

# The New Philosophy.

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## THE INITIAL CONCEPTION IN THE PRINCIPIA.

In the present number of THE NEW PHILOSOPHY we devote the entire space to two papers by the Rev. John F. Potts, who treats of the primary thought in the first and second chapters of the Principia. We bespeak for them a careful consideration on account of the importance of the principles involved. We expect to follow up the subject by papers treating of the subject from other points of view, and we would therefore ask our readers not to regard the present presentation as conclusive before reading what others have to say on the subject. We expect to publish next month a paper by Rev. L. P. Mercer, who will take issue with Mr. Potts. The subject is interesting and important, because it brings up the limitations of the merely natural mind, unaided by revelation, to arrive at a true conception of the nature of creation and the origin of matter. It also calls up for consideration the peculiar nature and status of Swedenborg's Scientific Works. Do these stand in exactly the same category as those of the ordinary scientist? When Swedenborg says that he was prepared for his mission through the study of natural science, are we to understand that he thereby teaches that his scientific and philosophical works are true in every respect? When he makes statements in his theological works that certain things cannot be rightly understood without knowledge gained by revelation, does this apply to his own Scientific Writings? If so, then how are the teachings of his Scientific Writings to be regarded, and what degree of authority should they hold in the mind of a New Churchman? These are questions which should be thoroughly discussed and settled in the present stage of interest in the re-publication of the Scientific Writings of Swedenborg.

Mr. Potts has performed a valuable service to the Church in thus bringing forth the subject, and by boldly assailing the initial conceptions of the Principia. At the present stage of the controversy we do not

wish to express editorially any dictum on the subject, but rather to raise our voice in favor of a thorough sifting of the subject in the light of reason and revelation.

In reading the works of the most eminent men of science of the present day, we see clearly the impossibility of their passing to the real causes that come from the Spiritual World; and when some of them express truths that are in harmony with revelation, we see clearly that they derive these knowledges not from reason but from revelation, either from the Word or the Writings themselves. Le Conte evidently derived from the Writings, his knowledge of the discreteness of the Spiritual World for it is known that he has read Swedenborg. Many writers in trying to investigate the origin of the Universe feel the limitations of reason in dealing with this subject, and at times express it. It appears also from some expressions of Swedenborg in the Principia that he felt the same limitation. It is therefore important to the New Church that we discover how far he was guided under the Divine Providence to correct conclusions, and how far, if at all, his conclusions were incorrect, also if the latter be the case how far his Scientific Writings are of use to us at the present time, and in what manner their teaching should be supplemented by the clearly expressed truths contained in his theological works.

In the Arcana, where it is treating of leading the children of Israel out of Egypt by Moses, which in the internal sense treats of the organization of the remains into a New Church, it is stated that the first instruction which should be given is on the subject of Creation. The interest now being taken in this very subject by the New Church, and the study of the Principia and of the Writings, to arrive at a knowledge of their teaching on Creation, seems to us to be a preparation for this work of inaugurating the remnant into the New Church. We therefore must carefully study these principles that we may gain true conceptions on the subject, and we therefore welcome in our pages the two papers by Mr. Potts, and we hope to receive valuable contributions from other equally faithful students of Swedenborg's philosophy.

## The Principia Theory of Creation--First Paper.

PREFATORY REMARKS—The purpose of these papers, which were originally prepared to be read before the Principia Club of Philadelphia, is to show that the subject of creation could not properly be understood by Swedenborg before the opening of his spiritual sight. Creation is not a proper subject for the investigation of science; but belongs to the department of theology. Science deals with effects; and causes can never be known except by revelation; they can not be inferred from a study of effects, but must be actually told from Heaven, that is, by God Himself. In so far, therefore, as Swedenborg, in his scientific and philosophical works, has treated of what are properly theological subjects, he has necessarily failed to present them in a satisfactory manner. The subject of creation is treated of most clearly, fully and convincingly in the work entitled "Angelic Wisdom concerning the Divine Love and Wisdom"; specially in Part IV of that work; and also, in general, in the whole work throughout; where a Divine revelation on the subject is given for the enlightenment of the spiritual mind of man, and also for the enlightenment of his natural mind in so far as it is willing to be subordinate to and conjoined with his spiritual mind; but no further than this. For these are the only conditions under which a true conception of the processes of creation can be arrived at; and these papers have been written to assist in the demonstration of the absolute necessity of all these conditions. They go thus far, and no further. By no means therefore are they intended to make any general attack upon the science and philosophy of Swedenborg in so far as these deal with matters which fall within their own proper sphere of investigation.

