

OTHERS SPEAK ABOUT OUR RELIGION
How I Review Them
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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

For more than 50 years I have been involved with the religion and doctrines of the New Christian Church and did not realize that there are others who attack it. But in 1987 I observed an orthodox Christian minister make such an attack on a local TV talk show.

The orthodox minister was quoting from a book and so I started to read this book. First I studied for myself. What was intended to be a short study, become longer and longer, until I had a book.

The criticism of orthodox theologians was correct in two instances. Swedenborg does not accept the idea of a tripersonal God, and he rejects the atonement doctrine of salvation.

All other criticisms I found to be incorrect. Either the facts are incorrect, or the reasonings are illogical or inconsistent. There were cases where both facts and reasonings were incorrect.

From the beginning I realized my book would not be bought by New Church people. They are convinced of the doctrines, and so to them the book is boring. But it could be useful to others.

For example, people who discover the Writings often find that orthodox relatives or friends attack Swedenborg, and so my book could give them a more balanced point of view. And if they would join the New Church, it would give them help in defending the New Church.

When I became acquainted with cult writers like Walter Martin, I realized that their books could turn people against the Writings before they had a chance to read them sufficiently to make a sound decision.

Our church is increasing its missionary efforts and the Swedenborg Foundation (the publisher of the Writings) is giving the Writings to more and more libraries. It seemed that also in these two areas my book could be useful.

My hope is therefore that all New Church book rooms will carry this book, and New Church people will donate copies of this book to the libraries in their neighborhood.

In the back of the book I have given a list of key words for the computerized indices of libraries. We have chosen a title for the book that will attract people who tickle the computer on these key words.

It seemed that if there is an attack, there should be a defense, not to repeat the attack, but to provide a fair, balanced point of view.

It is not expected that the readers of this book will go out and read the books that have been reviewed. Only a few are easily available. My hope is that when people read this book, they will feel encouraged to continue their study of the Writings so they have good, authoritative and original information on which they can base a sound decision for or against the Writings.

CHAPTER 2

CULT WRITERS

The problem with writers about cults

In every Christian bookstore you will find a shelf with books on cults. The writers of these books approach their subject all in the same way. First they determine that they do not agree with the tenets of a certain religion. Then they call it a "cult". Now they define what a cult is. They describe its features and characteristics. Because of these features and characteristics they condemn a cult as being evil and not Christian. Once they have done this, they take another look at the religions and churches they do not agree with, and then they condemn them as cults. Because of the bad connotation of the word "cult", they now have, not just disagreed, but also severely condemned and degraded.

Definition of Cult

Here are some of the definitions found in the literature of cult writers. "A cult is any religious group which significantly differs in some one or more respects as to belief or practice, from those religious groups which are regarded as the normative expressions of religion in our total culture"(These Also Believe, Dr. Charles Braden, Preface, XII). "A cult might also be defined as a group of people gathered about a specific person or person's interpretation of the Bible". "From a theological point of view, the cults contain not a few major deviations from historic Christianity. Yet paradoxically, they continue to insist that they are entitled to be classified as Christians"(Dr. Walter Martin, Kingdom of the Cults, 1965, p 11).

"A cult is a religious group which looks for its basic peculiar authority outside the Christian tradition. While most cults pretend to be correctly interpreting the Bible, they usually have high regard for some other literature without which the Bible cannot properly be understood"(Cults and Isms, Russler Spittler, 1962, p 13). A cult ignores or purposely omits central apostolic doctrines, or they hold to beliefs which are distinctly opposite to orthodox Christianity.

These definitions are not adequate, because as soon as we apply them to any religion other than orthodox Christian churches, we find they do not fit universally. Or we find that they characterize a normal religion like Catholicism as a cult, which characterization is ludicrous. If a scholar wants to describe and examine minority religions, he does not help us to understand any of these religions any better by bringing to this description the name and definition of "cult." This whole exercise of

defining a cult seems to be forced and useless. This becomes more obvious when we apply the definitions.

Application of Definitions

According to the definitions given above, the Catholic Church under the pope became a cult after the Council of Nicea when it adopted the doctrine of a tripersonal God. For this doctrine differed significantly from the original early Christian Church, which then was the normative expression of the Christian religion.

Also, note that the Catholic Church is gathered around the specific person of the Pope, who interprets the Bible and promulgates new truth in addition to the truth of the Bible. Of course, the Catholic Church insists on being called a (or rather "the ") Christian Church. Obviously, according to Martin's definitions, the Catholic Church is a cult.

When Luther nailed his propositions against a church door, another cult was born. Luther had a problem with the doctrine and life of the Catholic Church, and so he added the Latin word "sola"(only) to the New Testament, after which the concept "fida sola"(faith alone) came into the church. Luther became the leader of what are now called "Lutheran Churches." So we now have the Lutheran cult.

Calvin invented the doctrine of predestination, attributing to God the preselection of people to heaven or to hell. From him came the Calvinistic Church, and so this church would be a cult too. And what should we say about Oral Roberts? Most of his life he was regarded by Christian ministers as a deviation because of his "healing" doctrine. Only recently did Christian ministers ask him forgiveness for not accepting him as a Christian minister in the past.

Charismatics, who are jumping and shouting in the church service, are also not regarded as belonging to the normal church. Often we hear ministers of that group claim that the Lord talked to them. It is well known that Jimmy Swaggart would never regard Norman Vincent Peale or Robert Schuller or Robert Tilton as belonging to "historic or normal" Christianity.

When so many parts of Christianity turn out to be cults according to Dr. Martin, it is obvious that Dr. Martin believes that there is only one part that is not a cult, namely fundamental or orthodox Christianity.

Calling certain religions "cults" seems a useless scholastic endeavor that in no way contributes to a deeper understanding of the various religious expressions.

Cult labeling is uncharitable

But the application of the label "cult" can also be an uncharitable act. An article appeared in a local Californian paper under the title "The cults are still with us - nine years after Jonestown tragedy". With that headline, the sick murderer Jim Jones is compared to the leaders of other minority religions, and it is implied that they are like him, and that the Jonestown tragedy could happen in other cults or other churches.

The first 16% of this article describes how the Jonestown tragedy was started. Now it is fine if spiritual leaders tell people about the truths of their religion. No one minds if they argue against what they perceive as religious falsities. But to insinuate that other leaders are in some way like Jim Jones, without any facts or indications to support this insinuation, seems unkind.

Let us call a spade a spade. But let us not call a rose a spade. Let us not attach the sin of one leader to others who are totally innocent. This labeling of people and of religions, accusing them of certain behavior incorrectly, is not right. Is it charitable? Is it loving? Is it Christian? Above all, is it factual and scholarly?

Vague definition of orthodoxy by Martin

While comparing other religions to his own, Dr. Martin does not clearly define his own religion. Here are his definitions:

1. Biblical Christianity as taught by the apostles, defended by the church fathers, rediscovered by the reformers, and embodied by what is sometimes called the Reformed Theology (p 11,12).
2. Established Christian Churches and the historic teachings of the Bible(p 12).
3. The essentials of Biblical Christianity (p 14).

These 3 definitions are so vague that they leave us in the dark completely. The first definition spans centuries of thought and church history. From the apostles, who did not teach a tripersonal God, to church fathers, who fought about the divinity of Christ, to the reformers who rejected theology of the past. Think of established churches and the variety of thought found there. Some ministers do not believe in the divinity of the Bible or in the virgin birth. Some want to make fundamental changes in the Biblical text, like the gender of God. Dr. Martin does not write clearly about his own religion when he defines it. So he leaves us little to make a comparison between his religion and cults.

More definitions by Larson

In his "Book of Cults" Bob Larson is more definitive. "The basic fault of cults is that they demote God, devalue Christ, deify man, deny sin, and denigrate scripture. Therefore, correct theology regarding these points is necessary to be in accordance with historic Christianity"(p 32).

Later on, Larson gives his ideas about God, Christ, man, sin and scripture, and anyone who disagrees with those ideas then demotes God, devalues Christ, deifies man, denies sin, and denigrates scripture (p 36-40).

God - is a tripersonal God, namely Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who are co-equal, co-existent and co-eternal, three persons of the same substance, omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient.

Christ - is conceived by the Holy Spirit, died on the cross and rose from the dead.

Man - is created by God in the image of God, now destined for damnation, unless spiritually reborn.

Atonement - Christ paid for all the sins of men on the cross.

Scripture - the Protestant Bible is the inerrant, complete and divinely inspired Word of God.

Psychological Traits of Cults

Cults and cultists are said to have certain psychological traits. Here is a listing of those traits:

1. Cultists are not interested in a rational cognitive evaluation of facts.
2. Cultists belief systems are in isolation, they never shift to logical consistency.
3. Cultic systems are characterized by genuine antagonism on a personal level. The cultist identifies his dislike of the Christian message with the messenger who holds such opposing views.
4. Almost without exception, cultic belief systems all manifest a type of institutional dogmatism and a pronounced intolerance for any position but their own.

5. Cults generally begin with an authoritarian pronouncement on the part of the founder or founders. This in turn is institutionalized during their lifetime or after their death into a dogmatic system which requires absolute faith in the supernatural authority of those who received the initial revelation and whose writings and pronouncements are alleged to have transmitted it.

6. The problem of intolerance is closely linked to institutional dogmatism or authoritarianism, and those systems which embody this line of reasoning are resistant to change and penetration, since the cults thrive on conformity, ambiguity and extremes of belief.

7. Cults exhibit a hatred for the clergy of the Christian Church. Clergymen are always suspect, and their theology is to be regarded as untrustworthy and inspired by Satan (Walter Martin, Kingdom of the Cults, chapter 3).

8. Cults have a centralized authority which tightly structures both philosophy and lifestyle. They have a "we versus they" complex. They have a commitment to do intense missionary work, and emphasize isolationism that separates the cult member from the outside world (Bob Larson, Book of Cults, p 28).

9. Feeling, not doctrine, is the lure of the cult. This tactic is often enhanced by sensory deprivation, extreme amounts of physical activity coupled with fatigue, severance of all ties with family and friends, and the forsaking of all belongings and material possessions. In a short time the initiate becomes emotionally and spiritually dependent on the cult for decisions, directives, and even the physical necessities of life. Critical thinking is discouraged (Bob Larson, *ibid*, p 28,29).

Comparison of New Church with psychological traits

These "psychological traits of cults" enumerated in the previous section do not apply to the New Church and to New Church people. Let us make the comparison point by point.*

1. The new revelation given through Swedenborg is extremely rational and cognitive. Those who come in contact with the New Church all say that it makes so much sense. Common sense thinking is strongly advocated, and consistency of thought is a condition of scriptural interpretation.

2. The belief system of the New Church must be seen in the context of the Old and New Testament, is opened to logical scrutiny, and must be characterized by logical consistency.

