's conclusions were coherent and reasonable. His work gave this general point of view a greater level of doctrinal credibility and theological precision than was found in Miss Beekman's work. Unfortunately, the whole subject was becoming less about doctrine and more about feminism. Miss Beekman's work was more easily dismissed by people invoking passages in the Writings that warn us about the preaching and doctrinal teaching by women, as well as female authors (SD 5936, AC 266, CL 175).

### The Odhner View Rearticulated

In response to Acton, C.T. Odhner stuck to his guns. "If this were true, what was the spiritual body but a mere appearance? Did not this view really overlook the ultimates or 'lasts' of each discrete degree and therefore ignore the truly spiritual ultimates which actually constitute the spiritual body? Was not the whole view idealism?"<sup>38</sup>

In late 1914, Odhner formally responded to the Beekman-Acton position in an article called "Creation in the Spiritual World."<sup>39</sup> This time around, he argued more methodically that the spiritual body is constituted of a spiritual substance which is discretely above the natural substances Rev. Acton refers to. Here are some of his main points:

8. That there is such an ultimate spiritual substance—an inert substance from a spiritual origin—a substance at rest but not fixed—is a fact in complete harmony with Swedenborg's philosophical teachings in the

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<sup>38</sup> Alfred Acton II, *Carl Theophilus Odhner*. (No publisher or date listed), 34.

<sup>39</sup> C.T. Odhner, "Creation in the Spiritual World." NCL (Nov. 1914): 657–681.

Principia concerning the origin and nature of the “Third Finite or Substantial...”

9. This first inert or quiescent substance, which is the lowest of the spiritual substances and the highest of natural substances, is in the Writings termed “the ultimate spiritual” or “the spiritual natural.” In the Preparatory works it is sometimes called “the prince of this world” because, being in itself inert, passive and resisting, it can be separated from the higher spiritual substances, and can be turned into evil forms and uses...

10. This ultimate spiritual substance forms the earths and lands in the spiritual world—earths from a spiritual origin, upon which spirits and angels dwell...

13. This ultimate spiritual substance, which serves as earth or soil in the spiritual world, is the passive and re-active basis upon which and out of which organic spiritual forms are created.<sup>40</sup>

### The Joint Council Meetings

The debate was now at full throttle. It was, quite literally, the talk of the town. At least 40 articles were published on the topic in 1914 alone. Ministers and laymen alike began to be polarized, especially as the debate became enmeshed with Lillian Beekman’s person. Unfortunately, the judgment of many was clouded by accusations of feminism, mysticism, academic coercion and heresy. It became so heated that W.F. Pendleton resigned as Bishop, and the new Bishop, N.D. Pendleton, called for a special meeting of the Joint Council, which met on June 26, 1915. Due to lack of time, the council reconvened during the Thanksgiving break of that same year.<sup>41</sup> If we bypass all the ad hominem argumentation, we will find that the council fulfilled its responsibility by questioning this Beekman-type materialism in regard to the Holy Supper, the Lord’s Glorification and Presence, as well as interpreting the Writings. Let’s spend a moment examining these central issues.

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<sup>40</sup> C.T. Odhner, *Creation in the Spiritual World*. (Bryn Athyn, PA: Academy Book Room, 1915), 10, 11, 15.

<sup>41</sup> “The Journal of the Sixteenth Joint Council contains a bibliography citing 67 different books, articles, addresses, discussion of addresses, letters and replies to letters with the names of about 27 different contributors all relating to the subject.” Alfred Acton II, NP (1995):.52ff.

## Holy Supper

As to the Holy Supper, Miss Beekman “suggested that a Divine limbus actually imbued the elements of the Sacrament when blessed.”<sup>42</sup> In her own mixture of materialism and idealism, she believed that the Lord’s essence was carried by particles, in a similar fashion to the limbus of a finite person; thus the Lord could be present physically in the bread and wine. In her own words:

This sphere from the ultimate body-divine of the Lord Jesus Christ—a sphere unique among all spheres—as to certain laws and powers—even as Its use, Its appropriation—Its action—are unique—and are intended so.