IN the first chapter of his *Principia*, which is entitled "On the Means which Conduce to true Philosophy, and on the true Philosopher," Swedenborg, says in §1, "In the state of ignorance in which we are at the present day, we can derive knowledge—*sapimus*, only through experience; not merely our own individual experience and that of our own age, but the experience of the whole literary world, and of numerous ages. . . . I affirm, therefore, that at this day we are made wise only by means of experience; nor can we arrive at wisdom by any other path." He says, further, "We are indebted to experience, therefore, for all our knowledge—*scientiam*—, while experience itself is indebted to the senses." And again, "We only mean to infer that we ought to be instructed by the senses, and that it is only by means of the experience conveyed from them to the mind that we are able to acquire knowledge and wisdom." The experience which is obtained through the senses is the sole source of knowledge and wisdom: this is what he says: Swedenborg here begins with *effects*, and not with *causes*. He begins at the *bottom*, and therefore at the wrong end. At that time, of course, he could not begin anywhere else.

Swedenborg was well aware that there was something wrong with this method. Therefore he says, in section 4, "The reader may probably wonder why I affirmed that . . . the way to reason and things prior is to be opened by experience, or *a posteriori*; thus that our body and external senses are our only teachers and leaders, leaving but little to the mind." And he then proceeds to say that there are two states of man; first his state of integrity which he had before the fall; and, secondly, his present perverted and imperfect state; and that it is owing to his being in the latter state that he must follow this *a posteriori* or sensuous method of arriving at wisdom; a distinction which shows that even at that time he had a perception of the existence of a higher way of arriving at truth than mere experience. But in spite of this perception, he proceeded to make use of the *a posteriori* method in his attempts to arrive at a knowledge of causes, that is, of spiritual things; and, in so far as he did this, he necessarily fell into mistakes.

Having commenced with experience, and thus got facts, what does he say is the next thing to be done? It is to apply *geometry* to the facts so acquired. "The whole world itself," he says, "is a pure system of mechanism, and is therefore subject to the principles of geometry." (§2) Again: "As all things in the world are mechanical . . .

it follows that the smallest natural things, as well as the largest, flow in a mechanical order; and that the smallest and largest are governed by similar mechanical principles." (page 16.) From the application of this rule, however, he accepts all things that we should call spiritual, or Divine.

The *third* means for arriving at a true philosophy in cosmology, Swedenborg declares to be "the faculty of reasoning." By this faculty he says that man can "deduce the unknown object of inquiry from certain known data, by means of the rational or geometrical analysis." (§3) "If experiment and geometry be called to our aid, I have no doubt . . . of the possibility of arriving at some knowledge of the things in our world that do not appear to the sight . . . Let us then call the proper means to our assistance, and we shall probably arrive at the true causes and knowledge of things occult." (id) "By a true philosopher, we understand a man who . . . is enabled to arrive at the real causes, and the knowledge of those things in the mechanical world which are invisible and remote from the senses; and who is afterwards capable of reasoning *a priori*, or from first principles or causes, concerning the world and its phenomena. (§4.) Here again it seems evident that Swedenborg had a perception of the existence of a better way of reasoning than reasoning from effects to causes. But the difficulty which confronted him was how to arrive at a knowledge of causes in the first instance. For of course it is impossible to reason from causes before causes are known. And the mistake he made was to suppose that it was possible for him, by means of reason operating in conjunction with experience, and according to the principles of geometry to arrive at that knowledge of causes in the first instance. He, moreover, at that time, did not know where to draw the line between the world of causes and the world of effects; and indeed not aware that these two worlds are discretely distinct from each other. He therefore tried to penetrate beyond the line which divides them without being aware of what he was doing, and innocently carried over into the investigation of the spiritual world a method of research which is absolutely inapplicable to it.

