

THINKING FROM CORRESPONDENCES

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XIII THE HEART AND BLOOD

Correspondences are seen in their most excellent forms in man

Although the whole realm of nature exists from the spiritual world by means of correspondences, some natural things are more "remote" from the world than others. Mineral matters are most remote, plants less so, and human beings the least remote because nearest to the Lord. Thus the human and animal body derives its existence from the spiritual forces that flow into it, but these forces are not merely general influences, like gravity for example, but most particular and minute. Every smallest part of the human body represents some specific spiritual thing and much may be learned about the spiritual world from the uses of the various organs of the body, as has already been suggested with regard to the eye.² As uses are reflected in the anatomy and physiology of each organ, these sciences also contribute to an understanding of the correspondences; but before entering into detail it is useful to consider an aspect of the subject in which a result of correspondence, or a derivation of it, is seen rather than correspondence itself. This aspect involves the idea that from the spiritual point of view the human race can be seen as one body, different groups constituting different members. A perception of this truth was probably the origin of the famous chapter XII in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. Now, by correspondences and the sciences, we can follow the theme in greater detail.

The whole human race is like one man, and the church is like the heart and lungs of that man

In considering the human race as a whole we need to distinguish between the good and the evil, calling the former members of the Church Universal, irrespective of their religious loyalties. The character of these is described in *Arcana Coelestia* 3265, as follows:

...the Lord's spiritual church...extends throughout the whole globe; for it is not limited to those who have the Word, and

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²N. J. Berridge, "Thinking from Correspondences," *New Philosophy* 83:3-118; Aubrey T. Allen, "Sight, the Visual Process, and Vision," *New Philosophy* 84:1 & 2:35-42; 85:4:138-147.

who thereby know the Lord, and some truths of faith; but it is also amongst those who have not the Word, and who therefore are altogether ignorant of the Lord, and consequently do not know any truths of faith (for all the truths of faith have respect to the Lord, that is, it is amongst the Gentiles (i.e. those) remote from the church. For there are many amongst them who know by rational enlightenment that there is one God, that He created all things, and that He preserves all things, likewise that from Him comes all good, consequently all truth, and that likeness with Him makes man blessed; and who moreover live according to their religion, in love to that God, and in love towards the neighbour; from the affection of truth...they worship the Highest. They who are such amongst the Gentiles, are those who are in the Lord's spiritual church; and although they are ignorant of the Lord during their abode in the world, still they have in themselves the worship and tacit acknowledgment of Him, when they are in good, for the Lord is present in all good.

So we call the Lord's spiritual church which extends throughout the whole globe, the *Church Universal*, and we call that church which is specifically where the Lord is acknowledged, and where the Word is, the *Church Specific*. This distinction is clearly stated in *Heaven and Hell* 308:

The universal church on earth in the sight of the Lord resembles one man just as heaven does...but the church where the Word is and where the Lord is known by means of it is like the heart and lungs in that man. It is known that all the viscera and members of the entire body draw their life from the heart and lungs through various derivations; and it is thus that those of the human race live who are outside the church where the Word is, and who constitute the members of that man.

A further refinement is added in *True Christian Religion* 268, in which the heart and lungs are related to the celestial and spiritual kingdoms:

...[the church] is like the heart and lungs; the Lord's celestial kingdom like the heart and His spiritual kingdom like the lungs. As from these two fountains of life in the human body all other members live, so also do all those people in every part of the earth who...worship one God [and] lead good lives...live from the conjunction of the Lord and heaven with the church by means of the Word.

And finally, the crucial significance of the church to the whole human race is made plain in *Arcana Coelestia* 637:

The Lord's church on earth is as the heart, whence the human race, even that part of it which is outside the church, has life.... [T]he whole human race on earth is as a body with its parts, wherein the church is as the heart; and...unless there were a church with which as with a heart the Lord might be united through heaven and the world of spirits there would be disjunction; and...the human race...would instantly perish [because] regarded in himself man is much viler than the brutes.... Every one loves himself more than others, and thus hates all others.... Therefore unless the Lord should have compassion on him and conjoin him with Himself through angels he could not live a single moment.

