

ing them must impress the individual with the relation of the answer to other things—all other things coming within the ken of the individual. A simple inconsistency will surely give cause for some concern. This I think to be the safeguard against the charge of relativism that might be leveled against the emphasis upon the personal given in this paper. If one is in the least historically minded, he must be impressed with the great similarity of the problems he is called upon to solve with those which made their demands upon others in other ages. And so he is faced with their perennial nature. Yet, the solutions by others are not his solution. His solution must satisfy anew his own personal nature. The individual will be impressed by the demands by these problems upon the self-conscious application of his own thought. He must put them to himself. However much he uses knowledge gained from others and from the senses, there nevertheless comes a moment when his own personal judgment must take over. And, finally, at this moment the individual must surely realize that he is then raising himself above all other elements in the created world about him and asserting his God-given right to make use of the functions of “the as-of-itself.”

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## LILLIAN GRACE BEEKMAN

BY ALFRED ACTON

Lillian Beekman was born at Monticello, Minnesota, on August 31, 1859. She was of pure Dutch ancestry from the Beekman family, “whose name,” as she wrote in later years, “is written all over New York City,”<sup>1</sup> and one of her direct ancestors had been granted a coat of arms by James II of England.<sup>2</sup>

She was a precocious child, and very early gave indications of those traits which were displayed in her later years. After she had joined the Roman Catholic Church, she speaks of Thomas à Kempes work as “the beloved book which I first grappled to

<sup>1</sup> III, Nov. 27, 1943. [The Roman numerals indicate the recipients of Miss Beekman's letters: I = Bishop W. F. Pendleton, II = Mrs. W. F. Pendleton, III = Rev. Alfred Acton, IV = Mrs. Alfred Acton, V = Miss Alice Grant, VI = Rev. N. D. Pendleton.]

<sup>2</sup> II, Jan. 3, 1913.

heart as a kiddie of five or six, finding it in father's library." <sup>3</sup> At this time also, she calls to memory "the child Lillian who announced the long years ago, she wished only to be a Catholic nun." <sup>4</sup> Many years later, long after she had left the Catholic Church, she recalls: "As a very little girl, when I took the precept, to go into the closet and shut the door when I prayed—very literally—I went in and shut the door; and after a while I stopped saying prayers in words. I had so many things my small child's heart wanted. So I just lifted up my heart, for Him to see and read in all its little longings and prayers." <sup>5</sup>

While her ordinary lessons were learned at her mother's side, "her soul was fed on the heroic talks of the Bible and Homer which she read at her father's knee, while from time to time he recited passages in the original that she might appreciate the sound and the spirit of Hebrew and Greek." <sup>6</sup>

She early developed religious emotions together with a desire to know more concerning the mysteries of life. "As a child of twelve," to use her own words, "I used to write little consecrations of myself to the Lord Jesus, with a little drop of blood." As a little girl of ten, she delighted in accompanying her father on his pastoral visits as a minister of the Congregational Church. She was charmed with the beauties of nature—a beautiful tree, a lovely vista. She passed long hours in her father's study reading at his knee.

She was preëminently her father's child. "Verily," she writes, "I was a sport on the old fine family tree. . . . Father had no such inclination nor aptitude. But he backed me as against the maternal and the entire group. He said God probably liked a variety—in girls; and so did he." <sup>7</sup>

At the age of nineteen, she graduated from Junior College at Rockford, Illinois. <sup>8</sup> Here she had majored in music, and had distinguished herself as an interpreter of Chopin.

For some time after graduating, she gave music lessons in Rockford. But later she went to Chicago and studied art. Here, a noted surgeon, a college chum of her father's, gave her the op-

<sup>3</sup> II, Oct. 26, 1915.

<sup>4</sup> II, Dec. 14, 1916.

<sup>5</sup> IV, Sept. 25, 1941.

<sup>6</sup> Miss Wardle to Rev. A. Acton, April 26, 1947.

<sup>7</sup> III, Nov. 27, 1943.