These, then, were Swedenborg's three means for arriving at a knowledge of the creation of the universe at the time he wrote the *Principia*: Experience, Geometry and Reason. These are of course insufficient; but they were all he then had. And it is impossible not to admire the straightforward way in which he begins his investigation by thus

taking stock of his forces, or to love him for his manifest honesty and sincerity in his search for the truth. But bearing these three in mind, it is easy to see why Swedenborg was led to suppose that the universe originated from geometrical or mathematical points. Experience, geometry, and reason would necessarily lead him to this very conclusion. Not knowing anything of the existence of the spiritual sun, it was quite impossible for Swedenborg at that time to rightly understand anything about creation. This is plainly taught in the *Divine Love and Wisdom*, §107, where we read, "It is most necessary that it be known that there are two suns, one spiritual and the other natural . . . unless this is known nothing can be rightly understood about creation, and about man . . . effects can indeed be seen, but unless the causes of the effects are seen at the same time, the effects cannot appear except as in night." This passage applies to two subjects: creation, and man. Swedenborg, as a philosopher, exemplified the truth of it in both cases. In respect to creation he arrived at the conclusion that the universe came into existence from geometrical points; and in respect to man that the human soul is not in the human form; that "in Heaven souls are like birds; they have no need of feet or arms, neither of muscles, that is, flesh and bones . . . no need of a heart . . . neither of teeth, jaws, throat, trachea, lungs, nor tongue . . . neither ear nor eye; for where there is no air there is no sound, and where no earth exists there is no vision . . . even the members of the brain . . . will there be of no use. . . . All these things will serve for no use as soon as we become spirits and angelic forms." (The Soul, §521.) Both of these conclusions of Swedenborg, the philosopher, as regards what is above the physical, were afterwards flatly contradicted in the pages of Swedenborg, the inspired writer, and the truth of this statement in the *Divine Love and Wisdom* was thus verified: that unless the existence of the spiritual sun is known nothing can be rightly understood about creation and about man. In respect to man, Swedenborg proved the truth of it most conclusively; for the main purpose of all his researches for many years was to find out the nature of the soul, and in the work on the Soul he gives the final result of all his investigations, a result so diametrically contrary to what he afterwards learned to be the real truth; not from experience, geometry and reason, but from Divine revelation, as to demonstrate in the most striking manner the futility of any, such method of research as applied to the discovery of the nature of the human soul. And it is the same with the other subject referred to in this

passage from the Divine Love and Wisdom, as we shall see in the sequel. "Effects can indeed be seen, but unless the causes of the effects are seen at the same time, the effects cannot appear except as in night." Experience, geometry and unaided reason can deal only with effects. They cannot touch the causes of those effects, which are here said to be connected with the existence of the spiritual sun. And therefore the effects themselves even, cannot be understood rightly; they cannot appear except as in night. They cannot be seen in the light, but only in darkness. It follows that nothing true in relation to these two subjects, the creation and man, can be viewed from effects by any method of investigation whatever. As is so clearly and forcibly said in another place in the *Divine Love and Wisdom*, §119:—"Effects teach nothing but effects, and when they alone are examined, they do not bring forth any cause. But causes bring effects to light; and to know effects from causes is to be wise; but to seek out causes from effects is not to be wise, because then fallacies present themselves which the inquirer calls causes, and so wisdom is turned into foolishness. For causes are prior things, and effects are posterior things; and prior things cannot be seen from posterior things; but posterior things can from prior. This is the reason why the Spiritual World is here treated of first, for all causes are there; and the natural world afterwards, where all things which appear are effects."