The church functions spiritually as a heart and lungs because the heart corresponds to love and the lungs to wisdom

We noted above that the church is "like" the heart and lungs (TCR 268). But correspondences are behind this similitude, for "the heart corresponds to love and the lungs to wisdom" (TCR 37). Thus it is only according to the measure of their love and wisdom that members of the church can function as heart and lungs to the rest of the human race.

Some of the quotations given above indicate that the church where the Word is constitutes the heart and lungs of a "man" formed by all who are in good, but *Arcana Coelestia* 637 indicates that the church is a heart to the whole human race, and elsewhere we are told that unless there was communication of heaven with man by means of the church the human race would annihilate itself (AC 4545:7). From these passages it is difficult at first to decide whether the Church Specific is as a heart in the Church Universal or with mankind as a whole. However there is no real contradiction for life from the Lord descends even to hell, and so even to the most evil on the earth.

Evil men, however, are not in the Grand Man. They "do not correspond to any organs and members in the body but to various corruptions and diseases induced in them" (AC 4225). The body all too often includes diseases and disorders of various kinds. Many of the bacteria and other organisms that cause these diseases derive their nourishment from the blood or from tissues built up by the blood. Moreover, the organisms are usually controlled by antibodies

and other defense mechanisms provided by the blood. Thus we have a clear illustration of the function of the Church Specific in preventing the human race from annihilating itself.

Something in the church or in love and wisdom corresponds to the blood in the heart and vessels

In the first and most general sense, the correspondence of blood can be the same as that of the heart, for "containing vessels in the Word signify the same as their contents, thus a cup signifies the same as the wine, and a platter as the meat" (AC 672). In *Divine Love and Wisdom* we sometimes find "blood" being used in the same sense as "heart" has been used previously (DLW 419, 420). It is clear, however, that the correspondence, or cause of the existence of a vessel, cannot be exactly the same as that of its contents (although the end, or purpose may be the same). The signification may be the same but as already mentioned there is sometimes a difference between signification and correspondence. So if we look more closely we find differences between the correspondences of the vessels and of their contents. Generally, vessels mean scientifics (i.e. knowledges) because "every scientific is a vessel of truth and every truth is a vessel of good" (AC 3068; see also 3079). This suggests, as does common sense, that the contents correspond to something higher or more important than the vessel, though very probably something of the same type. If this is true of inanimate vessels it can be equally true of living ones, but it is likely that the relation between the vessels and contents will be more specific. A heart cannot live long if it contains anything else than blood.

We may think then, that in terms of general ideas, blood corresponds, as does the heart, to the celestial, or love, and to those in the church who have it. For more particular detail we may look for examples in *Arcana Coelestia*, where we find that blood signifies celestial things which are of the Lord alone, and thus in relation to man, the celestial things he receives from the Lord (AC 1001); that blood (or wine) represents and signifies spiritual Divine love (flesh or bread representing celestial Divine love) (AC 4735:2); that blood signifies the Holy of love, consequently charity and faith, for these are the holy things of love, and consequently blood signifies the holy truth proceeding from the Lord (AC 7326); that blood means and signifies Divine Truth proceeding from the Divine Good of the Lord (AC 7850, 10026). Here we have signifies and represents, which, as was mentioned above, are not always the same as corresponds to, but here where there is agreement the terms are probably

equivalent. This is confirmed when we read that "flesh corresponds to good, and therefore in the Word signifies it, and blood to truth and hence signifies it" (AE 962:9), and that the affections of love...correspond to the blood" (DLW 423).

Here, as we might expect when we move from generals to particulars, some different details emerge which at first look like contradictions—for the blood corresponds to love, affections of love, and also to truth—and truth seems to be so different from good! Nevertheless truth is only separable from good in the thought of man. In reality, genuine truth always has good or love actually inside it, for truth is a vessel of good. It is much the same with blood. Although it is mostly water (truth) it includes sugar and fat (corresponding to good) and many other good things which it takes to the parts of the body which need them.