...Note: That *Its particles* are vital: In a manner not known among other sphere particles. The Father has given the Son to have Life in Himself—and all the body of Him—likewise—as to its substance—and the omnipotence giving spheres likewise...<sup>43</sup> [My emphasis]

In keeping with the Catholic concept of transubstantiation, these particles can enter into the bread and the wine, leaving its outward form unchanged:

This sphere, which once produced, is everlasting—and everlastingly abides in nature—is collatable into ultimate matter, is collated actually into the ultimate matter, of the Holy Supper Divine—communion elements: The divine partaking elements,—we may put on our hands—and take,—and take into the microcosm of our own personal bodies...<sup>44</sup>

She goes on to say that we actually accept the Lord into our lives because we accept the bread and wine into our bodies. Furthermore, she believed that this miraculous event was invoked by the words of a priest. In her own words,

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>43</sup> Lillian Beekman. Quoted from letters to H. Synnestvedt, JCJ: 161.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 160.

That sphere, that corporeal sphere, of the ultimate body, inside and outside, given off from the Lord Jesus Christ, our living Lord, during the period of the Palestine evolution and life and act: that sphere marvelous; (whereby alone the Divine Human now has omnipotence, upon which, in which (as its own produced and moulded correspondent and plane) the Divine mind and soul of the glorified Lord rests and is operative immediately) that sphere marvelous, is not in the communion elements, before the words of institution are said, with definite intention, by the ministering priest.<sup>45</sup>

This general approach was entertained by both Rev. Acton and Dr. Iungerich, not that they conceived of it in the same way. The latter openly researched these concepts further.

On August 4th, a little over a month after the first meeting of the Joint Council, Miss Beekman abruptly resigned from the Church, and eventually turned to Catholicism. She claimed, maybe in frustration, that she believed in the Trinity, and “always knew” that Swedenborg’s “little subjective experiences” were “a joke.”<sup>46</sup> This left egg on the face of the people who were associated with her ideas; while those in the Odnher camp acted as if they had won the day.

At the November meeting, Acton and Iungerich were put on the spot in regard to the Holy Supper. Dr. E. Deltenre, pastor of the New Church group in Brussels, rabidly criticized Iungerich’s Beekman-like views, decrying:

It is said plainly in T.C.R. 716 that in the Holy Supper the Lord is present in His Eternity, as well as to His glorified Human as to the Divine from which the Human proceeds. But this is not at all the same as that supposed Divine sphere, surrounding this earth only, and divisible (!!) into material particles!

This view,...appears to me to be theologically absurd, and to lead logically to the negation of the real Presence and of the Indivisible Union

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 156.

<sup>46</sup> Lillian Beekman. Quoted from a conversation with N.D. Pendleton. Ibid., 10.

of the glorified Human with the Divine ex quo. It is, besides, radically, materialistic. I have never met in theology and not even in philosophy anything more inadmissible!"<sup>47</sup> [his emphasis]

After some others had spoken, Rev. Iungerich defended himself, saying:

I am thoroughly opposed to it [transubstantiation], and it is a perfectly grotesque theory to me...[Mr. Baekstrom] gave the impression that I believed in a God who is created particles. My position on that point is that I believe, not that our Lord is finite particles, but that He has retained about Him a complete system of finite particles by which He is active and has immediate entrance on each plane. This makes quite a different thing from the other abhorrent view suggested.<sup>48</sup>

Acton, who did little speculation on the subject, was less detailed, replying:

What she [Miss Beekman] has written about the Holy Supper I have not been able to accept, but I held an open mind to it because I needed light on that subject.<sup>49</sup>

### **The Incarnation and Glorification**

The rub was not just about the Holy Supper; the church's concept of the Lord's incarnation, glorification and presence was also at issue. C.T. Odhner voiced a specific concern regarding the Beekman-Acton view of substance. He claimed that college students were being taught that the soul comes from both the father and the mother because the soul is actually a blood, i.e., the spirituous fluid. Since both parents have spirituous fluid coursing through themselves, "consequently the soul of the mother is communicated to the embryo and the foetus."<sup>50</sup> He goes on to say:

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<sup>47</sup> E. Deltenre. *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>48</sup> E.E. Iungerich. *Ibid.*, 111.