<sup>8</sup> V, June 15, 1913.

portunity of doing some dissection in the Women's Medical College. "I remember," she writes, "when I was just with knife in hand—on one subject—I was murmuring softly, 'Do not mind. Do not feel it is an indignity. I am only looking for the way of God's dear love and planning, to understand the body way of it.' I never for one instant thought of a physician's career, that would be abhorrent—any public sort of career, use, or knowledge to a Beekman girl certainly."<sup>8</sup> Her dissections were undertaken perhaps partly because of her insatiable desire to search into hidden things, but mainly as a part of her studies in art, for in the Art Institute which she attended, she had a course in anatomy. She was so successful in the school, especially in oil painting, that she was informed by the Authorities that there was little they could teach her about color.

Her first knowledge of Swedenborg came from her reading Emerson's *Representative Men*, and this at a time when she had "definitely given up old theology and the possibility of incarnation." Emerson's praise of Swedenborg aroused her interest. "I recalled," she writes, "that my thrice beloved Emerson had mentioned Swedenborg's physiological works—very especially I hunted up presently the *Economy*; and, as a flyer some years later, the first volume of the *Arcana*."<sup>9</sup>

The reading of these works brought out her remarkable perception of the deep meanings in Swedenborg's earlier works, and the harmony of those meanings with the teachings of the theological works. She writes: "I found the *Arcana Coelestia* capable of raising the letter of the Word to its resurrection. As I was reading in it, of the three men who appeared to Abraham in his tent door at nightfall, suddenly I was struck with a recollection. What I was reading was a transference en bloc from his physiological work, and was the *anatomical* and *physiological basis* of a—the—human experience and experiment—everywhere, always—given *there* in the *Arcana* as the inmost meaning and interpretation of that Scripture story."<sup>1</sup> Later she procured the *Infinite*, and reading this, she saw at once "that the nexus was to be called Jesus."

Of her state at this time, she wrote in later years: "The Worship and Love of God and the Infinite moulded, each time they

<sup>8</sup> III, Nov. 27, 1943.

<sup>9</sup> III, Nov. 27, 1943.

<sup>1</sup> IV, Sept. 25, 1941.

were read, all my modes of thinking, and the Economy year after year taught the very motions of thought something of its largeness of sweep and continuity—and the early Arcane volumes filled me with deep longings—and still I was not New Church.”<sup>2</sup>

It was about the time when Miss Beekman became interested in Swedenborg’s theology, or shortly before, that she married a brilliant young surgeon of Chicago. By him, she had a child which, however, was still-born but for whom she ever cherished a loving memory. “It was my baby boy,” she told an intimate friend, weeping.<sup>3</sup> These facts were known to Miss Beekman’s intimate friends in Bryn Athyn.

The marriage was not a successful one, and some time prior to Miss Beekman’s meeting with Mr. Mercer, they were separated, and Miss Beekman went to live with her father in Romeo, Michigan. Her husband died in 1900, while she was in Bryn Athyn. In April, twenty years later, perhaps on the anniversary of his death, she wrote: “These are the days, these Spring days—which lie between the days of my marriage and my husband’s death. If, indeed, I may call him husband, since there is no husbandhood—nor any marriage—in the eyes of the Lord of the New Church when man and wife are not one in the Divine Human of the Lord. . . .

“I live again old states . . . a twenty years crowding into days. I cannot leave the New Church with my heart. . . . No! not even to make my oneness with the man, my twenty-years husband everlasting. I used to, when I saw how the image of living truths was getting hold of me—and yet he set his will and the decision of his thought against them, and laid the commands on me. For long and long I would put them by. Yet, even that was from their ground that I might not be separated in mind from him to whom I was thus mated; only, always the Divine Writings were the stronger.

“But ah! my dear one, one does not for almost the twenty years put the conjugal love laws into a sort of experimental use daily, and not be knit, knit, knit in a very habit of the heart, of guarding loyalties . . . and I remember where it said one might grow in

<sup>2</sup> I, Aug. 26, 1902.

<sup>3</sup> Mrs. Gilbert H. Smith to the Author, Oct. 17, 1947. [Miss Beekman told my wife that her husband, fearing a strain of insanity in his offspring, did not wish to have such offspring and therefore procured an abortion.]

the conjugal even if the other did not, and I dreamed I might some day behold him too in his understanding, one with me. And then I feared that against the Lord's will, even my loyalties, my knitting of thoughts of the inmost varieties in these dear images of marriage life, were but a fastening of a friendship of love to that spirit at enmity—considered, controlled, thought out—to the Divine Human.