The many functions of blood show the variety and importance of its correspondences

It is impossible to realize the scope of the correspondences of the blood without looking at its functions. Although it would require a whole treatise to describe them in detail, a brief list of the more obvious ones must suffice.

1) The control of the amount of water in tissues by providing it where needed and removing it if it is present in excess (with the aid of the kidneys).

2) The transport of numerous items of nourishment (sugars, fats, amino acids, vitamins, minerals) from sites of absorption or storage, to sites where they are required.

3) Transport of oxygen to all living tissues.

4) Removal of numerous more or less toxic breakdown products produced by wear and tear.

6) Combat of infection (by antibodies and leucocytes).

7) Plugging of leaks, by clotting. This includes a mechanism for directing the laying down of new tissues in scars to give extra strength in the directions of greatest stress.

8) Transport of hormones from the glands where they are made to the tissues to be subjected to their control.

9) Temperature regulation.

It does not require much imagination to translate these functions in a general way into their corresponding functions in the spiritual world, and by doing so one can get a clearer picture of conditions there. For example, we are told that each individual in heaven is the center of all influxes (AC 4225:3). Any attempt to picture this paradox in the terms of geometry, whether 2-, 3-, or n-dimensional,

is likely to produce nothing but confusion. But in terms of the body and its blood we can see that every cell is in "contact" with every other cell *via* the blood and so can receive from all and give to all. Moreover, the numerous functions we have just listed indicate the richness and abundance of the types of communication.

The Lord blesses the Church Universal with good and truth as far as it can receive; this good and truth corresponds to blood which is made in various organs and not in the heart and lungs.

It was noted above that blood signifies the celestial things a man receives from the Lord; but this is not saying that things corresponding to blood flow into man directly from the Lord, and there is much to be deduced from the correspondences of the bodily origins of the blood. It is a vast and wonderful subject and we can only hint at a few possibilities here.

It is fact of physiology that blood is made in various parts of the body other than the heart, (e.g. the red cells and some of the white cells in the bone marrow; other cells in lymphoid tissue; proteins responsible for clotting, in the liver). How are we to understand the correspondence of these facts? If we think merely of the "blood" being the Lord's, or of its being made in heaven, we run into difficulties regarding the function of the church.

Although we have the simple statement that blood corresponds to truth (AE 962:9), most of the references indicate a correspondence to truth from good from the Lord, suggesting perhaps directly from the Lord, though often indicating through heaven. Neither of these agrees very well with the fact that blood in the body is manufactured in organs other than the heart and lungs. Thus, if the Church Specific is as a heart and lungs in a man to which the Church Universal corresponds, we must accept that the "blood" is made in the Church Universal and not in the Church Specific.

However, correspondences exist at various levels (and the Writings seldom give the whole series in one place). Thus the spiritual heaven is in correspondence with the celestial. Representatives appear in the lower spiritual world corresponding to the ideas of the angels. There are also numerous degrees between which correspondences may occur—the three degrees of celestial, spiritual, and natural being only general ones. Each contains subdivisions. We have, for example "good seeks to live in truths, and truths seek to live in scientifics, and these in things of sense, and things of sense in the world" (AC 6077). We are also instructed that good produces truths and disposes them into a heavenly order by

means of which further good is produced, and from this further truths (AC 3579). These series show life flowing down, or causes producing effects, and are thus examples of correspondences, although this word itself is not used in these passages.

In natural good there are also civil good and moral good. We may therefore accept that there is a kind of good-and-truth corresponding to blood which may come to us from the non-specific church. It is really from the Lord of course, since all good and truth are from Him. And indeed the most external kind of "blood" from the Church Universal must exist with them from a celestial inmost, even with those who have no knowledge of such things. This is the higher "blood" which can be directly from the Lord and of which the Church Specific can have some little knowledge. It may well be that there is a whole series of degrees of good-and-truth to be thought of as correspondences of blood of different apparent origins. Thus as "blood" which can originate in the non-specific church, we have all those civil laws made for the purposes of true justice and equity; also the honour and morality to be found in many communities, and the good-neighbourliness we so often meet in everyday life.