It is here said that the Spiritual World is treated of first, because all causes are there; not some causes, but all causes.\* But in the *Principia*, the Spiritual World could not be treated of first, except fallaciously, because at the time that work was written nothing definite was known about the Spiritual world; and being the world of causes, it was impossible for Swedenborg to find out anything about it by reasoning from experience, geometry, and reason; that is, from effects, that is to say, it was impossible for him to find out anything that related to the creation of the universe, and the nature of the human soul. For his ignorance of spiritual things Swedenborg was not responsible, but Newchurchmen would be responsible if they were ignorant of them, and in that ignorance were to swallow down the results of his investigations without any careful thought, and impartial examination of them in the light of the doctrines of the New Church "Prior things cannot be seen from posterior ones; but posterior ones can from prior; this is the order." In the first chapters of the

\*Of course in ordinary speech *means* are often called causes; and there is no harm in this, providing it is remembered that such language is used only according to the appearance.

Principia, Swedenborg followed the reverse order; he tried to see prior things from posterior ones. He tried to show, with the sole aid of the senses, geometry, and reason, that there exists a first natural point, which is in the infinite, and is derived immediately from the infinite, and which is itself a kind of intermediate between the infinite and the finite, and is the origin and cause, by its motion, of all created things. This was unquestionably an attempt to see prior things from posterior ones, which is an impossibility. "To know effects from causes is to be wise; but to seek out causes from effects is not to be wise, because then fallacies present themselves which the inquirer calls causes, and wisdom is turned into foolishness." Swedenborg, the philosopher; supposed that experience through the senses is the sole source of knowledge and wisdom. What wonder, therefore, it is, that, acting on this supposition, his wisdom was, so far, turned into foolishness.

It is nothing to the point to say that even as a philosopher Swedenborg was a great writer and preacher of many noble truths. The present argument deals solely with his theory of the creation by means of geometrical points, and with the method of investigation of which he made use in his endeavor to discover the way in which the universe was created from the infinite.

JOHN F. POTTS.

## THE PRINCIPIA THEORY OF CREATION.

### SECOND PAPER.

"*In infinito nihil substantiale est*—in the infinite there is nothing substantial." (Principia §13.) In these words the author of the *Principia* discloses the fact that at the time he wrote that work he was not aware that "the one God is Substance itself and Form itself" (True Christian Religion, 20.) He supposed, together with the theologians of that day, that there was nothing substantial in the infinite, and that God is a being entirely devoid of substantiality. This fundamental error caused him to invent a theory of the creation which is as different from the teaching of the Writings on the subject as darkness is different from light.

Swedenborg begins his argument by saying, "Rational philosophy acknowledges some first *ens* produced from the Infinite, and some simple as the origin of entities not simple. This first *ens*, or this simple, we here call the Natural Point." (Prin. 1.) Here, then, with Experience, Geometry and Reason as his sole guides or means for acquiring wisdom, Swedenborg launches his inquiry with a first *ens* produced from an Infinite in which there is nothing substantial, and with a simple which is the origin of entities not simple, that is to say, of