<sup>49</sup> Alfred Acton. *Ibid.*, 130.

<sup>50</sup> C.T. Odhner. *Ibid.*, 172.

I then showed them how destructive such a teaching would be to the supreme doctrine of the Church, the Glorification of the human with the Lord. Did the Lord obtain His soul from Mary as well as from the Divine Itself? If so, the Lord would have had a finite soul, as well as an Infinite Soul.

...In such case the whole work of Glorification would have been impossible. A finite soul cannot be glorified or made Divine and Infinite!...As to the soul of a man being a blood,—that is not the teaching of the Writings. The soul of man is a finite receptacle of life, but no kind of blood is a receptacle of life. The soul, therefore, is an inmost membrane: otherwise it could not receive or hold anything.<sup>51</sup>

Yet, the central problem was articulated by Dr. Iungerich himself, when he outlined some different interpretations of the Glorification from past New Church leaders. In telling why he was somewhat sympathetic to Rev. Cowherd's ideas, he also outlined the main concern of the council. With academic honesty, he states:

The Lord came on earth and He took and retained something He never had before—Where did he get it? Now that is putting the thing in a simple way. Now the Lord had in Him all the Infinite. He came on earth, put on the finite, which of course had been made originally from Himself. It says he retained an additament, an accessorium, which He did not have before. Did He get it from the Infinite? Did he get that from the finite? Yes and no. Of course, I would say the difficulty in Mr. Cowherd's view is that, according to the construction of it, *it makes the finite the Lord*, and that is the trouble with Miss Beekman's view, though perhaps only to the construction put on it, it makes the finite the Lord, that is, the additament that was adjoined to Him is regarded as merely finite, and not as glorified by the Infinite.<sup>52</sup> [My emphasis]

In short, the council was afraid that Beekman, Iungerich, and possibly Acton were materializing the Glorified Human, thus making Him some-

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> E.E. Iungerich. Ibid., 190. Here, he outlines something of an answer to the paradox.

what distinct from the Infinite. Therefore, if they held that the Lord, in His incarnation, descended to the lowest things of nature, and these ultimates were finally glorified, it would seem that they would have to accept some Beekman-like view. Otherwise, they would have to deny that the incarnation and glorification was down to ultimates of the natural. How could the glorified Human be both Infinite and finite? How could the glorified Human be one with the Infinite, yet still be finite, “retain[ing] an additament, an accessorium which He did not have before?” (see AC 1461e).

Here we find out one of the reasons why the pre-theological works became so significant. In his preparation, especially in *Principia* and *The Infinite and the Final Cause of Creation*, Swedenborg delved deeply into the subject of the infinite and the finite in creation. In the former work, Swedenborg illustrates his view of creation, showing “how a series of finites and actives combine to form five specific elements beginning with a First Natural Point.”<sup>53</sup> One might ask what is the character of this “First Natural Point?” Does the term “Natural,” here mean the natural world as opposed to the spiritual? “Or does it in fact mean finite which could be a spiritual entity,” such as the spiritual sun?<sup>54</sup> The usual description of creation given in the Writings “does not seem to coincide with what is said in *Principia*.”<sup>55</sup> This preparatory book makes no direct mention of spiritual creation or a spiritual sun. It is also interesting to note that the scholars of Swedenborg’s day criticized *Principia* for being too materialistic. Yet, a more definite spiritual tone is found later in *True Christian Religion* 33, which states:

God first rendered His infinity finite by means of substances emitted from Himself, from which His nearest surrounding sphere, which constitutes the sun of the spiritual world, came into existence; and that then through that sun He perfected the other surrounding spheres, even to the outmost: which consists of passive materials; and in this manner, by means of degrees, He rendered the world more and more finite.