These ideas suggest that civil and moral good-and-truth cannot "originate" within the church. This is a surprising conclusion perhaps, until we realize that it applies only to merely civil and moral matters, and that within the church nothing of the kind can exist because all moral and civil good-and-truth must be an expression of spiritual good-and-truth.

The kingdom of the heart includes all the blood vessels and the blood itself which permeates every organ

A further step in the development of the subject is to understand what is involved in the teaching that the heart rules *throughout* the body. It is said in *Divine Love and Wisdom* that the heart rules throughout the body by means of the blood vessels; also that "[T]he whole angelic heaven resembles one man and so appears in the Lord's sight. Consequently its heart makes one kingdom and its lungs the other" (DLW 381). And likewise: "...for by means of the blood vessels the heart rules in the whole of the body and in all its parts; and the lungs in all its parts by the respirations" (AC 3887). So what are we to think about the rest of the organs? Further reading makes it clear that to whatever province (organ) an angel or spirit belongs he is also either in the heart or lungs or both. Thus those of the province of the hinder part of the head are divided into celestial and spiritual, and the celestial belong to the province of the heart

and the spiritual to the province of the lungs (AC 3886); and there are "spirits of the middle sort belonging both to the province of the heart and that of the lungs" (AC 4046).

The picture now emerging is that the heart "rules in" all the other organs. As confirmation of this idea we read that "the heart and lungs are the two things which reign...in the body" (DLW 382). The heart is then thought of as extending throughout the body, as in the following: "...the heart...[extends] into the body through arteries and veins" DLW 399).

We have already noted the similarity in correspondences of the heart and the blood. It is now clear that arteries and veins are to be included with the heart, and it seems reasonable to add the smaller arteries and veins (arterioles and venules) and the capillaries and other spaces occupied by the blood. We now begin to see what is involved in the idea of the heart "ruling" throughout the whole body. It becomes even more clear if we consider a few more details.

In most organs the arterioles divide into capillaries, with the blood passing through the capillaries to be collected again in the venules and then veins and so back to the heart. With respect to the numerous constituents of the blood that have small molecules (i.e. water, salts, glucose, oxygen, carbon dioxide, hormones), it is more true to think of the blood as permeating the whole organ, and continually soaking through it, thus providing all the cells with a continually-changing liquid environment from which they take nourishment and into which they discharge waste products. Thus we can see how intimate is the connection between the cardiovascular system and the rest of the body. Regarding that system and its blood as one, we can see more clearly now than anyone could in Swedenborg's time how what he calls the heart permeates every other organ, and rules in the whole body.

The heart rules the whole body by being the servant of all

Although it was stated above that the heart corresponds to love, it has perhaps not been made sufficiently clear that because of that correspondence the heart also corresponds to the will, which is the residence of love, and to the celestial heaven which is also a residence of love since all the angels there are primarily in love to the Lord. Since the celestial heaven is the highest one, it can be thought of as ruling the rest of the spiritual world, and in the individual man it is his will or love that effectively rules him (although he often tries to make it appear otherwise). Now, as love rules spiritually, we would expect the heart, by correspondence, to rule naturally, or, if you

prefer it, physiologically. This is what the Writings teach. It is not what medical science teaches. Yet both are true, and by bringing them together we can see several points of doctrine which might otherwise be less clear.

We hesitate first at the use of the word "rule." We do not observe any rule of the body by the heart except when it is inadequate. Yet according to the heavenly order from which the correspondence comes, it is quite clear. The heart rules, or is greatest because it serves all the other organs, as the Lord teaches: "He that is greatest among you shall be your servant" (Matt. 23:11 and similarly in 20:27).