3. New Church people certainly believe in their own doctrines. But one of these doctrines is that people from any religion can be saved and reach heaven. Therefore New Church people do not waste their time on hating the Christian message or any other message. New Church men do not identify with the messenger of any such message.

4. Baptism into the New Church only requires a belief in the divinity of the new revelation. Newcomers are encouraged to write their own credo, and the New Church does not have one set creed. Ministers have their own interpretations, and members are free to have theirs. Intolerance for the position of another church member is therefore impractical. As New Church men do not believe that their way is the only way, therefore they are not intolerant towards people who have a different opinion.

5. Swedenborg never tried to found a church. All he did was to write and publish the revelation. His ambitions towards leadership were so low that he even avoided putting his name on some of his writings. The ministers and laymen who founded the church had a wide variety of doctrinal opinions, and this variety of opinions continues throughout the history of the various New Church organization until the present day.

6. As a result the New Church does not have a problem of intolerance, nor does it know institutional dogmatism and authoritarianism. New Church people are individualists and could not live with conformity, ambiguity and extremeness of belief.

7. I have never observed New Church men with a hatred for the clergy of the Christian Church. But one can sometimes observe such hatred in certain Christians who feel that the theology of the New Church is to be regarded as untrustworthy and inspired by Satan.

8. New Church organizations do not have a centralized authority which tightly structures both philosophy and life style. Some have an episcopal form of government, but even these have the democratic principle of government with the consent of the governed. Other organizations have the congregational form of government. Most groups in the religious world have the "we versus they" complex. One can hear this kind of talk from the pulpit of every church. The New Church does not have a commitment to intense missionary work. To the contrary, the New Church does grow but only slowly, like 1% per year.

9. Feeling, not doctrine, is the lure of the cult. Not so with the New Church, where we find just the opposite. In the New Church we have no sensory deprivation and no extreme amounts of physical activity. New Church people would not dream of severing ties with family and friends, and they certainly would not think of forsaking all belongings and material possessions. In the New Church critical thinking is very much encouraged.

New Church compared to Christian Church

The New Church admittedly differs significantly from the present day Christian Church. It differs in regard to its beliefs about God, Christ, atonement and revelation. These differences are so great and fundamental that New Church people do not want to be called "Christian" but "New Christian".

A Christian is a person who believes in the divinity of Christ. But then he also believes that Christ is the second person in the Godhead. A New Christian is a person who believes in the divinity of Christ and the virgin birth, but he does not believe that Christ is the second coexisting person in the Godhead. The New Christian believes that there is only one God, the Lord Jesus Christ. In Him is the Father and from Him is the Holy Spirit.

The New Church is not a group of people gathered around a specific person, or around a specific person's interpretation of the Bible. The New Church is a group of people gathered around the Lord Jesus Christ, drawing their knowledge and instruction from the Threefold Word of God, namely the Old Testament, the New Testament and the Third Testament (=Theological Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg). This Third Testament is from the Lord alone, and in it the Lord has redefined the canon of the Old and New Testaments. So Swedenborg did not interpret the Bible. The Lord gave additional truth, as He promised in John 16 verses 12, 13, 14 where He says: "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth. For He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you."

In the New Church we believe the Bible can be understood by itself, provided it is approached in the right way. If we want to understand the teachings of the Bible on a certain doctrine, then we first gather all the passages we can find on this subject. Then we carefully select all the passages that are clear and rational. If an idea is supported by only a few passages, then we postpone accepting that idea into our faith. In fact, we first look for a teaching that is supported by many passages. We cannot extract with certainty a doctrine from a few passages that are unclear in parts, or whose parts do not connect with each other.

CHAPTER 3 REVIEW OF CRITICAL REMARKS

INTRODUCTION

When people become interested in our church and doctrine, they sometimes experience negative reactions from their relatives or friends, and such reactions are felt as disturbing. They have found something wonderful, and then it is torn down and shaken by relatives or friends.

These negative reactions could be regarded positively. It is not good for people to embrace a religion quickly. Never accept a religion in a state of emotional frenzy. Consider it carefully, do not rush into it. New Church ministers will often counsel people to postpone baptism and becoming a member. Negative reactions from friends and relatives can cause people to think harder and more deeply.

The negative reactions hardly ever come from sound knowledge and experience, for the relatives and friends are not really acquainted with New Church doctrine. But when the names "New Church" and "Swedenborg" are mentioned, one of the relatives or friends consults an encyclopedia or book, and absorbs negative comments from the people who wrote in these books.

New Church ministers get these comments second hand. They may not be exactly what was said or written, and so New Church ministers have to deal with ideas that may not even be correct.

In this book we have taken the initiative. We were tired of the vague attacks. We have searched out these negative ideas and checked their factual basis and the logic of their reasonings. Here are the books that will be reviewed:

1. **SWEDENBORGIANISM EXAMINED** by Dr. Enoch Pond, a book of 250 pages, exclusively devoted to examining the New Church. Published in 1861.
2. **HERESIES EXPOSED**, A brief critical examination in the light of the Holy Scriptures of some of the prevailing heresies and false teachings of today, compiled by Wm. C. Irvine. The chapter on Swedenborgianism was written by Wm. Hoste, pages 181-186. The book was published in 1919.
3. **CHAOS OF THE CULTS**, by Jan Karel van Baalen. The chapter on Swedenborgianism can be found on pages 177-187. The book was written before 1968.

4. **THE KINGDOM OF THE CULTS**, by Dr. Walter R. Martin. The chapter on the Church of the New Jerusalem or Swedenborgianism in the 1965 version is on pages 241-251. His 1985 version discusses Swedenborg on pages 513-525.
5. **SPIRITUALISM**, by J. A. Hill. Chapter 2 on Swedenborg is on pages 41-54. Published in 1913.
6. **CULTS AND ISMS**, Russell P. Spittler, pages 106-107. Published in 1962.
7. **BOOK OF CULTS**, Bob Larson, pages 396-397. Published in 1982,
8. **WHAT THE CULTS BELIEVE**, Irvine Robertson, pages 85-87. Published in 1966.
9. **RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL GROUPS IN MODERN AMERICA**, by Dr. Robert S. Ellwood, pages 64-66. Published in 1973.
10. **ALTERNATIVE ALTARS**, by Dr. Robert S. Ellwood, pages 84-89. Published in 1979.

GENERAL REMARKS

Most of the books are written, not by students of comparative religions, but by Christians who feel that the various religions they describe are outside true Christianity, and are therefore heresies or falsities.

All but two of these books are written from a strong personal and negative bias to which some of them even confess. It is not easy for a person to report objectively about a religion and a theology which he believes to be false and heretical. For that reason alone, we should check the correctness of the quoted facts and conclusions.

Another weakness of these eight books is the way in which they were written. Normally a theological scholar wants to consult original or unbiased sources. He refuses to consult the writings of other biased scholars. In the various books reviewed there is far too much quoting of such commentators. As a result it happens that the same factual mistakes, the same faulty conclusions go from book to book.

It is not necessary to quote only from Swedenborg and his Theological Writings. It would be equally scholarly to quote from other writers. However, these writers should be at least factually correct. To make sure this is the case, it would be wise if the theological scholar would check with New Church scholars, and establish that in their opinion a book is good "source" material.

Because of these weaknesses the reader should view any critique of Swedenborg and the New Jerusalem religion with a very critical and questioning attitude. Now let us take a closer look at these books.

SWEDENBORGIANISM EXAMINED

Introduction

This is the most voluminous critique of the Theological Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg. Dr. Pond writes about his work on this book as follows: "I have read nearly all Swedenborg's Theological Writings with the deepest attention of which I am capable. I have read the remarks and comments of his followers. I have honestly endeavored to understand them, and I do understand the ordinary meaning of the terms employed. And if any will say that I have misapprehended them, and consequently have failed to represent them fairly, I can only reply that they are then unintelligible. And this is reason enough for rejecting them as constituting a revelation from God"(page 241).

Misapprehending and misrepresenting another religion is easily done. We can even do it with our own religion. We continually learn, if we live correctly, and this even in the other world to eternity. We can make the best and sincerest effort to understand correctly, but we can still fail. But should we place the blame on others? Dr. Pond says that ideas he cannot apprehend are then unintelligible and therefore not divine.

This reasoning is not logical. It often happens that we do not understand certain statements in Divine Revelation. In that case we acknowledge that we do not understand, but we do not give up our acknowledgement of the divinity of the statement. We say that we believe the statement is divine, but as we do not understand it, we do not incorporate it into our faith, and we do not try to force our understanding. We pray and wait patiently for enlightenment.

In regard to understanding the language of the Writings, Dr. Pond writes: "I am not sure the language will all be understood, or that I could rightly explain it, if I should make the attempt"(page 84). When reading Dr. Pond's book, should not we assume he is trying to understand and explain the Theological Writings of Swedenborg? Why write the book otherwise?

DR. POND'S OBJECTIONS

In 15 objections over 157 pages Dr. Pond gives his reasons why he does not believe in the claims of the Theological Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg. Let's review these objections one by one.

OBJECTION 1

The Writings teach that doctrine should be drawn from the literal sense of the Word and then is to be confirmed by it. Dr. Pond gets from this teaching that all doctrine must be drawn from the Bible and be confirmed by the Bible. No doctrine can be drawn from the Writings as these Writings are the spiritual sense of the Word.

This would mean that the Writings cannot be a source of doctrine. They cannot be a source of new ideas. Through them the Lord cannot tell us things that mankind could not understand while He was on earth 2000 years ago.

This means that we should not pay attention to what the Writings reveal about the spiritual world, about the internal sense, about marriage and about many other things. And especially we cannot believe the teaching that all doctrine has to be drawn from the literal sense of the Word, for this teaching can only be found in the Writings.

And yet, it is this very teaching that Dr. Pond wants to use to reason that it is not true that the Christian dispensation has been superseded by the New Church dispensation. Here is what he says:" I ask for proof from the literal sense of the Word(Dr. Pond means the Bible), that the dispensation which was introduced at the first coming of Christ, has passed away, or was ever expected to pass away, and that a new dispensation has succeeded it"(page 50).

First, let us look at the first coming and at the Christian Church. The first coming was prophesied in the Old Testament, then it took place, and on the basis of that coming the Christian Church (a new dispensation) was established. Note that the Lord showed how the prophecies in the Old Testament were fulfilled.

At the time of the Lord's coming the people in the Jewish Church faced this choice. They believed He was the Messiah and that what He spoke was divine truth, or they did not. If they did not believe it, they could not believe in a NEW church (the Christian Church), but if they did believe it, then the idea of a new church automatically followed.