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<sup>53</sup> Alfred Acton II. NP (1995): 44.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

Despite this difference, those who saw a correlation between the pre-theological and theological works, wanted to argue that the “First Natural Point” is essentially the same as the spiritual sun. They emulated the *Principia* model, making natural and spiritual creation run parallel, rather than having the natural emerge as an effect, or consequence, of the creation and completion of the spiritual realm. If the First Natural Point was the origin of the natural realm, at the same time as it was the origin of the spiritual, the implications of Beekman, Acton and Iungerich’s views would seem to follow. Consequently, whether or not Swedenborg makes use of *Principia* ideas in the theological works became a central issue.<sup>56</sup>

### Interpretation of the Writings

One of the main things contested during the whole debate was how the Writings are to be read. Can we accept teachings as they are *prima facie*, or, are “interior views” necessary, or even possible? Do we need to read passages in light of a larger theory gained from collating passages; one which puts the passages in a larger context, resolving apparent contradictions?

After 57 articles had been written testifying to the confused and confusing nature of his views, Alfred Acton finally defended himself. He argued that his antagonists selectively read passages, making no attempt to reconcile passages which are “apparently contrary.” Consequently:

there is, I imagine, some feeling of uneasiness among the people because, while they may not accept my reconciliation or unification of the passages, or may not comprehend it, they yet feel uneasily that it has not been answered; they see that the writers against it dwell upon and affirm the beautiful passages contained in the Writings concerning the reality of

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<sup>56</sup>See *ibid.* Alfred Acton II asks us to at least consider the possibility that the phrase in *True Christian Religion* n. 33 which reads “But from what is shown in my works concerning creation...” refers to the *Principia*. He claims that the phrase “my works” in the first edition (in Latin) was printed “OPERIBUS MEIS.” The use of all capital letters was intentional, and suggests a book title. Acton states, “In this number, also in upper case, two books of the Writings are cited—THE DIVINE LOVE AND WISDOM, and THE INTERCOURSE OF THE SOUL AND THE BODY.”



the spiritual world, but do not explain what Swedenborg says elsewhere about the nature of that reality.<sup>57</sup>

He tries to tell us that:

...when we go into the deeper aspects of our doctrines we will find a great deal of lack of clearness,—to say nothing about one of the remarkable phenomena of the spiritual world as to how it is effected; ask about the Glorification of the Lord even as to the body; or something about the spiritual sun. If you go a little bit deeper than the bare statements of the Writings,—if you endeavor to enter into the real understanding of them, will you find clearness?

...When we come to any deeper explanation of the things we talk about,—when we endeavor to enter into them more deeply, you will find, I think, in a great many more subjects than are dealt with in my book, a lamentable obscurity. And this is but natural, when we consider how limited and obscure is our thought, bound as it is by ideas drawn from time and space.<sup>58</sup>

Walter Childs responded, articulating what might now be considered the General Church position:

...we see that the theory in question is no mere academic speculation, but that it involves nothing less than a denial of clear and reiterated passages in the Writings, such as have been accepted throughout the Church and regarded as fundamental truths of revelation.

For instance, in very many places, and by various forms of explicit statement, the Writings affirm that man retains the complete human form and figure after death. This our friends of the opposition *deny*. Again, the Writings distinctly and repeatedly affirm the reality of ultimate spiritual substance...in forming the bodies of spirits and angels...This also our friends *deny*. Further, the Writings repeatedly tell us that there is creation in the spiritual world. This likewise our friends *deny*...

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<sup>57</sup> Alfred Acton, JCJ: 141–142.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 133–134.