“And now it all lives again, day after day, and my heart bruises continually and cannot rest between the buffeting of opposed states and fighting truths and memory endless.”<sup>4</sup>

Reading in the *Economy* the many references to the *Principia*, Miss Beekman was eager to procure a copy of that work. She was then living with her father in Romeo. From there she wrote to a friend in Chicago to procure her a copy. After inquiry at the New Church Bookroom, of which the Rev. L. P. Mercer was the Head, “she reported—at five hundred dollars. I sent her back with proffer of a thousand dollar insurance and ten dollars for the return of the *Principia* on a three weeks' loan. The Head there compromised—If any lady wished it that bad, she could have it for a month for ten dollars.” The book was then sent to Miss Beekman. “In three weeks I practically had taken a copy of what was of interest to me—pretty much the whole.”<sup>5</sup> “The first natural point,” she wrote, “being the Infinite, was no bother to me, who at three years had read John I.”

It was after this that Miss Beekman read the *Divine Love and Wisdom*, a work which indirectly brought her to a knowledge of the New Church. It was in Chicago where Miss Beekman was working as Secretary to a popular preacher. Her father had arrived on a short visit. But let Miss Beekman tell the story in her own words. It was the day before both father and daughter intended to leave Chicago:

“A man who had come into father's acquaintance by mere chance, to fetch his special problems to father—for counsels of wisdom—caught my attention as I scribbled and painted. I thought—that book of Emanuel Swedenborg's might just give him a happier thought than the sort of sad, half-spiteful mood he seemed to be cherishing.

<sup>4</sup> V, April 8, 1910.

<sup>5</sup> III, Nov. 27, 1943.

"I recommended it, as a sort of flyer. Not from the least regard for any Revelator claims that might be afloat in the work, but just on its own values—as is. . . .

"Afterwards I reflected—Nobody goes to buy an unknown book on chance recommendation. They cost money. But if I bought it, and then father gave it to him—as only giving something not of particular worth any more to us—yet worth his looking into. . . .

"So father hunted up the New Church bookroom address. Not far from the Art Institute where we were practically habitués. . . . And I made my way up. At the eighth floor, I entered a very, very narrow bit of hall that widened into a library and bookroom. The purchasing desk continued the narrow bit of entrance hallway, and some larger room opened across and beyond.

"Mr. Geiger—a gracious old man, a Swiss—was the Librarian. . . . He was slow in getting the book I bought wrapped up, and I looked along the shelves, as always one does in a bookroom. On the top shelf of all I espied among books strange to me, a copy of the *Principia*! and probably the very one I had rented! Then I saw a couple of little slips sticking out of the top—still!! I was disgusted. I thought I had taken every one out, before I had the book returned. So I climbed the little stepladder and reached it down—meaning to surreptitiously take those overlooked slips safely out. But that old lynx-eyed librarian must have been watching me. He suddenly called softly, 'Are you the lady who borrowed the *Principia*?' And I—like a little child, just answered simply, 'Why, yes.—I left these little slips in accidentally.' And then he said, 'We have been so interested. Mr. Mercer greatly has wished to meet you.' I—definitely alarmed and almost displeased—at once refused the desired 'introduction.' I certainly was not desiring to enlarge my acquaintances with strange men. The women of the Beekman family were trained in the old Knickerbocker ideas. *No* one was permitted acquaintances—save as the nearest man of her own family sponsored the introduction.

"And still that old Librarian fumbled the wrapping up of that book, while I was on tenterhooks to be gone. Then the door to the little narrow hall opened—a smallish, rather elegantly gotten up gentleman entered—filling the passage-way out. As

he stopped at the desk, Mr. Geiger said, 'This is the lady who rented the Principia.' I was angry, affronted—that he had presumed to over-ride my express refusal. I am sure I scowled at both men—like a thunder cloud. But I could not get by—to go out—without actually brushing against the intruder.

"He turned—said, 'Why, that is fine! Tomorrow, the Swedenborg Philosophy Club has its meeting here—for the discussion of a special problem in the Principia. Would you like to join us—for that hour? We would feel it an honor. And every student thought adds value.'