It is the same with the New Christian Church. In the New Testament there are prophecies about the second coming. In the Theological Writings of Swedenborg you can find how these prophecies have been fulfilled in these Writings. Every Christian is faced with this choice. They believe the Lord has made His second coming or they do not. If they don't they stay in the Christian Church, but if they do, then they will logically join the New Church.

The need for and coming of a new church is always indicated by the prophecy of the Lord's coming. If the Lord thinks He should come, it is because His church on earth is not functioning in accordance with His will. But the fulfillment of the prophecy can be given only after the coming of the Lord has taken place. Therefore Dr. Pond's reasoning is inconsistent, and his demand unreasonable.

When we read Genesis, or Isaiah, or the Gospels, we are reading the literal sense of the Word. When we read any of the Theological Writings of Swedenborg, we are also reading the literal sense of the Word. For the literal sense of the Word is the Lord's Word on earth . If we want to draw doctrine from the literal sense of the Word, we can do this from books of the Bible as well as from the Theological Writings of Swedenborg.

Why would the Lord give us a new revelation if we could not learn from it, if we could not draw doctrine from it? Why would He reveal so many new ideas if we could not use them? Is not Objection 1 based on non factual and inconsistent reasoning ?

OBJECTION 2

According to Dr. Pond the Writings are not to be received as divine revelation because they are not sufficiently attested by the laws of testimony and by miracles.

The laws of testimony, well known and used in every American court room, require that there must be sufficient witnesses, there must be concurrent and consistent testimony which cannot involve absurdities or contradictions. Miracles are acts of God, which no man can perform.

To require that the divinity of the Writings are attested by the laws of testimony is inconsistent because it was never required in the case of the books of the Bible, so why should we require it in the case of the Writings? No man can attest to the divinity of the Word. Only the revelator can do this. All that others can do is to expose themselves to the Divine Word, and then see its divinity. Once they have seen this divinity then they can also attest to it. They can give testimony to their own sight.

The giving of the Writings, the Second Coming of the Lord, was accompanied by the greatest miracle the Lord ever performed. He took Swedenborg, the revelator of the Second Coming, and introduced him into the spiritual world. This in itself is not miraculous as it happened to others. But Swedenborg was conscious in the spiritual world for many hours every day and this for many years, without any harm coming to him. Obviously he was protected especially against evil spirits, so he could stay sane until he died at age 84.

OBJECTION 3

In his 3rd objection Dr. Pond asserts that Swedenborg treated the Bible badly by rejecting nearly half of the Bible, because it does not have a continuous internal sense. The obvious sense scripture, what strikes the eye and affects the heart of the common reader, is not important. Besides, Dr. Pond feels that Swedenborg's method of interpretation is unreasonable. For example, if the inspired writer had wanted to talk about SCIENCE why did not he use that word instead of its correspondence EGYPT(page 61)?

Dr. Pond objects strenuously to the spiritual sense. "We have seen Swedenborg, not only using words in the most strange and arbitrary senses, but dropping these senses at pleasure, and substituting others, and frequently setting all sense and consistency at defiance"(page 71).

Swedenborg noticed that many portions of the Old and New Testaments are incomprehensible or offensive or senseless if we look at the literal sense only. In that case we do not see the Lord's love, or His wisdom or His divinity. But when we begin to see the spiritual sense or spiritual meaning of these passages, then the glory and majesty of the Lord begins to shine. We more and more begin to see His wisdom and love, and in awe we say: It is good.

A good example are the many sexual passages in the Bible that have disturbed and bothered many Christians, and have caused others to become atheists. Many of these passages are explained in the Writings, and you can find a number in my book "Sexuality and the Word of God".

The Writings do not treat the Scriptures badly. It is just the opposite. This is obvious to New Church people, and so they treat the Word with such love and reverence that they will have a copy of the Word in a special place in their home. Also, they will try to avoid placing any other book on top of the Word.

The Writings teach that the Word is like a man, mostly clothed but with some portions bare. The bare portions correspond to that part of the Word where the internal sense shines through. This is the "obvious" sense of the Word that strikes the eye and moves the heart. The Writings teach us to first focus on that bare portion of the Word, for it is from that portion of the literal sense that we should begin to draw doctrine. But some portions are clothed, like the portions where the word EGYPT is used, instead of "science".

In considering the doctrine of the internal sense, Dr. Pond learns about the science of correspondences. Here is what he said: "I know it is said that correspondences have all the precision and exactness of a science. But an hour's attention to the Dictionary of Correspondences is enough to refute this pretense forever"(page 71).

Obviously he expected that the connection between words in the literal sense and words in the spiritual sense is scientific like a mathematical ratio. But correspondences are alive in the biological sense. Correspondences depend a great deal on context too.

Dr. Pond felt that the spiritual sense as a method of interpretation was unreasonable. "If one of the inspired writers had occasion to speak of "science", why did he not use the common word "science"? Why use the word "Egypt""(page 69)?

But the inspired writers did not know anything about the spiritual sense, and they wrote what God dictated to them. It is unreasonable to totally disregard the nature of revelation and the methodology of inspiration.

Dr. Pond also expressed the fear that this method of interpretation "puts it into the power of ingenious, fanciful, designing men, to make anything or nothing of the Scriptures, as they please"(page 70). If Dr. Pond would be alive today and study the doctrinal history of our church and our history of sermon writing, he would discover that all his fears are totally unfounded.

Also the Writings have teachings that would allay his fears. For when we derive the internal sense of some portion of scripture, it should always agree with the doctrines that are given in the literal sense of the Writings. In other words, the spiritual sense as derived by any man must always be confirmed by the literal sense of the Word. It can never stand by itself.

According to Dr. Pond the concept of the spiritual sense "goes well nigh to destroy the Scriptures. They reject nearly one half of our sacred books, while their principles of interpretation go to confuse, and render almost valueless, the other half"(page 74).

The principle of literalism and the literal approach to the Bible creates for many people the overpowering feeling that the Bible is not at all divine. It leads to untenable conclusions if rigorously applied, and actually destroys in the human mind the belief that this is God speaking to man. Too literal an approach to the Bible weakens its impact on the lives of people.

Dr. Pond mentions that there is a similarity between the teachings of Origin and the teachings of Swedenborg(page 73). In all scholarly studies we find such comparisons, suggesting the possibility that one writer was influenced by the ideas of another writer. This fact, in itself, does not in any way negate the idea that Swedenborg's Theological Writings are a divine revelation. The Ten Commandments were known in some form before Moses brought them down from Mt. Sinai. The story of the Flood can be found with other nations. What is important in each case is that these ideas received divine approval.

The Writings teach that the Lord's providence watches with great care that human beings never lose the chance to reach heaven. Our eternal welfare has His eternal attention. The Lord's Word plays a very important role in our reaching our home in heaven. It is like a map that we need to travel into unknown territory. Therefore the Lord makes sure that His Word always remains visible to people on earth.

Go to the library and read about the history of canonization. Read how there have been centuries of discussions about whether a book belonged in the Bible or not. The Book of Revelation is a good example.

In all history you can discern God's providence. But you can see it best in the history of canonization. One thing obviously has the Lord's attention. He must make sure that all books of the Divine canon remain there. It does not matter if a non-divine book slips into the canon, as long as all divine books remain in the canon.

The canon of the New Church could not have been revealed earlier, because people could not have understood it. When one reads Dr. Pond's book, it seems clear he did not understand the internal sense, and therefore could not see the New Church canon of the Bible. He rejected it and was offended by it.

But today the internal sense is revealed and can be understood. And once it is understood, it is obvious that the Christian canon had to be longer than the New Church canon, and the Lord had to take books out of the Bible. In His providence not one divine book was lost.

OBJECTION 4

In Objection 4 Dr. Pond complains that the Writings discard much scriptural truth. But when this statement is examined, it is obvious that Dr. Pond is really talking about Christian orthodox doctrine.

Dr. Pond feels, the Writings contradict on numerous minor points the teachings of the Bible. Again, his meaning is the same. The Writings go against teachings of orthodox Christianity.

Dr. Pond discusses eleven points that are taught by the Writings: 1) The trinity of person instead of persons, 2) angels are human beings from earth, 3) Jesus Christ had a divine soul and not a human soul, 4) while on earth the Lord was open to temptations, 5) there is no predestination to hell by God, 6) there is no atonement, 7) regeneration is gradual, 8) justification by faith alone is rejected, 9) there is a world of spirits between heaven and hell to which we all first go after death, 10) the denial of the resurrection of the body, and 11) the last judgment has already taken place.

Dr. Pond believed the Writings taught that the Holy Spirit did not act directly on man but through the intermediate agency of created spirits only(page 77). It is indeed true that all the angels of heaven are somehow involved in the ministry of the Lord. But the Lord approaches man, or the Holy Spirit deals with man, in two ways, either immediately or mediately. The Lord can and does approach man immediately, without the help of any other human being or angel. But He also approaches man through angels and men. In the church this can be seen, when we observe how a person can read the Word and be taught there by the Lord Himself. But the Lord may also teach a person through the mediation of a minister.

Here are some of the minor points where, according to Dr. Pond, the Writings disagree with the Bible. Quoting from Proverbs 16:4:"The Lord has made all things for himself; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil". Quoting from Revelation 4:11:"Thou hast created all things and for thy pleasure they are and were created". Now if you do not know anything about God, then you can only conclude that God created for Himself and His own pleasure. But once you realize that God is infinite love , then you can see that the quotes from Proverbs and Revelation give only an appearance of truth and not the real truth. The real truth is that a loving unselfish God does not create for His own pleasure and glory but for the sake of the happiness of His creatures.

The next example deals with a statement of Paul. See if you can understand this quotation: "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so they are without excuse"(Romans 1:20). The things that are made, according to Dr. Ponds, are material things. They are not spiritual things. And so this passage then teaches that we can see and understand the qualities of God in the material world. This is called natural theology. The Writings teach that there is only

one place where we can learn about the Lord, and that is in His Word. In the New Church there is no natural theology.

One more example. In Luke it says that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to go to heaven(18:25). The Writings teach that a rich man does not have a more difficult way to heaven than a poor man. What do you accept as the gospel truth? The Luke statement which obviously is a parable, or the statement from the Writings. There are other examples, but they all come to misunderstanding the literal sense.

OBJECTION 5

According to Dr. Pond, the Writings misrepresent the doctrines of other religions. God would not do this so the Writings are not divine. He gives several examples:

Example 1

Regarding the doctrine of the trinity. the Writings, Dr. Pond says, "almost invariably represent trinitarians as believing in three Gods, each one a God by himself". The Writings also say these ideas occur in the Athanasian and Nicean creeds. This is not true, Dr. Pond says, and therefore the Writings misrepresent the doctrines of others(page 95). For a full discussion see Objection 8, Historical Fact 3.