Of course, in opposition to this, our friends will assert that what we call denial is based upon certain statements in the Writings which, when properly understood, sustain the new theory. Also it is claimed that the very many statements of the Writings which have been adduced by us as conclusively refuting the new theory, are but appearances of truth, not intended to be understood literally by the wise. But this involves a dilemma even more destructive to the Church, namely, a practical denial that the Writings are a rational revelation addressed to the rational understanding of all who are willing to receive them, requiring no further revelation or special interpretation of their teachings...<sup>59</sup> [His emphasis]

### Agree to Disagree

In order to head off a schism, N.D. Pendleton gave a truly diplomatic speech at the end of the Joint Council meetings. Admirably, he led this group of men to see that charity is the essence of faith, and that “it is at least ideal that we can differ in opinion and yet live happily together.”<sup>60</sup> He had accompanied W.F. Pendleton in the break with the autocratic “Father” Benade; and this night he spoke in true Pendleton style, expressing the need for freedom and tolerance. Since no solution had been forthcoming, N.D. Pendleton gave a lesson in the affirmative principle:

Now it appears that the two positions are irreconcilable. It may be so with regard to the two positions as now stated and understood, and it would make a vain attempt to reconcile things unreconcilable. But, gentlemen, the difficulty is not incurable. The truth of revelation is reconcilable with itself, and when it is reconciled, as it will be, then may we all be together as we were before.<sup>61</sup>

In effect, the bishop wisely called for a moratorium on the topic, or at least on the level of discussion. The Bishop knew the motion of men’s hearts, when he said:

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<sup>59</sup> Walter Childs, *ibid.*, 115–116.

<sup>60</sup> N.D. Pendleton, *ibid.*, 217.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 216.

Let us not by the strength of majority rush over into some other kind of dominion that will not allow freedom of speech and freedom of thought. It is human to do this. If by a majority we close in with severity, a very intelligent and conscientious minority will find it impossible to live with us...<sup>62</sup>

## Conclusion

The philosophical debate was never completely resolved. Hugo Odhner, with his masterful scholarship skills, as well as others, took up where Carl Theophilus left off, and refined the Odhner position. Acton stood firm. Even today, many enjoy arguing over these points. But the years have washed away the venomous sting in people's words. Time has shown that the finer points of the debate did not need to be ironed out. In view of quantum physics, a true paradigm shift, the whole debate may be a non-issue. All in all, the nature of spiritual substance was not a point that should divide a church. Bishop N.D. Pendleton is to be commended for his wisdom in leading people to see that charity is the essence of faith, and that the truth, like everything else, comes slowly.

Although no one had won the philosophical battle, it was clear that the Odhner contingent had won the political war. They established the "conservative" position on the topic, while the Acton position was somewhat tainted with "Beekmanism" and all of its overtones. As we've discussed above, the nature of spiritual substance was not the only thing at issue, but also how we are to read these Heavenly Doctrines. In turn, those affiliated with the General Church entered into something of a heresy-fighting mode, which was less flexible in its reading of the Writings. Granted, the whole Academy movement was already conservative in regard to the authority of the Writings, but its battles had been with the Convention, outside its borders. This debate, much like Benade's prophecy, was an internal crisis, which was perceived as an inside attack on the authority of Writings. The Odhner camp had reinforced the General Church's conviction in the authority of the Writings themselves, essen-

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

tially saying that they don't need the pre-theological works to understand the theological works. Thus, for all practical purposes, the literal meaning of the Writings was authoritative; little or no interpretation (or theory) was necessary to understand them. The effect of which seems ironic. In the attempt to prevent further heresy, ministers, due to their position and knowledge of the texts, were given more authority at the same time that priestly understanding became less credible. Although not directly related, the orthodoxy of these views may have created an environment for the next difficulty in New Church history, the *de Hemelsche Leer* debate.