"I said, primly and doubtfully, 'I expect to leave tomorrow, but possibly,' and departed myself.

"Father said, 'Why yes, dear. Do so. It may interest you. And too few care, or are equipped, to occupy themselves with the problems of the intellect or the like.'

"So that was how it began—dear. And now I am writing to you!

"Mr. Mercer wanted to keep me, somehow, for the Swedenborg study values, and, as afterwards I learned, he wrote to Bishop William Pendleton of me. And Bishop Pendleton came on.

"So that one day, when I went into that open farther room—to shape up a long pasted together roll of notes, I found a grey-haired gentleman on the other side of the table, engaged in serious study himself. And that was my first sight of the Rev. Bishop—with whom Father, dear and wise, fellowshipped quite at once."<sup>6</sup>

This first introduction of Miss Beekman to Mr. Mercer was in 1898 (probably in the Spring); and the "Swedenborg Study values" to which Miss Beekman refers, were informal meetings for the study of Swedenborg's philosophical works. At the meeting on November 5, 1898—at which Miss Beekman was present—the name The Swedenborg Philosophy Club was adopted (NEW PHIL. 1898, p. 72).

Prior to her visit to the Chicago Bookroom, Miss Beekman had read more than one of the Writings, and among them *Conjugal Love*; for, in 1896, she wrote, in nine chapters, a work entitled "The Conjugal in History and Literature. Ancestry and In-

<sup>6</sup> IV, Dec. 11, 1942.

heritance of the American Home." In contrast to her other writings, this work is a prose poem, and evidences a wide knowledge of mythology and poetry. In it, she goes through the Ages of Gold, Silver, Copper and Iron mixed with Clay, and shows how the declining conjugal was restored by the Advent of the Lord, and how that something of it was preserved in the Age of Chivalry, then by means of the Reformation, and finally in the pioneer homes of the New World.

Shortly after meeting Miss Beekman, Mr. Mercer wrote to the Rev. W. L. Gladish, telling him "of this wonderful young woman and her ability to fathom the depth of the Principia." As a consequence, she, together with the Reverend and Mrs. Gladish, was invited by Mrs. Gladish's sister, Miss Emily Wallenberg, to visit with her at her summer cottage in Benton Harbor, Michigan. Of this visit, Mrs. Gladish writes me: "Willis had given delighted interest to all Mr. Mercer had written him of the opening of a new study of Swedenborg's science and Philosophy. He valued this opportunity to learn all that Miss Beekman had to give. So every day of her visit, she gave him instruction in the wonders she had so marvelously grasped.

"She was a charming guest. She loved tenderly little children, and lived close to the realm of the spirit. The trees beautiful, with their promise of fulfillment, gave her 'feelings of delight' like Wordsworth's little Lucy. Although not yet of the General Church, Willis and I had been learning the new music of Mr. Whittington in the Psalmody. She played the accompaniments,<sup>7</sup> and we all sang together.

"She was an artistic photographer, and how dearly did she love flowers. She was well read in literature. She was really all feminine."

Prior to this visit, the Rev. Mr. King, whose church in Englewood she attended, brought Miss Beekman to Glenview to be present as a visitor at the Second General Assembly in June 1898. Here she probably met Bishop W. F. Pendleton. Probably, it was at this time or soon afterwards that she was baptized, either by Mr. Mercer or by Mr. King. The records are unfortunately lost.

<sup>7</sup> In later years, owing to an injury to her wrist, she was unable to play the piano.

Miss Beekman's presence in the Chicago Philosophy Club gave a great stimulus to the study of Swedenborg's philosophy. That she took an active part in this study, is shown by a notebook of some seventy typed pages, entitled "Studies in Rational Physiology from Swedenborg's *Regnum Animale*, by Miss Lillian Beekman, for the Swedenborg Philosophy Club, Chicago, Illinois." Her first public contribution to this study was at the inaugural meeting of the Club, when she was called upon by Mr. Mercer to illustrate the orbit of the natural point. "This she did most ingeniously by means of wire coiled in spiral and vortical forms. Forms of unexpected beauty and of extreme suggestiveness were produced out of these by variously modified circumferential pressure" (NEW PHIL. 1898, p. 72).