Example 2

Regarding the doctrine of salvation, the Writings say that "the Protestant churches place salvation, not in amendment of life, but in certain words breathed out in a devout tone of voice, not in repentance, but in a confidence that they are justified and sanctified(page 96). Dr. Pond's reaction to this statement is that " a grosser slander of the Protestant churches could not possibly have been uttered"(page 96). Actually, this doctrine is preached quite frequently on religious TV programs.

In this book I will only quote from one source. It is from notes that were produced by the Reverend Zola Levitt of Dallas, Texas. His TV programs are aired nationally. The notes I am quoting from are called "The Bible; The Whole Story" .

In the first paragraph Mr. Levitt confesses that he is deeply intimidated by the subtleties of the Scriptures. This confession gives a feeling of uncertainty. Is he sure of the ideas he is expounding. Is he sure of the doctrines he announces with such apparent certainty?

The first idea Mr. Levitt advances is that "God, being God, could not relax His standards, and men, being men, could not meet them". This statement Mr. Levitt applies to the period of human history that lies before Abram. This idea makes God a being who is obsessed with His laws and rules, which He lays upon man and demands him to follow. But the statement also makes man universally weak and incapable of living according to divine law.

But with Abram God takes a different approach. "With Abraham the idea is different. A sinful nature, a lack of faith, even a distrust of God Himself are simply assumed. The man will fail, God knows, but God will redeem him. The idea of redemption--God's buying back a lost soul--makes its initial appearance with this randomly chosen Gentile of Ur called Abraham"(page I-1). This idea by itself already shows what is in Mr. Levitt's mind, namely a person is saved not by shunning evil, not by repentance, but God's buying back action.

Those of us who know the story of Abram and the revelation of his character are then shocked to find out that according to Mr. Levitt, "the overwhelmed young Abraham was left with nothing less than the eternal redemption of the human race in his two obedient hands"(Page I-1). While it is true that the Lord uses human beings to reveal His truth and to lead to heaven, the Lord never allows Himself to be dependent upon any human being. The eternal redemption of mankind has never been in the hands of any human being but always and only in the hands of the Lord. Is not Mr. Levitt's reasoning strange to say the least?

Mr. Levitt says that the Jews are chosen and the land is given to them forever(page I-3). And Mr. Levitt believes that they are chosen people "forever". "It is an immutable principle that when God sends missionaries He invariably sends Jews(Page I-5)."The Jews are influential and gregarious because they are God's main missionaries"(Page I-6).

In the period between the birth of Jesus Christ and the Tribulation the Jews are very inactive as missionaries, "but when God takes over once again in the tribulation, they will be outfitted to the task and will undertake it as enthusiastically as they did in the first century"(Page I-7).

Reason or common sense or a clear view on the infinite and nonjudgmental love of the Lord tells us that this God would never chose one nation above all others. We are all equal in the sight of the Lord. The constant criticism of the Jews by the Lord all throughout the Old Testament and even into the New Testament, is painfully obvious. Also, the insistence on this divine election throughout the ages has caused the Jews great suffering and grief.

The Jews who see the Old Testament as a divine revelation have to continue to believe that they are the chosen people of God. It is hard to see how they can escape this. And Christians who believe that we must approach the Old Testament in a literal way, also have no choice. They must believe that the Jews are still the chosen people. It is sad to realize that many of these Christians are Jew haters at the same time.

In the New Church we believe that the Jews themselves were never chosen, but as representatives of regenerating men they were chosen and special in the Lord's eye. This representation ends after the Lord's glorification was completed. In the view of the New Church, the Jews never were God's exclusive missionaries nor will they ever be.

Mr. Levitt distinguishes several "salvation periods". There is the period before Abraham. Then there is the period between Abraham and the Exodus of the Jews from the land of Egypt. Then there is the period between the Exodus and the Cross. Then there is the period between the Incarnation and the Tribulation, and finally there is the period after the Tribulation.

The period that lies between the Exodus and the Cross, Mr. Levitt calls the period of the Law(Page II-1). In this period the believer provided his own sacrifice, while in the next period (of the new covenant) God takes care of that part Himself(page II-2).

Under the Law God demands righteousness of men, but in the covenant period God simply gives it to them. Under the Law we would have to perform to realize the love of God, but under Grace we have it instantly and always(Page V-6).

According to Mr. Levitt, the Law in the final analysis is too difficult for even the best of men to obey, and so Grace just has to be there. Without Grace there is not only no salvation, there is not even a concept of salvation(Page V-7).

The Age of Grace lasts until the church is raptured and taken to heaven. In the Great Tribulation the world will be in anarchy. Mr. Levitt does not say how men are saved then. But following the Tribulation we will have the 1000 year reign of the Lord, which will be a period not of Grace but of Law again, and even stricter law than the Old Testament period.

During the period of Grace, the judgment as to whether or not a person is saved, has little to do with his good works. Under the Law it was works, but under Grace it is the relationship to Christ. If I have five good works in my lifetime and my neighbor has 5000, it is nevertheless my faith in Christ which saves me, and if he has not got that, he is lost(Page V-9).

Mr. Levitt sets up a contrast between Law and Grace, using John's statement("For the law was given by Moses but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ"(John 1:17), namely that there is no Law where there is Grace. There is no accusation nor penalty there is no Law(Page V-11).

According to Mr. Levitt, and it is hard to even write this down, God wanted blood in return for sin(page II-4). For that reason Jesus Christ shed His blood on the cross and thereby paid for all the sins of men.

While Mr. Levitt's concept of salvation is not the same for all ages, causing God not to be "unchanging", for the Christian Church it does not matter that a man repent and changes his lifestyle. All that matters is his belief in the justification doctrine of the cross. Mr. Levitt's conception of salvation, of how a man reaches heaven agrees completely with what Swedenborg says about the orthodox Christian Church.

Example 3

Dr. Pond writes that "Swedenborg falsely represents the Reformed Churches as holding and teaching that imputation of the merit of Christ is from an arbitrary selection. Swedenborg says that the believers in predestination represent God as having designed that the bulk of mankind should be born for hell and that he makes no provision for those who live good lives and acknowledge God. Redemption into heaven is of mercy alone, whatever the life may have been"(pages 97 and 98).

Quoting from a book, titled "Concerning the eternal predestination of God" by John Calvin, translated by J. K. S. Reid. "God, by His eternal goodwill, which has no cause outside itself, destined those whom He pleased to salvation, rejecting the rest; those whom He dignified by gratuitous adoption, He illumined by His Spirit, so that they receive the life offered in Christ, while others voluntarily disbelieve, so that they remain in darkness destitute of the light of faith"(ibid, page 11).

The original title of the book by Calvin is "Concerning the eternal predestination of God by which He has chosen some men to salvation and left others to their own destruction".

Here is a quote from a book by Professor Loraine Boettner, titled "The Reformed Doctrine Predestination": "Predestination we call the eternal decree of God, by which He has determined in Himself what He would have to become of every individual of mankind. For they are not all created with a similar destiny; but eternal life is foreordained for some and eternal death for others"(ibid, pages 14 and 15). Luther

was as zealous for absolute predestination as was Calvin, and so was Melancton, according to Boettner(see page 15).

Example 4

On page 101 of his book Dr. Pond writes that Swedenborg falsely accused Luther of solifidianism when in fact Luther insisted on the necessity of good works as strongly as Swedenborg himself.

Solifidianism is the doctrine of faith alone. Sola means only or alone and fida means faith. The idea of this doctrine is that man is saved, that he goes to heaven, only on the basis of his faith in the atonement work of Jesus Christ, and not at all on the basis of good works. Good works are not necessary at all. A more advanced form of faith alone is the idea of predestination, which says that Christ died only for the elect who therefore cannot fall from grace.

In Example 3 we quoted Boettner who said that Luther was an avowed predestinarian or a solifidian of the worst kind. Dr. Pond is wrong in Example 4, and Swedenborg is not. One more thing though. Dr. Pond thought that Swedenborg believed in "good works". Not so. Swedenborg preached that man must regenerate. He must shun evils as sins against the Lord as of himself, yet acknowledging that he cannot do this without the Lord's help. This means that he should examine his motives and that he should try to have these changed by the Lord. External actions by themselves are not important. Also, a man reaches heaven because the state of his mind is heavenly, not because of the things he has done.

Example 5

On pages 101 and 102 Dr. Pond writes that Swedenborg claimed that Calvin taught that God created the greatest part of men for eternal damnation, but that the elect and regenerate cannot lose faith and the Holy Spirit, although they should commit great crimes and sins of every kind. Those who are not elected are necessarily damned and cannot attain to salvation. Then Dr. Pond says that if Calvin made any such confession, he confessed a lie. He never taught such doctrine while on the earth.

In Example 3 there is a quote from Calvin himself. From that quotation it is clear that Calvin said exactly what Swedenborg accused him of. How can Dr. Pond conclude Objection 5 by saying Swedenborg is involved in "gross and continual misrepresentation of the doctrines of evangelical Christians". Well, Dr. Pond steps back a little! "I will not say that there was absolutely nothing in the faith of Protestant Christendom, at the time of Swedenborg, with which some part of his statements may agree. BUT I do say that, for a considerable part of them, there was then, as there is

now, no foundation in truth, and most of the remainder is so colored, distorted and exaggerated, as to have all the effect of falsehood. Did Swedenborg then receive it by divine revelation? Was it taught in heaven and by the angels? Impossible! The thought is not to be admitted for a moment"(page 102).

OBJECTION 6

The Writings speak reproachfully of the church of God. They do this of the Jewish and of the Christian Church.(page 103) It is true that the Writings say that the Jewish Church was not even a church but only a representative of a church. But the Lord Himself, when He was on earth, did not speak highly of the Jewish Church and its priesthood. The Lord called the Jews of those days an adulterous generation, and He compared the priesthood to a sepulchre white outside but rotten inside. From this point of view the Writings are not out of tune with the Lord.

As far as the Christian Church is concerned, if the Second Coming has taken place, then a new revelation has been given. And every time a new revelation is given, a new church is founded on that revelation, and the previous church has become the former church. In that sense it is dead.

However, the Lord does not turn away from the members of previous churches. He continues to attract them towards His heaven. And among the members of these former churches there are really spiritual people who are on their way to heaven. Also, who is to say that a new church organization is a spiritual church, and who is to say that people who profess to be New Church men are indeed angels of heaven?. Judge not, that ye be not judged. This statement should guide New Church men, and Christians, and Jews, and Moslems, and people of all other religions.

OBJECTION 7

Then Dr. Pond objects to what the Writings say about "some of the best and wisest men that have ever lived on the earth". For example, the Writings record that King David is not in heaven, but is an adulterous and cruel mind.