everything in the created universe except itself. And to this first *ens*, or simple, produced from an Infinite in which there is nothing substantial, he gives the name of the Natural Point. He then proceeds to lay down a formal definition of this Natural Point. "It is," he says, "a simple *ens*, and the first, existing from the Infinite by means of motion; and thus . . . in respect to existence, it is a kind of medium between what is infinite and what is finite." (6.) To what he had said before about the Natural Point, Swedenborg here adds these two things; first, that the Natural Point comes into existence from the Infinite by means of motion; and, secondly, that the Natural Point is a kind of medium between the infinite and the finite. He also says, further on, that "this point is produced immediately from the Infinite" (§11); and that "this natural point is purely motion in the universal Infinite; and consequently it is pure and total motion" (§12); and also that "all motion which is . . . finited by degrees supposes something substantial . . . but the motion of which we are now treating cannot admit of any such thing, because it belongs to the infinite, and exists in the Infinite" (id.); and, finally, that, "this motion presupposes nothing substantial;" for "in the Infinite there is nothing substantial" (§13.) To sum up all these particulars relating to the Natural Point:—It is a first *ens*; it is a simple *ens*; it exists from the Infinite and the finite; it is produced immediately from the Infinite; it is purely motion in the universal Infinite; and consequently it is pure and total motion. And now to put the meaning of these particulars briefly. *The Natural Point is the first ens produced immediately from the infinite by means of motion in the universal Infinite, and is itself pure and total motion.* Let us consider these several statements. First if the Natural Point is the first *ens*, or entity, it follows that it is either identical with the Infinite itself, or else that the Infinite is not an entity. Now Swedenborg denies that the Point is identical with the Infinite itself, saying that it is a kind intermediate between the infinite and the finite; and it therefore follows that the Infinite is not an entity; that is to say, it is nothing. It may of course be an entity of reason; but that, in this connection, means the same thing. Swedenborg therefore begins his inquiry by abolishing the Infinite; or, in other words, by reducing it to nothing. This indubitably follows from his statement that the Natural Point is the first entity. The idea is also strictly in harmony with his statement regarding the Infinite with which we commenced this paper: that in the Infinite there is nothing substantial; for of course if there is nothing substantial in it, it is devoid of both substance and form, and that is equivalent to

being nothing. I am well aware that Swedenborg would himself have shrunk from this conclusion; but still, it follows from his own declaration, It is evident therefore that these declarations are fallacious.

In this connection, it may be mentioned, that in section 8 of the *Principia* Swedenborg says, "The Infinite itself; in a geometrical point of view, may be called an entity, yet only in an eminent sense." From which it is again evident that Swedenborg regarded the Infinite as a mere geometrical entity, and even that only in an eminent sense. And to the New Churchman, who has clear ideas about the reality of the Infinite, this amounts to the idea of nothing that is real, which has any actual existence.

*Secondly:* It is said that the Point is produced immediately from the Infinite by means of motion in the universal Infinite; and is itself pure and total motion. If the Point was produced immediately from the Infinite, it follows that it was produced immediately from that in which there is nothing substantial, or, in other words, that it was produced immediately from nothing. What else is this than to say that God created the Point and thus the universe, out of nothing?

*Thirdly:* It is here said that the Point was produced by means of motion in the universal Infinite. But what motion could there be in that in which there is nothing substantial? How can there be motion where there is nothing substantial to move and nothing substantial in which to move it? It is evident that this is mere idealism, or transcendentalism.

*Fourthly:* It is said that the Natural Point is itself pure and total motion; and that pure motion does not necessarily require anything substantial as the basis of its existence; the meaning of which evidently is that the Natural Point consists in the motion of nothing. For that which has nothing substantial as the basis of its existence is itself nothing. Pure motion, is therefore the motion of nothing, and the motion of nothing is nothing. Therefore the Natural Point is nothing, and out of nothing nothing can be made. From which it follows that the universe did not originate from Points. Indeed it is evident, to enlightened reason, without argument, that nothing whatever of a substantial character can be made out of geometrical or mathematical points, either by motion or in any other way.

Contrast with this fundamental error that in the Infinite there is nothing substantial, the following statements. "This one God is Substance itself, and Form itself. . . . Since God is *Esse*, He is also Substance; for an *esse*, unless it is a substance, is a mere entity of reason—*ens rationis* and He who is substance is also form; for unless substance is form, it is a mere entity of reason—*ens rationis*; and therefore both can be predicated of God, but in this way, that He is the only, the very, and the first substance and form; and this form is the human form itself." (True Christian Religion, §20.) As it is a fundamental error that there is nothing substantial in the Infinite, so it is a fundamental truth that the Infinite God is Substance itself; and what a difference this makes! In