Furthermore, the moratorium on certain kinds of scholarship sent the message that the scientific works were to be left alone. To this day, the significance of the pre-theological works is undervalued and understudied. This is unfortunate because, as science has advanced, modern physicists are finding that their questions about mind, matter and substance are no longer merely "scientific" but also theological. In this regard, the kinds of ideas and questions raised by people like Alfred Acton, Lillian Beekman and C.T. Odhner, may be more harmonious with science at the end of the twentieth century than at the beginning of it. The general ideas espoused in Swedenborg's *Principia* and the other pre-theological works may be more compatible now than they've ever been. Yet, the impetus and scholarship to adapt and harmonize these works with modern science from the light of the theological works was pruned before its fruits could have been known. Now that we have gained some emotional and paradigmatic distance from the issues of 1915, it is time to lift the long forgotten moratorium and welcome study into the pre-theological works, not just for ourselves, but for what could be contributed to modern discussion in science. □

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"On the Occasion of Mr. Pitcairn's Seventieth Birthday." Stroh, A.H., Mr: 199–202.

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"The January Quarterly." (Ed. about Idealism). Iungerich, E.E., Mr: 180–84.

"Expurgation or Compilation." (Ed. on errors in Writings). Odhner, C.T., Ap: 236–238.

"Apparent Shadows in the Letter of the Word." (Ed.). Odhner, C.T., Ap: 241–244.

"The 'Diary' and the Spiritual Body." (Ed.). Odhner, C.T., My: 297–299.

"Tulkism." (Ed.). David, L., My: 299–302.

"The Atmospheres, Natural Mind and the Limbus." Stroh, A., My: 312–319.

No Titles. (Positive quotes about Beekman's work). Odhner, C.T., Ju: 358; Jl: 425–426; S: 545.

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"The Spiritual Diary, No. 222." (Letter). Gladish, W.L., Ju: 366–367.  
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- No Title. (Ed. on mistranslation of Principia). Odhner, C.T., F: 106–107.
- 10th Ontario Assembly, 3rd Session. Cronlund, E.R., Mr: 183.
- "The Spiritual Body and the Objective Reality of the Spiritual World." Pitcairn, J., Ap: 192–203.
- "Swedenborg and Feminism." Smith, G.H., Ap: 224–230.
- "Form' and 'Figure'" (Ed.). Odhner, C.T., Ap: 237–239.
- "New Church Science Versus Swedenborg's Science." Wells, A.B., Ap: 245–248.
- "Speech in the Spiritual World." Gill, W.R., My: 266–271.
- "The 'Diary' and the Spiritual Body." Odhner, C.T., My: 272–287.
- "The Angelic Human Form is a Discretely Interior Human Form." (Reply to Pitcairn). Iungerich, E.E., My: 309–312.
- "Phantasy in the New Church." (Reply to Iungerich). Pitcairn, J., My: 312–315.
- "The Issue Misunderstood." (Reply to Iungerich). Alden, W.H., My: 315–317.
- "Real Appearances in the Spiritual World." (Ed.). Odhner, C.T., My: 317.
- "The Docetistic Theory." (Reply to Gill). Odhner, C.T., Ju: 343–356.
- "Discretely Interior Figures in a Discretely Interior World." (Reply to Pitcairn). Iungerich, E.E., Ju: 369–375.
- "Swedenborg's Dreams, or Diary of 1744." Odhner, C.T., Jl: 389–404.
- "The Docetistic Controversy." (Reply to Odhner, C.T.). Gill, W.R., Jl: 429–433.
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- "The Divinity of the Writings." David, J.S., Au: 453–465.
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- "Idealism in the New Church." Pitcairn, J., S: 554–562.
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- "Reflections on the Appearance Controversy." Odhner, C.T., O: 612–621.
- "Mr. Acton's Work on the Spiritual World." Alden, W.H., O: 627–633.
- "The Nature of the Spiritual World." (Reply to Acton). Whitehead, W., O: 638–43.
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- "Creation in the Spiritual World." Odhner, C.T., N: 657–681.
- "From the First Editor of New Church Life." Anshutz, E.P., N: 705.