At a subsequent meeting of the Club, she was asked to collate what Swedenborg says in his *Corpuscular Philosophy* with his teaching in the *Principia*. "The result was a carefully prepared chart, relating the several auras and the derivative spirituous fluids in man, animal, and insect, and tracing the development of creation in successive steps from the natural point and first aura to the earths" (NEW PHIL. 1900, p. 65). A copy of this, the first of Miss Beekman's charts, was sent to the Principia Club of Huntingdon Valley, together with a request for subscriptions for the support of Miss Beekman's work. The chart was exhibited at the December 1898 meeting of the Club, when it was explained by Bishop W. F. Pendleton (*N.C.L.* 1899, pp. 14, 21).

At the meeting of the Chicago Club on December 3, she delivered the first of the many papers which she wrote. It was on "Solar Vortices and the Development of Suns," and was published in the NEW PHILOSOPHY for January 1899.

At the second annual meeting of the Swedenborg Scientific Association, held in April 1899, a Resolution was passed, expressing appreciation of the work done by Miss Beekman, and recommending that an effort be made to make her work available to New Church students. It was perhaps as a result of this Resolution, that the Executive Committee of the Chicago Philosophy Club, impressed with "Miss Beekman's peculiar talent and intimate knowledge of the Scientific Works, engaged to support her at a modest salary to collate the doctrine of the *Animal Kingdom* with the most important facts, theories, and admissions of modern physiological science. . . . She has gone forward with the work, and a con-

siderable volume of manuscript awaits the formulation of some plan, to make it publicly available" (NEW PHIL. 1900, p. 66).

Miss Beekman was then working as ghost writer and private secretary to a popular Chicago preacher and lecturer, a Dr. Gonzales, but after receiving the offer of the Chicago Philosophy Club, she resigned her secretaryship and went to Glenview, where she was the guest of Mr. and Mrs. Seymour Nelson. In the old Club House, she studied and wrote and doubtless had many talks on the cosmological subject with the Pastor, the Rev. N. D. Pendleton, and others.

A picture of her at this time is given by the Pastor who, in 1927, writing his recollections of the Society, says: "I was oppressed by the need of some foundation of New Church thought on the subject of evolution to meet this formidable array. This brings to mind another vision. I see Miss Beekman crossing the Park, picking flowers, bending down, laughing, followed by a group of imitating children. Little did we dream of her subsequent intellectual supremacy, and still less of the final denouement. Her work of correlation was a healing to my hurt" (Nelson, *Early Days of the Immanuel Church*, p. 81).

Miss Beekman fell in love with Glenview. "You cannot imagine how delightful it is. I desired so greatly to go there rather than elsewhere for the partial leisure of the vacation season. . . . It is to me lovely to full content—and beautiful beyond more beautiful places. . . . With the little circle of New Church homes—and the many fair and brown little heads at their play, so that it seems as if it was all literally the loveliest thing they had ever looked upon—because the thought of what Glenview stands for in the hope, the prophecy and the achievement of the New Church is present as a sort of accompanying consciousness and delight wherever they look." <sup>8</sup>

In March, 1899, Bishop Pendleton had written to Mr. Mercer about Miss Beekman's work, and on March 21, Mr. Mercer answered him: "We had not regarded this work as finished work, but as studies which would be stimulative . . . a subject of criticism and conference on the part of students. The proposition to print did not include the idea of publishing except to the circle interested and active in the study of Swedenborg's science.

<sup>8</sup> I, June 21, 1899.

“We shall not get the minds of our young scientists and physicians settled into any very helpful study of Swedenborg’s Animal Kingdom without awakening their interest in the general sweep of doctrine contained therein. . . . This must be drawn forth by some one who is at once instructed in spiritual doctrine and thoroughly familiar with the Animal Kingdom, and one who has the patience to search out and the perception to see those points of suggestion in modern students of facts which show the need and the power of the doctrine. . . .

“For this first work, Miss Beekman has singular fitness on account of her unusual familiarity with the Animal Kingdom and Principia . . . and because of her truly wonderful perception; and more because of her absolute faith in the Divine preparation of His Servant from first to last. . . . Her work is feminine in form, but I do not know but that may be, as Mr. Sewall thinks, all the more useful to the New Church scientific student as counteracting a tendency toward dead rather than living fact.”