investigating the subject of the origin of the created universe, it makes, as I said, all the difference between darkness and light; and it may be added that it makes all the difference between nothing and everything. Swedenborg at the time he wrote the *Principia*, would not have denied that God is *esse*; but what he did deny was that God is substance. But, as we here read, "an *esse*, unless it is substance, is a mere entity of reason." Again, "The Divine, which is substance in itself, or the one and only substance, is the substance from which *are* each and all things which have been created; thus God is the all in all things of the universe." (Divine Love and Wisdom §198.) And again:—"Everyone who thinks from clear reason sees that all things have been created out of a substance which is substance in itself . . . and, as God is substance in itself . . . it is evident that the coming into existence of all things is from no other source. Many have seen this . . . but have not dared to confirm it . . . lest they might think of the created universe as God, because from God; or that nature is from itself, and thus that its inmost is what is called God . . . The reason of this is, that they thought of God, and of the creation of the universe by God, *from time and space*, which are proper to nature; and from nature no one is able to perceive God and the creation of the universe; but everyone whose understanding is in any interior light, is able to perceive nature and its creation *from God*, because God is not in time and space." (Id. 283.) The idea of the creation of the universe presented in these passages is clear and satisfactory to enlightened reason; that the Divine is substance itself, and that all created things have been created from it. Clear reason sees that all things have been created out of a substance which is substance in itself; and that this substance is God. This is light before the mental eye; but the idea that the universe was created out of an infinite in which there is nothing substantial, by the intervention of geometrical points, is darkness before it. A nothing cannot create anything by the intervention of another nothing. The doctrine of the New Church on this subject is that "The Lord from eternity, who is Jehovah, created the universe and all things of it *from Himself*, and not from nothing." (Id. 282.)

To pursue the argument further. By means of his Natural Point, Swedenborg tried to bridge over the chasm between the Infinite and the finite. He says it is a medium or intermediate between them. Geometry led him to this idea; and caused him to think that mathematical points in motion, can form the connecting link between the Infinite and the finite. But how contrary this idea is to the doctrine of the New Church on the subject, is shown by the following extract from that grand repository of the fundamental principles of science, the True Christian Religion: "*God first finited His infinity by means of substances emitted from Himself*, from which came into existence His proximate compass which constitutes the [spiritual] sun. (§33-2.) God did not finite His infinity by means of mathematical points, or points of any kind; but by means of *substances emitted from Himself*."

Having made these quotations from the writings in support of my position that the Infinite is substance itself, and is therefore the source and fountain of all other substances, I will proceed to examine the statement of Swedenborg that the Natural Point is a simple which is the origin of entities not simple; and that it is the first simple, the origin of all created things. In section 8 of the *Principia*, Swedenborg says that "this point is a simple *ens*, and indeed so very simple, that nothing can be more so, because what is simple admits of no degrees." In connection with this subject, the Writings say, "It is asserted by some that there exists a substance so simple that it is not a form from lesser forms, and that out of that substance, by accumulations into masses, substantiated or composite things come into existence; and, finally, the substances which are called material. *But still such most simple substances have no existence.* For what is substance without form? It is that of which not anything can be predicated, and out of an entity of which nothing can be predicated, not anything can be made up by accumulations into masses. That there are innumerable things in the first of all created substances, which are the least and most simple ones, will be shown in what follows, where forms are treated of." (Divine Love and Wisdom, §229.) This statement of the Writings is undoubtedly aimed against the simple substances of Christian Wolff, whose *Ontology*, in which he delivers the doctrine of simple substances, was published in Germany in the year 1729, five years before the *Principia* of Swedenborg. But if it is aimed against the simple substances of Christian Wolff it is aimed *a fortiori* against the simples of the *Principia*, which are not even substances. If it is wrong to say that out of simple substances not anything can be made up by accumulations into masses, it must be still more wrong to say that this can be done out of simples which are *not* substances. Yet this is precisely what the *Principia* of Swedenborg does say. "Things which are much compounded," it says, "take their origin from things less compounded; the less compounded from such as are still less so; these from their individual substances or parts, which are least of all compounded, or least of all limited; *and these again from things simple*, in which no limits can be supposed, except one; from which circumstances also they are called simples. (§1.) This plainly teaches that out of simples, by accumulations into masses, substantiated or composite things come into existence, which is contrary to the Writings. The simple of the *Principia* is the same as the Natural Point, which is "the same as the mathematical point, of Zeno." (Prin. 7.) and which in no respect is compounded" (Prin. 8.) And it is evident that as the Writings here say, no accumulation whatever of such points, whether they are supposed to be in motion, or in any other state, can result in the formation of anything substantial. They are themselves mere entities of reason, and so must also be everything which is compounded of them. The result is a merely ideal world, and not a substantial one. Swedenborg's doctrine of the Natural Point, therefore, and its utter simpleness, leads