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- Editorial Note. (Getting too much mail on spiritual body topic). Odhner, C.T., D: 764–765.
- No title. (Reply to Odhner). Acton, A., D: 771.
- No title. (Letter). Holman, G.E., D: 771–774.
- No title. (Reply to Gill and Acton). Evens, W., D: 774–777.

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- "Natural Space: A Symposium." Pendleton, N.D., JI: 230–238.
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- "13th British Assembly of the General Church of the New Jerusalem." Elphick, F.W., O: 388–393.

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- "The Fatal Omission of a Comma." (Review of Acton's book). Odhner, C.T., Ja: 43–47.
- "The Eminent Human Body." Iungerich, E.E., Ja: 47–68.
- "The 'Limbus' and the Spiritual Body." (Applauds Odhner's work). Wells, A.B., Ja: 94–95.
- "The Reason Why the Things Heard and Seen are Described." Childs, W.C., Ja: 95–98.
- "The Dangers of Idealism." Odhner, C.T., F: 136–150.
- "A Misapprehension Corrected." (Reply to Iungerich). Odhner, C.T., F: 160–161.
- "Where is the Spiritual World?" Karl, Valentin, F: 161–163.
- "The Writings as the Divine Rational." Odhner, C.T., F: 191–200.
- "A Reply to Mr. Iungerich." David, L., Mr: 217–221.
- "A Question of Misreference." (Reply to Odhner). Acton, A., Ap: 275.
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- "Women Teaching Theology." Odhner, C.T., Ma: 331–333.
- "Man a Real Being in the Next World." (Cheers Odhner). Barger, W.L., Ma: 348–350.
- "A Request for Elucidation." (Reply to Iungerich). Odhner, C.T., Ju: 412–414.
- "The Revolt of Women." Gladish, W.L., Jl: 429–438.
- "The Doctrine of Transubstantiation." Odhner, C.T., Jl: 463–471.
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- "The Affirmative." Alden, W.H., Au: 493–509.
- "The Spoiling of the Egyptians." (Reply to Odhner). Iungerich, E.E., Au: 526–527.
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- No title. (Beekman's official withdrawal from the New Church). Beekman, L.G., S: 602–603.
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- "Thought Brings Presence." Gill, W.R., O: 661–667.
- "The Contention About the Writings." (Reply to Whitehead). Odhner, C.T., O: 668–669.
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- "Was the Divine Trinity From Eternity?" Odhner, C.T., N: 722–727.
- "The October Quarterly." (Iungerich's sketch on interior views). Odhner, C.T., D: 785–786.
- "A Reply to Mr. Potts." Acton, A., D: 798–801.

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- "Natural Space." (Reply to Gossett). Spalding, J.H., Ap: 142–148.
- "Natural Space." Mongredien, E.C., Jl: 245–248.
- "Spiritual World Objectivity." (Review of Acton's book). Holman, G.E., Jl: 257–263.
- Survey of the Magazines (Review of Beekman's papers). Homan, G.E., Jl: 281.
- "Socrates Visited: A Sketch." Iungerich, E.E., O: 318–29.
- "Natural Space." (Reply to Mongredien). Spalding, J.H., O: 342–352.
- "Spiritual World Objectivity." Howard, H., O: 362.
- "Creation in the Spiritual World." (Review of Odhner's book). Buss, J.F., O: 369.
- Survey of the Magazines. Buss, J.F., O: 384–386.

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"The Divine Human From Eternity." (Reply to Burnham's book). Odhner, C.T., Ma: 275–290.

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"A New Work by Mr. Spalding." Odhner, H.L., O: 642–647.

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"The Principia Doctrine of Creation." Pendleton, N.D., Jl: 254–267.

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"A New Churchman's Contribution to the Theory of Knowledge." Holman, G.E., Ja: 62–65.

"The Magic of Experience." (Reply to Holman). Regrove, H.S., Ap: 163–164.

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"The Doctrine of Ultimates." Acton, W.H., Jl: 203–219.

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"The Article on 'De-Creation.'" Buss, J.F., O: 388–391.