First of all Dr. Pond would be a very naive person if he thought that every person in the Bible and every leader in the church will be in heaven. While in the Old and New Testament we have not been given much information about the life after death and about people's lot there, in the revelation of the second coming we have been given a great deal more information. It is not unreasonable to expect more information about people's lot after death.

All through the history of the church people have assumed that their leaders were god-fearing, later on to find out they were not. David did not appear to be a holy man even in the Bible. He was an adulterer with Bath-sheba and the premeditated murderer of Uriah. Read the story in 2 Samuel 11. How then can we be surprised to find that he remained an adulterer and murderer.

Luther was a monk, a church leader and a reformer, but he had the audacity to add a word to the Bible (sola=alone) so it would teach that man is saved by faith "alone". Calvin was a very judgmental person who believed in reprimanding the sinners in his church.

In the Writings we find two opposite phenomena. We find that people who did bad things here on earth, ascended into heaven. And we find that people who appeared to be good on this earth, actually landed in hell after death. There is a very important lesson in these teachings. We here on earth cannot judge if a person is evil or good. Such spiritual judgment is useless and a waste of time.

The other lesson we can learn is that we should never be in awe of our spiritual leaders, and we should never allow them to stand between us and the Lord. We should not allow them to make our decisions or to tell us what to do. It is all right if they teach us what they see to be true, but they should always refer us to the Lord's Word.

Churches really need leaders to inspire, encourage and warn against dangers. But these same leaders can also stand in the way of improvement and progress. In many churches, probably most churches, people become affectionately attached to their leaders. Present leaders are accepted only if they sing the same tune as leaders of the past. Present leaders are sometimes clones of past leaders, and as such they cease to inspire and lead.

But leaders of the past are not necessarily right and good. It is even possible they are in hell. So let us concentrate on what our present leaders say and not worship past leaders. Let the dead bury the dead, and let the living go on with life and renewal.

OBJECTION 8

Dr. Pond complains that Swedenborg contradicts the plain facts of history. This is, he says, true both of sacred and profane history (page 120).

Historical Fact 1

A very important teaching of the Writings regarding Divine Revelation is that its subject is the nature of God and the way to heaven. Divine Revelation does not teach

anything about history or science. Right here Dr. Pond differs in his opinions from New Church ideas, because Dr. Pond believes that Divine Revelation is literally true and is historical and scientific.

Then the Writings teach that the first 11 chapters of Genesis are pure allegory and are not scientific in nature. And so Dr. Pond cannot agree with this idea. But it is kind of funny to say that Swedenborg goes against the plain facts of history when he says that the story of creation, and the story of the flood are not plain facts of history.

Historical Fact 2

Here is another argument of Dr. Pond. Swedenborg affirms that sacrificial worship was first instituted by Eber, who was of the fifth generation of Noah. But when Noah went forth from the ark, he made a burnt offering(Genesis 8:20) and in Genesis 4:4 we read about Cain and Abel bringing an offering to the Lord.

Dr. Pond sees Swedenborg making historical blunders. But Dr. Pond very quickly forgot what he said a few paragraphs ago, namely that the first 11 chapters of Genesis were allegorical. So when we read about offerings by Cain and Abel and Noah we are not reading about actual historical offerings, but about allegorical ones.

Historical Fact 3

The Writings teach that a trinity of persons was unknown in the apostolic church, and that it was first broached in the Council of Nice in the fourth century. Surely, the people in the apostolic church knew about the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, but their central belief was that God is one, and that this one God is to be worshiped. Are the Writings incorrect in this teaching? Here is the result of some study in the literature of the Christian Church.

"Apostolic Christians did not have Paul's Epistles at hand to copy from. The original apostles were never inclined to accept Paul's fancies as the primitive Gospel. Neither is there the least hint that on the person of Christ there was any difference of opinion among the leaders of the Church"(Origin and Development of the Nicene Theology, Hugh M. Scott, page 50). "All worship of the Apostolic Church was centered in the Divine Christ"(ibid, page 50). "The gentile Christians received as the unanimous doctrine that Christ was the Lord who was to be prayed to"(ibid, page 52). "Neither general probability nor the evidence of the documents gives any color to the supposition that stereotyped, verbally sacrosanct creeds of the kind that were later to become current, existed in New Testament days. As a matter of fact, they did not

make their appearance until several generations later. Even the theory that they cannot be dated before the middle of the second century can be shown to be unduly optimistic"(Early Christian Creeds, J. N. D. Kelly).

William Burgh wrote "An Inquiry into the Belief of the First Three Centuries respecting the One Godhead of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit". In this book the writer sets out to prove that the early Christian Church knew the concept of the trinity of persons. I read the first 40 pages of this book, dealing with the first and second century of the church, but found no proof whatsoever.

On page 4 he writes:" The word trinity has not come down to us earlier than the middle of the 2nd century, when it was used by Theophilus, bishop of Antioch". On page 21 there is the following statement:"St. Ignatius calls our Redeemer, God clothed in the flesh", which statement sounds pretty close to the New Church idea. In his "Apology", Lindsey says that "the fathers of the first 3 centuries till the Council of Nice were generally Unitarians"(See page 23).

And finally, let me quote from "Trinity Theology" by Forrest. "The doctrine of trinity of persons in the godhead must have crept into existence subsequent to the Apostolic Age"(page 1). There have been three Creeds, the Apostle's Creed, the Nicene Creed and the Athanasian Creed.

"The first creed is unitarian, the second is partly so, and the third contains trinitarianism in its boldest and most complicated state"(ibid, page 1). Forrest reminds us that "the bishops of those primitive times were, for the most part, plain and illiterate men, remarkable rather for their piety and zeal than for their learning and eloquence"(ibid, page 3). "It was soon found, when the leaders of the church began to advance towards trinitarianism that the Apostle's Creed was insufficient to express the new opinions"(page 4).

"The Nicene Creed is semi-trinitarian. It retains in part the spirit of Unitarianism but in part approaches the complex Athanasian system"(page 5). "A profound silence was maintained in the Council of Nice concerning the divinity of the Holy Spirit.

The church was not prepared to decide what precise dignity this third person was entitled to"(page 6).

From the following quote you can glean the idea that the development of the three Creeds was gradual and did not go over a path of roses. There was a lot of struggle and strife in the early church. Both Arius and Athanasius went in and out of favor a number of times.

"The Council of Nice drew up the Creed in favor of Athanasius, on which occasion Arius was condemned and banished into Illyricum. But ten years later, the fugitive was recalled, and admitted into communion by a council at Jerusalem, which agreed to accept his confession of faith as satisfactory. On the other hand, Athanasius also was severely scrutinized by several ecclesiastical assemblies. He was five times expelled from his episcopal throne at Alexandria. Twenty years he passed as an exile or as a fugitive, and his doctrine fluctuated between honor and disgrace, just as his party or that of Arius prevailed. Victory at length decided for the adherents of Athanasius towards the end of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth century"ibid, page 7).

Historical Fact 4

Swedenborg also asserted that the doctrine of justification by faith alone was not known in the apostolic church but came into existence only after the Council of Nice(page 122).

From the quotes under Historical Fact 3 we learned that the early Christian Church did not know much about the teachings of Paul. But even if they knew about justification by faith, they still did not know about justification by faith alone. For as long as a Christian does not believe in the doctrine of the trinity of persons, he cannot believe in the atonement doctrine. Therefore he cannot believe in justification by faith in that atonement doctrine.

This is what Swedenborg meant when he said that the doctrine of justification by faith arose from the Council of Nice, for without a tripersonal God this doctrine cannot exist.

Historical Fact 5

In True Christian Religion number 632 we read that the Athanasian Creed was written immediately after the Council of Nice by people who attended that council. Nowhere in the Writings does it say that Athanasius was the author of the Athanasian Creed.

To this Dr. Pond says:" The Athanasian Creed could not have been written by Athanasius or by any of his contemporaries. It was probably composed in or about the sixth century(page 124).

Swedenborg agreed with Dr. Pond as he never claims that Athanasius was the actual author of the Athanasian Creed. All he says is that "the creed has its name from Athanasius"(AR 961:7).

Forrest writes on this subject the following: "The compilation of the third Creed was imputed to Athanasius, as to by far the most celebrated of the Nicene Fathers"(page 8). Forrest suspects this was done to secure the acceptance of this creed, which otherwise, from its unreasonableness, it was ill calculated to secure. However, he agrees that no scholar thinks that Athanasius actually wrote the Creed named after him(see page 8).

Historical Fact 6

Swedenborg says that the fact that there is an internal sense in the Word has heretofore been altogether unknown in the Christian world. Dr. Pond questions the historical truth of this statement.

If Swedenborg meant with this statement that the idea of symbolism and of correspondence was unknown in the Christian world, then of course, Swedenborg was wrong. Symbolic and figurative speech has been used for many centuries, even outside the Christian Church.

Early Christian leaders recognized that the scriptures could be interpreted in a symbolic way. Dr. Pond mentions names like Origin and Clemens. But what these men saw and what Swedenborg revealed cannot be compared in any way. For Swedenborg revealed that the sense of the letter consists of correspondences, representatives and significatives, that there are three internal senses in the Word, that each sense is in the Word continuously, and that each sense is the Word in a different heaven, that these correspondences connect us with the heavens and the heavens with us, and that each sense has its own subject. All this is very new and was never seen by Origin or Clemens.

Final Conclusion

At the end of Objection 8, Dr. Pond writes:"When it is shown conclusively that all (historical facts in the Writings) are not true, then the claim of Swedenborg is invalidated"(page 125). Unfortunately, Dr. Pond's objections have not been found to be true, and so Swedenborg's claim is not found to be untrue.

OBJECTION 9

Dr. Pond also believed that the teachings of the Writings contradict, in a great variety of instances, the plainest and most universally acknowledged facts of science(Page 126). And, Dr. Pond says:"This consideration is the more important, because his teachings are so based upon his philosophy, and mixed up with it, as to be inseparable from it".

Divine Revelation does not teach scientific facts, because human beings are able to discern these by themselves. They do not need divine revelation for scientific investigations. Human beings can take these scientific facts and try to understand them, and base scientific theories on them. This is true of all divine revelation. It is true for the Old Testament, the New Testament and the Writings.

If we think that Genesis tells us how the world was created, we are fooling ourselves and we are misinterpreting scripture. Science comes from the observation of nature and theology comes from the observation of divine revelation. Science cannot come from revelation and theology cannot come from nature.

This confusion is a real possibility especially in the New Church, as the revelator of the revelation of this church was first a devoted scientist and philosopher. There are even people in the New Church who look upon Swedenborg's scientific work before he became a revelator, and give it more credence than they should.

It is quite possible that Swedenborg was ahead of his scientific contemporaries, but New Church men are going to leave it to scientists of today or the future to see if he indeed was ahead of his time. Before present day science has proven him right we do not accept as divine truth anything he wrote as a scientist or philosopher.