directly, as I said before, to transcendentalism.

It is said of the Natural Point, further, that "it has only one termination or limit." (Prin. 8.) By this is evidently meant that the Natural Point has a termination or limit, on the side of nature or of the created universe, but that it has no limit on the side of God or of the Infinite. It is therefore continuous with the infinite, for that which has no termination on the side of the infinite, or no limit on that side, must be *unlimited* on that side, and must therefore be itself infinite on that side. If there is no break or discrete degree between the Natural Point and the Infinite, it is clear that the Point must be continuous with the Infinite, and therefore must be itself infinite on that side. But if the Point is infinite on one side, it must be infinite on the other side also; for we cannot conceive of a thing which shall be continuously infinite and finite. There must be a discrete degree between the infinite and the finite. But the Point contains no such degrees; for it is expressly stated in the *Principia* that "what is simple admits of no degrees." It follows from these premises then, that the Natural Point is continuous with the infinite on the side of the infinite, and is then continuously infinite all through to the other side; and thus is infinite altogether; in which case it can form no connecting link between the infinite and the finite, and cannot be a medium between the two. So that the Natural Point breaks down completely in attempting to do that which it was invented to do.

It is easy to see how Swedenborg got into this inextricable confusion when we remember the means for arriving at wisdom with which he set out, and which were Experience, Geometry, and Reason. These are all invaluable things, and all subserve a noble purpose in the search after wisdom; but they are not alone sufficient. In dealing with subjects in which *God* is involved, and the creation of the universe by God, revelation also is absolutely necessary, and anybody whatever, no matter how great an intellect he may possess, who attempts to solve such questions without the aid of Divine revelation, is doomed to disastrous failure from the very outset. It was not Swedenborg's fault that at that time he had no Divine revelation on this subject to guide him. He did the best he could with the machinery he had then at hand. But for us, who are placed in a very different position, to follow him into his mistakes, and adopt them as truths, would be a terrible dereliction. Swedenborg the geometrician taught in the *Principia* that "the world is geometrical or mechanical . . . and therefore the same beginning is to be assigned to the world as to geometry; the same point is the first of the world, because it is the first of geometry; or it is the first of geometry, because it is the first of the world." (Prin. 6.) The geometrician, Swedenborg, I say, might teach, without discredit, such a doctrine as this, that the same beginning is to be assigned to the world as to geometry; and that the same point is the first of the world as is the first of geometry; *he* might quite reasonably make such a deduction; but the Newchurchman of the present day, who is in possession of the revealed doctrine of the *Divine Love and Wisdom* and of the *True*

*Christian Religion* on these subjects, who can should deliberately bring himself to swallow down whole any such an idea would have to be placed in a very different category. Swedenborg was a modest man, and was a sincere seeker after the truth; and like all such was preserved from confirming himself in his mistakes. This is evident from the fact that while writing out his theory of the First Natural Point he was conscious all the time that it was an unsatisfactory theory. And he therefore pauses, in the midst of his argument to say, "I could wish that some other person, capable of the task, would favour us with a better, or more just view of the subject. For my own part, I could willingly give up the further consideration of this first *ens*, to which something of infinity adheres . . . but to prevent any interruption in the thread of our principles and arguments, we will for the present continue the inquiry." This almost despairing utterance, evidently elicited from him by a consciousness that he was labouring in waters beyond his depth, was destined to receive the most complete and magnificent response that was ever vouchsafed to a philosophical inquiry, in the day when the Heavens were opened to Him, and the all-glorious revelation of the New Jerusalem shone forth through his instrumentality to give light to all them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death. Happy Swedenborg, to whom it was permitted to exhibit, in his own person, the utter failure of merely human ability to solve the great problem of the creation of the universe; and also to be afterward the human instrumentality for the complete and eternal solution of that problem.