The rule of the heart in the body shows the ruling influence of love or the will in the mind, and of the church in the world

The correspondence of the rule of the heart which has just been described confirms a very important teaching that recent writers are emphasizing to counteract a tendency among us to think we can be just cognitive. They point out that experience and the Writings both indicate the importance of love, affection, or feeling, in every aspect of our lives. The Rev. P. V. Vickers shows in *God-Talk and Man-Talk*³ that no matter how intellectual we may be or how carefully we marshal truths and deduce conclusions, what really rules with us is our affections; and in an essay devoted mainly to demonstrating the unity of love and wisdom and all their derivative functions, Dr. Wilson Van Dusen emphasizes the importance of love, affection, and feelings.⁴ These teachings are not new, of course, but the awareness of them seems to have become somewhat keener recently, and it is gratifying to find them so vividly portrayed in anatomy and physiology.

The correspondences also help us to gain a clearer idea of heaven. Although we are taught to remove ideas of space and time, we are also told that the celestial live on the mountains; as we (or at least I) had an idea of the celestial as "way-up-there" beyond our reach, of the spiritual as lower, and of the natural as lower still. We see, however, from the correspondence with the body that the celestial, in the kingdom of the heart, are in the closest possible relation with

³Paul V. Vickers, *God-Talk and Man-Talk*, The General Conference of the New Church, (London, 1970).

⁴Wilson Van Dusen, "Love in Understanding," *New Church Life*, September 1975, p. 401.

all the other provinces, so close in fact that the use of the word "other" is difficult to justify.

We must similarly consider the place of the Church Specific in the Church Universal. The correspondence indicates an extremely close relationship since the Church Specific is as the heart and lungs and the Church Universal as the rest of the body, or even the whole of mankind on the earth as the rest of the body. We can deduce something more about this relationship from certain passages of the Writings.

From the *Apocalypse Explained* we receive a picture of a continuous flow of life (i.e. of love) from the Lord through heaven and then through the Church Specific into all mankind, for we read:

...all in the whole earth, those who constitute the universal church, live from the church were the Word is; for thence the Lord flows in with love and with light, and vivifies and enlightens all who are in any spiritual affection of truth (AE 351).

We have already seen that without this relationship (or association) mankind could not live for a single moment, and if this influence was withdrawn, the race would "instantly perish" (AC 637). The instantaneous result of the severing of the association shows that it cannot be a merely natural one, but one which has its origin in the spiritual world (in which, of course, we are all living). Thus there is a hidden influx of life through the church into the rest of the human race, and by its means the evil are restrained. How this may function can be deduced from what we are told about the representatives of a church among the Jews. The representatives affected the spirits who were with men and thereby the angels in heaven (AC 454:6). Thus we may expect that anything of a church in man will affect the spirits with him, and these spirits will communicate with others who are associated with people outside the church and will have some influence upon them.

Let us now return to the fact that blood is not made in the heart and lungs. We have seen how the "kingdom of the heart" extends throughout the whole body, and it would seem that when "heart" is mentioned in the Writings it is usually the "kingdom of the heart" which is meant, or, as we would now call it the cardiovascular system. Thus it may be correct to place the various organs which manufacture the various constituents of the blood in the kingdom of the heart, and we could then account for the many civil, moral, and

natural goods that "originate" in the Church Specific. Indeed in one way the matter is quite simple, for although at one level the Church Specific may be as the heart and lungs, at another level it is as a whole man.

The effect of the church through associated spirits does not, of course, preclude the more obvious effects of the church in disseminating truth and encouraging good. We have already referred to the several degrees of correspondence, and these more obvious effects are clearly like the pumping out of blood, which concept brings us again to that most essential teaching that the Church Specific should rule in the Church Universal by being the servant of all. How the Church Specific serves the Church Universal at a practical level varies according to the loves and abilities of different groups and individuals. Perhaps it is a matter that ought to receive greater attention.

Following the correspondences of the heart and the blood, we need to study the correspondence of the lungs because the conjunction of the heart and lungs can show us many things concerning the conjunction of love and wisdom.■