The Writings are not based upon any previous philosophical or scientific facts and can be separated from them. Swedenborg had to be a scientist and philosopher, so his mind would have all the forms and concepts for the Lord to use in His second coming. There are New Church men who believe that they will understand the Writings better if they study and understand the pretheological works, but there are others who have never been able to accept the rationale of this position.

We want to know and understand the Lord. We want to receive His love and truth, and these can only be found in His Word, not in any other place including the writings of the revelator that were written without Divine guidance and dictation. To me it is not helpful to seek assistance from such writings but actually could confuse us and blur the picture.

And finally, any statement in the Writings that appears to be scientific should be treated in the same way as any statement in the Old or New Testaments that appear to be scientific. As science it totally lacks divine authority. Our task is to see the meaning behind such statements, just as we have to see the meaning behind the story of creation in Genesis.

First Scientific Fact

Dr. Pond states that Swedenborg knew nothing of the modern discoveries in chemistry. This is very true. With a degree in chemical engineering I studied Swedenborg's scientific work on Chemistry, and found little use in its study. But thirty years later I cannot help any one with modern chemistry. There have been too many changes. All this seems very acceptable and normal.

Not so Dr. Pond. First of all he accuses Swedenborg of "revealing" scientific ideas and theories, which is not true. Actually Swedenborg had been profoundly discouraged in his scientific pursuits. He discovered that in science he could not discover the human soul. Then he was led to the Bible and theology.

Second Scientific Fact

Then Dr. Pond discusses how Swedenborg gives the reason for the redness of blood, but no references! If you went through the "Concordance" of Swedenborg's Theological Writings under the word "blood" you could not find any such references. He must have quoted from the scientific works.

However, Dr. Pond never mentions the fact that the Lord laid a connection between the wine of the Holy Supper and His blood, and between the bread of the Holy Supper and His flesh. It is obvious that wine and bread by themselves have no saving qualities. No one will maintain that the blood and flesh of the Lord's body that existed 2000 years ago would have saving qualities. But the correspondence of these 4 do have saving qualities. For blood and wine both correspond to the Lord's wisdom and flesh and bread correspond to His love. Only His love and wisdom can save us. Only the concept of correspondences gives real meaning and use to our participation in the Holy Supper.

Third Scientific Fact

"Love is the sole cause of vital animal heat"(page 129). Again, while Swedenborg could not reveal any scientific truth that applies purely on the plane of the natural world, he could reveal how the spiritual relates to the natural. Who can deny that

when the person leaves his body, when his loves are separated from the body, that the body temperature decreases? Without love operating in the body, there is no heat in that body.

Fourth Scientific Fact

The fourth scientific fact Dr. Pond speaks about deals with the exchange of substances that take place with blood in the lungs. Of course, there is a correspondence between our lungs and our understanding. This correspondence is defined by the following rule: What the lungs do for our body, our understanding does for our mind.

The new revelation can reveal facts about the operation of our understanding, but it cannot reveal facts about the operation of our lungs. These are scientific facts, which are not revealed but discovered by men in scientific investigations. Today we still know very little about the operation of the body, but we know so much more than what we knew 200 years ago. The Lord would not interfere with the normal development of any science by revealing prematurely a scientific idea. After all, the purpose of revelation is leading men to heaven and not to scientific understanding.

Dr. Pond thinks that New Church men who accept the three claims of the Writings must believe the scientific appearances that occur in the Writings, "whatever may become of their physiology or their common sense"(page 130). But this is nonsense. We only accept in revelation what deals with our approach to heaven. And we do not try to discover scientific truth by applying the principle of correspondence to what has been revealed about the spiritual world.

What is hard to understand is how Dr. Pond can hammer away on this subject when he accepts the scientific facts that can be found in the Bible. For example, he accepts that the universe was created in 6 days, that light was created before the sun, and that the earth already existed in a cooled off state before the sun and moon existed.

OBJECTION 10

Dr. Pond believed that he had found many inconsistencies in the Writings which he could not reconcile. "Many such instances which might be mentioned and which I had actually noted for consideration, I shall be obliged to pass over. Enough however will be introduced to satisfy every reader, that my objection is not without foundation"(Page 143).

This statement is not entirely fair. For even if the reader would conclude that the inconsistencies mentioned are reconcilable, he would still have an uncomfortable feeling about the many inconsistencies not mentioned.

Chicken and Egg Problem

The first five inconsistencies are of the "chicken-egg" variety. You ask someone this question: "What came first, the chicken or the egg". It is a fun intellectual argument for the budding college student. Here is how it runs.

Every egg comes from a chicken and every chicken comes from an egg. Now who came first, the chicken or the egg. If you say egg, then your debater will say that the egg came from the chicken. And if you say chicken, then he will say that the chicken came from an egg.

The problem is that we do not know how a chicken was created in the beginning. But if we knew, it would not change a thing. Every chicken is still coming from an egg, and every egg is still coming from a chicken.

Inconsistency 1

The Writings teach that all spirits and angels first lived on earth, and entered the spiritual world through death. Once they are in the spiritual world they are continually present with men on earth. Men need this contact because otherwise they would not have thought or affection, or even life.

Here is how Dr. Pond reasons on the basis of these facts. There must be people in this world, before there can be any in the other world, and there must be people in the other world, before men on this earth can live. This is inconsistent.

Of course, once there are people in the spiritual world, the problem is solved. The Writings teach that the first men created on this earth were not much more than babies. They could walk and eat and cry but they had very little thought and affection. In that sense they had little life. But the Lord's life flowed into their inmost soul in the spiritual world, and from there into their body. In that sense they had life, and so they did not perish. As soon as they died and passed into the spiritual world, they were able to communicate with people on earth, and add to their life of affection and thought. The result was a more advanced life of thought and affection with people on earth. Once they were in the spiritual world, they could repeat this process of adding to the thought and affection of people on earth. Conclusion, there is no inconsistency.

Inconsistency 2

The Writings teach that spiritual freedom results from equilibrium between good and evil spirits. Without such equilibrium there is no free will, and without free will there is no moral character, and without moral character there is no good or evil.

There must be existence of good and evil spirits before there can be free will, and there must be free will before there can be good and evil spirits. How can this be, Dr. Pond asks.

In the beginning of creation there was no evil. There was only good. But there were lesser goods and greater goods. Men could choose between what is more good and what is less good, just as we can choose between what is more important and less important. When man began to fall, he kept choosing a lesser good all the time, and finally the choice was between evil and good. And there goes Inconsistency 2.

Inconsistency 3

If there are no evil spirits there can be no sin. But how then can we account for the first sinners? There must be sinners before the first sinners to stir up the evil passions to which the first sinners yielded(page 145). This inconsistency can be solved with the same reasoning that is given for inconsistency 2.

Inconsistency 4

The Writings teach that man is free and cannot be restrained from sinning without destroying his freedom. The Lord permits evil. While He does not will it, He will not prevent it. On the other hand, man is nothing and has nothing except what is from God. He is a passive recipient of influx from God. Where then, Dr. Pond asks, is his freedom, his activity? There is the teaching that man's freedom is not real but only apparent. The Lord is the first to act. Man is second and reacts. He acts in appearance as of himself, though such reaction deeply considered is also from God(see page 146).

The infinite was not created, the finite was created. This sets who is independent and who is dependent. This dependency cannot be helped. Neither the infinite nor the finite can do anything about it. However, the finite was created by the infinite out of infinite love. The purpose of that creation is to give love and happiness to the finite. The nature of infinite, non judgmental love implies that the finite is to be free to accept or reject this infinite love. So God created man with the faculty of free will. This freedom is real because it originates in God.

Of course, man is alive because of God. Man has freedom because of God. But man does not feel that dependency. It appears to him that he acts of himself, and that he is free to do what he wants. The Writings use the word "proprium" and this word means "what is his own". And we could ask: "What can man really call his own"? It is not his body, it is not his mind, it is not his soul, it is not his sex, it is not even his freedom. There is only one thing that is truly man's own, and that is the choice he makes. The choices he makes set him apart from God and from others, and make him independent. The very fact that man can make decisions that are totally contrary to the Lord's will, proves that man is truly an independent creature. So all teachings considered, we are not left with an inconsistency.

Inconsistency 5

Dr. Pond maintains that the Writings teach that man has everything by influx from God. The reception of this influx is according to the state of his mind, according to the state of his love and wisdom or according to his character. If the character is good, the influx produces good, and if the character is bad, then the influx produces evil. This position avoids the conclusion that God, by His influx, is the author of sin. Then Dr. Pond asks: "How came man by his previous character, or by the previously favorable or unfavorable state of his receptivity? Then everything in him is not by influx from God. Did he inherit from his parents? But how? Obviously, everything in man is not by influx from God, or else we face another absurdity or inconsistency again, namely an influx before the first influx"(page 147).

The Lord inflows with His life and love into all human beings. This influx is the same with all. What is different is what human beings receive and appropriate individually. Some receive nonjudgmental love and turn it into the opposite, namely judgmental love. Others receive the Lord's infinite love for the human race and they turn it into hatred for others. Thus it is not the influx that turns it into judgmental love or hatred towards the neighbor, but it is man's decisions imprinted upon his mind and forming his character. The Lord's influx never produces good nor does it produce evil.

When man was created a finite human being, there is inherent in his finiteness the fact that if left to himself, by nature, he will incline to choices that have a downward tendency, a tendency towards self centeredness. In nature there is a natural tendency in matter for energy to flow from a higher temperature level to a lower one. Spiritual finite substance has a similar tendency. Man's choice naturally seeks the lesser good.

Just as energy has to be supplied to matter in the natural world to go up in temperature, so there has to be a conscious seeking and appropriation of the Lord's love before man can rise to a higher level of spirituality. Of course, this tendency is

created into man so he may have freedom. The ability to choose is created into man, but man alone makes the choice.

Inconsistency 6

The Writings teach that the divine essence itself is love and wisdom. The divine love and the divine wisdom are a substance and a form. The divine love is the substance and the divine wisdom is its form. The divine love and wisdom are a substance and form in themselves, which means that they are self-subsisting. But then the Writings also speak about the attributes of God, and not as constituting his very substance and essence. The Divine love and wisdom also proceed as one from the Lord. In these statements in the Writings Dr. Pond sees an inconsistency.

If we ask ourselves what the attributes of God are, then we learn in AR 611 that there are many attributes of the Divine essence, such as omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, mercy, grace, eternity and others. And there are attributes proceeding from the Divine essence, which are creation and preservation, salvation and redemption, enlightenment and instruction. At this point we ask ourselves where the inconsistency is. It all fits together pretty well. So let us go on to inconsistency 7.