The last point to which I shall direct attention is a statement in the Writings in which the theory of the creation of the universe by means of points is categorically rejected. I have already, on a former occasion, referred to the statement in section 20 of the *True Christian Religion*, in which, in my opinion, this theory is denied; but as some exception has been taken to the conclusiveness of the passage, I will now refer to another which must be admitted by all to be final and conclusive. It is contained in *The Divine Providence* in section 6, where we read: "It is acknowledged by many that there is only one substance, which is also the first from which are all things, and . . . it is believed that it is so simple that there is nothing more so, and that it may be likened to a point which is of no dimension, and that from an infinite number of such the forms of dimension have come into existence. But this is a fallacy, which originates from the idea of space . . . The Truth is that the more simple and pure anything is, the more, and the fuller, it is. . . . Thus, in the first substance are the most wonderful, perfect, and beautiful things of all. The reason it is so, is that the first substance is from the spiritual sun, which is from the Lord, and in which is the Lord." Let us thank God for the clear teaching of the Writings, which while on the one hand it rids us for ever of the confusion, obscurity, and fallacy of the First Natural Point, and all that belongs to it, at the same time furnishes us on the other with

that solid doctrine of the creation which is one of the most interesting and mentally elevating inheritances of the members of the New Church.

I once thought that it might be possible to reconcile the theory of the creation by means of points in the Principia, with the doctrine of the New Church on the subject, and I made some attempts to do it. I supposed that it might be possible to show that Swedenborg was speaking of the same things in merely different words, and I did not finally give up all hope of this until I met with this passage in *The Divine Providence*. But the moment I did meet with it, I saw, as must every candid reader of it, that it amounts to a categorical and deliberate denial of the Principia theory of creation by means of points; and from that moment I have felt no hesitation in utterly rejecting this theory as being what it is here called—a fallacy. It is quite evident, I think, that for all believers in the Divine truth of the Writings, down it must go as so much useless and superceded rubbish, that, like the ruins of old castles and cathedrals, is indeed venerable, but is still in itself nothing but rubbish; and the sooner it is cleared away, and the new edifice of the Lord's revelations on the subject of the creation of the universe is erected on the same ground, the better. They cannot both stand there; for they are contradictory to each other from the very outset; and I would fain hope that none of us will hesitate as to which to reject.

I have felt sorry to have to make so uncompromising an attack on a theory of Swedenborg, but the love of truth must be paramount; and it may be that it is of the Divine Providence that Swedenborg was permitted to fall into fundamental errors on this and other great subjects, in order that we who have so much to do with his work may be prevented from secretly idolizing him as a man. Openly we should never do it; but unconsciously to ourselves we might otherwise be betrayed into an attitude towards him which would practically amount to the worship of him as a writer and teacher. In the Writings there are no fundamental errors; but these are not the works of Swedenborg. Swedenborg as a man was just as fallible as anyone else; and it does no harm to prove it. By getting rid of him as an infallible authority, we are left with the Lord alone as our Teacher and Guide, our Light and our Salvation; and this is what Swedenborg himself would have preferred, and did prefer.

I will close this paper with a quotation from the noble words in which Swedenborg himself closes the second chapter of the Principia, in which he propounds the doctrine of the First Natural Point. "Yet," says he, "should any person perceive in the principles here laid down the smallest disagreement with matter of fact, or with analytical geometry; or should he be able to point out anything imperfect or defective in them; if he will have the kindness to communicate the same to me, I will gratefully acknowledge the favour, and receive his hints with pleasure. For truth is only one; *truth* is my single end and aim."

JOHN F. POTTS.