Two months later, on May 15, Mr. Mercer wrote further to Bishop Pendleton, that in Chicago there were so few students interested in the work Miss Beekman “can do so well,” that it seemed to him “she ought to be in a New Church educational centre where her work under direction would be stimulative to other students, where it could be systematized and progressively developed. The social environment of such a centre would be wholesome for her. Moreover, here . . . she is regarded as a ‘phenomenon,’ which is not good for her, nor socially pleasant. I have been led to wonder if you could make a place for her in the Academy. . . . It would be good for her and useful to the Church. . . . She is devotedly loyal to the Writings with a deeply spiritual perception of New Church theology, modest and pure, with docile mind toward rational truth, with a simply marvellous knowledge of the scientific and philosophical works, and an equally remarkable perception of their meaning, with a capacity for digging in libraries for facts and theories and for classifying and criticizing them. She is wonderfully at home in English literature and criticism. This sounds very extravagant but it is a plain and simple statement of fact nevertheless. Yet with all this talent, she looks for direction to make it useful, and is docile as a child under



priestly direction.<sup>9</sup> She is very useful here, but I feel that with the Academy her work would be more widely useful and more permanently so. . . .

“I have stated my intention to write you, to Miss Beekman, and I think if you could offer her a place in the Academy to do any work at which she might support herself consistent with the work in Swedenborg’s philosophical doctrine . . . the offer would be attractive to her.”

Shortly after this, Miss Beekman wrote to Bishop Pendleton asking if she might submit her manuscripts to his judgment. In his answer, the Bishop not only consented but in addition invited Miss Beekman to come to Huntingdon Valley on a visit.

In reply, Miss Beekman wrote: “I am indebted to your courtesy in permitting me to bring my work for the Swedenborg Philosophy Club to the loadstone of your wide knowledge. I should not have ventured to ask so great a favor save for the sake of the common work, the interests of which Mrs. Nelson assured me you had at heart. I myself shall feel the happiest freedom in submitting my own tentative work to the correction of your authority. In working so largely alone, one can never feel sure the ‘personal equation’ is not invalidating the result somewhere. And one knows the understanding, like the eye, cannot perceive its own errors. . . . For the invitation to Huntingdon Valley, many thanks. It would give me pleasure, did circumstances favor my acceptance.”<sup>1</sup>

Miss Beekman’s advent was at a time peculiarly propitious for the development of the work which she was destined to do. In March, 1898, the Rev. John Whitehead, President of Urbana University, started the publication of a monthly called the *New Philosophy*—adopted, in 1900, as the official organ of the Swedenborg Scientific Association. Early in the same year, the Rev. Mr. Mercer had started informal meetings for the study of Swedenborg’s Philosophy; in May, the Swedenborg Scientific Associa-

<sup>9</sup> In this connection, I remember asking Miss Beekman what she thought of the teaching in *Conjugal Love* as to women authoresses. She answered that she wholly believed in it, and that she was never satisfied with her writing until it had received the approval of Bishop W. F. Pendleton.

<sup>1</sup> I, June 5, 1899.

tion was founded, and in July, the Principia Club of Philadelphia (Huntingdon Valley,—now Bryn Athyn).

In July 1899, Bishop Pendleton gave Miss Beekman a definite invitation of a year's stipendiary course in the Theological School of the Academy. Miss Beekman took that offer as the Bishop's reply to her urgent request to have the benefit of his criticism.<sup>2</sup> She answered: "I am too old<sup>3</sup> to be counted on as a very successful student in any school . . . but I think I know what your offer means, and am well content to accept it. . . . You offer a subsistence. I am content to do this work from very joy of it—for a subsistence. But a lady needs more frivols than a theological student." The little extra could be provided for, "if you will permit me to continue a certain amount of work for the Philosophy Club here. . . . I should like to do it, not only because I love and honor the Philosophy Club, but because I have been working for them, and it seems only dutiful to respect their wishes in the matter as voiced by Mr. Mercer."<sup>4</sup>

*(To be Continued)*

<sup>2</sup> I, Sept. 9, 1899.

<sup>3</sup> She was then forty years old.

<sup>4</sup> I, Aug. 29, 1899.