Inconsistency 7

In TCR 170 it says that before the world was created the trinity was not. But after creation, when God became incarnate, it was provided and brought about, and then in the Lord God the Redeemer and Savior Jesus Christ. In Genesis 18:2 we read how three angels come to Abraham while he is sitting in the door of his tent. In AC 2149, explaining this scene, we read that the three men signify the Divine Itself, the Divine Human, and the Holy Proceeding. According to Dr. Pond we now have an inconsistency. For on the one hand it says that there was no trinity until after the incarnation, while there seems to be a trinity at Abraham's time.

Before creation there was nothing else in the Lord but the divine love and wisdom. But after creation, when the finite existed, the Lord could go from Himself to the finite. Then the divine love and wisdom proceeded from the Lord towards the finite as one. So after creation we observe three things in the Lord. We see His love, His wisdom, and His proceeding. This is the first trinity that we can see in the Lord, long before incarnation.

His love is the Father, His wisdom is the Son and His proceeding is the Holy Spirit. Or we can say that what we do not see of the Lord is the Father, what we see is the Son, and what comes to us to work with us is the Holy Spirit.

The Father never really changes. And as long as there are no men, the Son does not change. But as soon as the divine wisdom has to appear to finite men, the Son begins to change. Of course there is no change in the Divine wisdom itself, but there is a change in its appearing to men. For example, the Lord appears in one way to the highest angels, in another way to the middle heaven, and in another way to the lowest heaven. His appearing to men on earth in the Word on earth has to be different from His appearing to the angels of heaven. Every time more revelation was given to the Jewish Church this appearance changed.

Then the Lord appeared to men in person. He assumed a human body in the womb of Mary, was born into the world, and then assumed a human mind from Mary and the world. This human was then glorified and became the Divine Human. The Father was in the Divine Human (the Son), and the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Divine Human. All this is prophetically represented in the story of Abraham and the three angels.

This overall approach to the trinity explains why three angels appearing to Abraham represented the trinity. It also helps us to understand that the inconsistency Dr. Pond sees, does not really exist.

Inconsistency 8

Dr. Pond did not understand how children can be in innocence and yet at the same time be nothing but evil. As he could not understand it, he termed it an inconsistency. Innocence in the Writings is defined as a willingness to be led. All children have this.

But at the same time they are evil. They all have the propensity to choose what is less good or what is evil. Of course, until they are rational, until they are free to choose between good and evil, they may do something evil but it is not sin like it would be with an adult. This propensity comes from the nature of their minds which tend to go downward. But if the child yields to the willingness to be led, then he can be kept from doing what is evil.

Inconsistency 9

The love of self and the love of the world rule in the hells, but love to the Lord and to the neighbor rule in the heavens. This is clear to Dr. Pond. But he cannot reconcile these teachings with the ideas that he learns about conjugal love. In fact he finds them totally irreconcilable.

The reason for this is that the Writings teach that the love of the sex stays with men and women beyond death. In heaven people are married, but in hell they are not, as they are only interested in sexual relationships. Dr. Pond does not believe that after death there is sex and marriage. How can he even hope to reconcile sets of ideas, part of which he does not accept?

Nevertheless, for the New Church man there is no inconsistency here. First you need a few definitions:

1. The love of self is the love that prompts us to care for ourselves. It was created into us, and by itself it is not evil.
2. The love of the world prompts us to acquire for ourselves shelter and clothing and all kinds of worldly and material things. It was created into us, so by itself is not evil.
3. Love to the neighbor is the love that prompts us to love the neighbor equally as we love ourselves. This love was not created into us from birth, but we receive it from the Lord at our request.
4. Love to the Lord is exactly what it says. It is the love of good. It is given to us by the Lord at our request.
5. The love of the sex is the love that is between man and woman in both men and women. In itself the love of the sex is neither evil nor good. It is made evil or good by the ruling love of man or woman. This ruling love can be either love to the Lord or love to the neighbor, and in these two cases the love of the sex is good, and it is conjugal love, or it can be love to the world or the love of self, in which cases the love of the sex is scortatory love that leads to fornication or adultery or polygamy. All this seems very simple to grasp, and there is no inconsistency.

Inconsistency 10

It is true that the Writings condemn the religion of the Reformed Churches, because of their belief in a tripersonal God and their belief in the atonement doctrine. But it is equally true when the Writings say that in these churches it is taught that a man must examine himself, see his sins, acknowledge them, repent, desist from them, and enter upon a new course of life. This is taught when people are prepared for the Holy Supper. Obviously, if anyone in the Reformed Churches would follow this path of action he will be in heaven.

The overriding belief in the New Church is that anyone in any religion can be saved and reach heaven. As long as there is a belief in a God outside of oneself, as long as leadership and help from this God is sought and accepted, and as long as the person does what he or she thinks that God says, that person will go to heaven, regardless of the beliefs that have been entertained. A person in that state of mind is very open to

instruction in the other world, and so any falsities that have been believed are easily discarded. So there is no inconsistency here.

Inconsistency 11

"Swedenborg taught that the other world is a mere state of being and not a place. The angels have no notion or idea of place and of space"(page 152). And yet, "Swedenborg speaks of the spiritual world as a place"(page 152). Dr. Pond senses an inconsistency.

It should be admitted that with our present day understanding of matter it is easy to understand space and time in the spiritual world. Such understanding was not possible in Dr. Pond's days.

Today we realize that matter, the solid stuff that we are so used to in this world, is really nothing else but an appearance of energy. When we see solid matter, we actually see small particles racing around in orbits. This motion requires space and time. The space is required so the particle can move around, and this moving around takes time. We need space also because otherwise we could not have an individual physical body that exists separately from other bodies. For that body we also need time, for it has to grow and develop.

It is fairly easy to think about space when you think about the space right around you. But thought about space further away from your body, is harder. Look into the sky and try to think of space far away. Is there an end to that space? That's a difficult question.

Now think about time. At first it is easy to think about time. There are minutes and hours and days and years. There are revolutions of the earth around the sun. But what about time when you sleep? Then time can fly by. When you are in beautiful nature with the person you love, and time can fly by. Time is less definite.

Obviously there is such a thing as the fluidity of time. We exist on and on in that fluidity of time, which is true for both our body and our mind, for the natural world and for the spiritual world. In the natural world we measure the fluidity of time in revolutions of the earth around the sun. In the spiritual world there is the same fluidity of time, but as there is no revolving of the earth around the sun there, we are aware of and measure the same fluidity of time in a different way. There we measure it in terms of changes of state. If our state stays the same, we do not sense time, but when it changes, then we do sense it.

As far as space in the spiritual world is concerned, it cannot be the same there. For in the natural world space is connected with energy. In the spiritual world there is no energy, but instead there is love. Our spiritual bodies are appearances of love. Everything we see there is made the same way, it is always the appearance of love. Of course, our spiritual bodies or our minds need individuality there. We need "space" between each other, and so there is the appearance of space in the spiritual world. But that "space" is determined by love and not by energy. But it looks the same in both worlds.

We are aware of natural space in our mind. The same is true of our awareness of spiritual space. As long as our spiritual eyes are not opened, we do not see spiritual space, but we do sense it, when we realize how one person is far removed from another person. We are far apart, we often say.

While space may appear the same, our awareness of it is different. In the spiritual world we sense space, but it does not affect us the same way. In this world we cannot go from one place to another, unless we move our body through space. In the spiritual world we can be in another place by just changing the state of our mind.

From all this it is apparent that we can say that angels have no notion of space and place. And yet we can also say that there is space and extent in heaven. There is no inconsistency here, but new and vast insight into old concepts.

Inconsistency 12

Dr. Pond observes that there is no deception or hypocrisy in the other world, and on the other hand there is(See page 153). There is an inconsistency here. To deceive others on purpose is evil, and so it is impossible for the devils in hell to be without deception or hypocrisy. There are lots of phenomena in the spiritual world that could not be explained or take place unless spirits could have externals that are different from their internals. Especially before every judgment such phenomena can be observed.

Inconsistency 13

The Lord casts no one down to hell, but the spirit casts himself down. This the Writings teach. Then there are teachings that say that evil spirits were cast into hell(pages 154 and 155). Dr. Pond senses another inconsistency.

Nowhere in the Writings can you find the two opposite statements that the Lord does cast people into hell, and that the Lord does not cast people into hell. That would have

been an inconsistency. But it does say that people were cast into hell or appeared to be cast into hell. What casts them into hell are their own evil loves. It does not say that the Lord did this. So there is no inconsistency here.

Inconsistency 14

Sinners in hell are punished only to prevent their molesting and tormenting others. And yet there are also teachings that say that evil spirits torment other spirits. Another of Dr. Pond's inconsistencies(see page 155).

How this is, can be illustrated with the correspondence between the human body and the grandman of heaven. When the food comes into the intestinal canal, it is attacked by certain fluids, which break the food down so parts of it are assimilated into the body and other parts leave the body eventually. These fluids are not allowed in other parts of the body.

Evil spirits are often used in the assimilation process of spirits into the grandman of heaven. Then they are allowed to torment. They may torment each other in hell.

Inconsistency 15

There are no radical changes of character, one way or the other, after death(page 155). This is indeed a teaching of the Writings. The Writings also teach that no person in hell is punished for the sins he committed while on earth. If a person in his God given freedom chooses to sin even in the other world then why would the Lord punish him to eternity? And how is this inconsistent with the idea that people do not change after death?

OBJECTION 11

"The Writings represent the way to heaven comparatively easy, and tends to depress, if not subvert, the proper standard of Christian piety. It dispenses with the appropriate work of the Holy Spirit, leaving this to be performed by the ministry of angels"(page 157).

First let me take care of the second part of the above quote. It is not true that the Writings teach that the Holy Spirit does not work directly with man, but only uses angels in this work. Dr, Pond just did not know enough when he wrote this.

In the Christian religion it is very easy to go to heaven. Say the sinners prayer, accept Jesus Christ as your personal savior, and accept His atoning work performed on the

cross, and His blood will cleanse you from all sins. This is very easy indeed it seems, certainly easier than the New Church way to heaven.

For in the New Church way to heaven a man has to read the Word, dig into himself, examine his actions and his motives, and discover what he is doing wrong, and this he has to do till the end of life on this earth.

Obviously man can do this anywhere and in every situation. He can do it as a monk in a monastery, and he can do it as a judge on a court bench. It really does not matter where in the world he regenerates.

OBJECTION 12

In Objection 12 Dr. Pond asserts that some of the doctrines of Swedenborg are decidedly of an immoral character and tendency(page 162). "I refer particularly to those which relate to polygamy, concubinage and fornication", he said.

Dr. Pond deals here with teachings he found mainly in the work on Conjugal Love. This book is divided into two parts. The first part deals with conjugal love as it exists with the angels in the heavens, and the second part of the book deals with sexual love in the hells.

In the first part of the book, we find everything about the ideal of sexual love. It is given so we will know what to strive for while we are on earth. In the second part of the book we are taught about sexual love outside of a heavenly marriage. Subjects like fornication, concubinage and polygamy are discussed there.

From everything Dr. Pond says on this subject it is clear that he either does not know or does not understand certain ideas that are given in the Writings. The first idea is the difference between evil and sin. The second idea is that the Lord permits evil only if it can be bent to good.

These ideas are totally foreign to the Christian theologian. In the Jewish Church people had to live according to the law. In the Christian Church it is considered impossible to live according to the law. If a person wants to go to heaven, he will never be able to do that by living according to the law. The only way he can do it is by grace. And grace here means accepting the atoning work of Jesus Christ.

The New Church does not know such a black and white approach to salvation. In the New Church we worship the Lord Jesus Christ who is a God with infinite love, infinite patience, infinite understanding and infinite tolerance.

For example, if a Mohammedan loves his God and tries to do what this God tells him to do, even if he does not believe like the orthodox Christian, he still can go to heaven. It is his willingness to be led by God that counts, that is all important, and that saves him.

If the religion of this Mohammedan teaches him that polygamy is allowed and he is in polygamy from this religion, then the Lord permits this, though He does not will it. In heaven, the rule is monogamy, this is what the Lord wills for our greatest happiness, but He permits polygamy temporarily in the lowest heaven and on the outskirts of heaven. The Lord deals very patiently and passionately with people when their religious beliefs are not totally in agreement with Divine order. This example Dr. Pond noticed in number 343 of Conjugal Love. To understand, we need to read in context and quote from subsequent numbers.

For example, number 345 says "that polygamy is lasciviousness because its love is divided among several, and is the love of the sex, a love of the external man. So it is not conjugal love which alone is chaste". Numbers 346 and 347 say "that with polygamists there cannot be conjugal chastity, purity and holiness and that they cannot become spiritual".

In other words, polygamy is an evil but not necessarily a sin. Human behavior is evil when it interferes with the love relationship that we have with the Lord, with our partner or with our neighbor. We are committing a sin if we know that something is evil but we do it nevertheless. If we do not know something is evil, and we do it, then it is not a sin. Sin will keep us from heaven. It effects total separation from the Lord, from our partner and from our neighbors. This is why it says in numbers 348,349 and 351 "that polygamy is not a sin with those with whom it is from religion or who are in ignorance concerning the Lord".

Also, it should be mentioned that the Writings teach that polygamous Mohammedans are not living in the same heaven as monogamous Christians. There is total separation between these heavens.

OBJECTION 13

In Objection 13 Dr. Pond explains what he does not believe about the description of heaven and hell that is given in the Writings. It should be noted that Dr. Pond represents a church and a religion that professes to know either little or nothing about the life after death. Many people in his church fear death and avoid talking about it. And if they talk, the message is clear:

1. They do not know anything about death and after death.
2. Death is punishment for sin.

3. Nobody ever came back from death to tell about it.

At Christian funerals we get the same picture. Even today there are many Christians who find it very difficult to think about a friend or a loved one alive in the other world. Their thoughts are focused mostly on the body and on the coffin and on death.

In the revelation of the Second Coming the Lord reveals to us many facts about the spiritual world. One of the most fundamental ideas that are revealed there is the fact that heaven is in the human form. By this is meant that all the angels in heaven and all the societies in heaven, and also all the degrees of heaven are organized in the same way as the cells, the organs, and the systems of the body are organized.

Dr. Pond reacts as follows: "To my own apprehension, the whole account is supremely ridiculous, being destitute alike of sense and decency, and worthy only of contempt"(Page 171). It is this kind of statement that attracts attention. It is so condemning, making such a final judgment. After the reading of such a statement most readers are going to wonder. Is it really that bad? And so we reread what Dr. Pond said before, and then we read on.

Before making this statement Dr. Pond describes how people who pass from this world into the other world are either absorbed into heaven or rejected into hell. Here is what the Writings say:

- 1. People who die and become conscious in the other world are like the food that enters the mouth and the intestinal tract.**
- 2. Entering the mouth signals death. The intestinal tract is like the world of spirits, the body is like heaven, and the world outside the body is like hell.**

Dr. Pond thought that the world of spirits was heaven. But the space in the intestinal tract is not the body, and so the intestinal tract does not correspond to heaven. Dr. Pond concludes "he does not see how the science of correspondence can be applied. For then the wicked must go through the whole midst of heaven in order to get into hell"(page 171).

Though Swedenborg made extensive anatomical studies, Dr. Pond believes that "Swedenborg probably did not know that the contents of the intestinal canal are made up but in part of the refuse of the stomach. With them is also mixed the refuse of the whole system, which the adsorbents are continually taking up and passing off in a natural way. To carry out the correspondence we must suppose that hell is continually supplied from heaven"(page 172).

Hell is not supplied from heaven. The teaching of the Writings that a man is either evil or good, either an evil man or an angel, before he dies, and so an angel is never changed into an evil spirit, or hell can never be supplied from heaven.

For a number of pages Dr. Pond gives descriptions of heaven, and ridicules them. But his concept of heaven is gazing at God and singing songs of praise all day. Does that sound reasonable?

What bothers Dr. Pond the most is the fact that the angels are very interested in discussing marriage and conjugal love. Dr. Pond would have us believe that marriage is of the body only, and that marital bliss is not much more than sexual delights which are on the plane of the body only. That Dr. Pond thinks this way is obvious when he says: "I feel constrained to ask, how much better is the heaven of Swedenborg than that of Mohammed? Indeed, where is the difference between them"(page 182)?

If you were to read Conjugal Love only once with an open mind, you would never make such statements. Read this work for yourself once, and you will ask: "How can such a learned and intelligent man miss the point so completely"?

Dr. Pond balks at the various descriptions of hell. But if you read some of the transcripts of murder court cases, descriptions of cruelties perpetrated by criminals and soldiers of various races and countries, if you were to watch some of the modern movies and see what thoughts some men have, then Swedenborg's descriptions of hell would not surprise at all.

Why would these descriptions surprise Dr. Pond, especially when he believes that hell is like a lake of fire where people are gnashing their teeth. Also, he knows and accepts the strangest descriptions of the other world that occur in the Bible.

Dr. Pond is upset to think that a new revelation from God would declare that certain Christian tenets of faith are not true. I have struggled with the same questions for several years and that struggle was not always easy. In the end I concluded that the main question this: "Are the Theological Writings of Swedenborg a divine revelation or not"? If they are not, then they can be treated like the books of any other author. We can pick and choose. But if we conclude that they are from the Lord, then we have to accept the whole. So let us concentrate on that question.

It does not seem useful to concentrate on the descriptions of the spiritual world. Instead we better concentrate on theology, on doctrine, on the doctrine of the Lord and on the way to heaven. Are they in agreement with the Bible? Are the prophecies of the second coming fulfilled by the Writings?

When you do this, you will discover that there is fulfillment of prophecy. The fundamental doctrines of the New Church religion do agree with the Bible. In fact, it becomes crystal clear that the Old Testament, the New Testament and the Writings belong together, and are from one Author. This sight is possible largely because of what is revealed about the spiritual world. The teachings concerning the spiritual world are an integral part of the explanations or interpretation of many of the passages in the Old or New Testaments. In fact, it is through these explanation that we can see the divinity of these two Testaments better than ever before. After that sight it is easy to accept the divinity of the many descriptions of the spiritual world.

In the Writings we are given a chance to really understand the nature and reality of the spiritual world. Once we see that matter in this world, which appears to be so solid and real, is nothing else but an appearance of energy, once we see this, it is easy to grasp that the spiritual world is a world, not of energy, but of love. And as love is far more real than energy, it is easy to see that the spiritual world is more real than the natural world.

Unfortunately, Dr. Pond lived in a time when we knew very little about the nature of substance. What Dr. Pond says about Swedenborg's statements concerning the spiritual world is therefore outdated and not relevant anymore. For this reason we will go on to Objection 14.

OBJECTION 14

According to Dr. Pond Swedenborg proposed to his followers certain tests of the validity of his claims. Here is what he says. "My next objection lies not only against Swedenborg, but also his followers. He proposed to them certain tests of the validity of his claims, drawn nor from the other world but from this world - tests which, without any supernatural illumination, they are able to apply. But they have never applied them, nor is it likely they ever will, since the result of the application could only be to demonstrate the falsehood of his pretensions(page 197)".

It is easy to deal with this objection. First, Swedenborg never proposed such a test. Swedenborg never suggested that his claims could be proven with such tests. Also, he would reject the idea that any person become his follower.

The divinity of the Writings can be seen only by examining the fulfillment of prophecy and by seeing the oneness between the Writings and previous revelations. Some external test by means of events or facts in this world is silly. Also, we do not apply any test to the Old or New Testament.

OBJECTION 15

In his last objection Dr. Pond asserts that the doctrines of the Writings terminate in materialism and pantheism. Materialism is defined in the dictionary in various ways. It is the philosophy that there is only one thing in the universe, namely matter, and that even the mind consists of matter. It is also the belief that self interest is the first law of life. Belief in spiritual things is scoffed at. Pantheism denies the personality of God, and identifies the universe with God.

Having defined both words, it is so hard to understand that Dr. Pond would say that the Writings teach materialism and pantheism. In a book, *Heaven and Hell*, Swedenborg describes the spiritual world, a world apart and above the material world. He adds to this book more descriptions all through the other works he wrote. Swedenborg's interpretation of the Bible cannot be understood without the belief that there is a spiritual world. Any cursory reader of the Writings can see that it is ludicrous to say that the doctrines of the New Church terminate in materialism.

But Dr. Pond does more than make a statement. Please watch the following reasoning: "The present is a material world; and yet it exists, according to Swedenborg, from the very substance of God. It is in fact, an emanation from God. Hence, the substance of God must be material"(page 204).

Swedenborg states that God existed before He created, so He could not be material. The Infinite was there before the finite. And the finite consists of two parts, the spiritual and the natural, or the substantial and the material. There is a real and essential difference between these two. The substantial is love and the material is energy. How much more discrete can the difference be. Above and before these two worlds was God. And God created them and sustains them as entities outside of Himself.

When our spirit separates from our body, the body dies and disintegrates. It cannot exist without the spirit. But that does not make the spirit material. The finite cannot exist without the infinite, but that does not make the infinite finite. The material world may exist from the very substance of God, but that does not make the substance of God material. This is, in our opinion, very faulty reasoning.

Right behind that reasoning Dr. Pond asks: "What, according to Swedenborg, is the human soul?(page 205)" Now remember, Dr. Pond is trying to prove that the new revelation is not from God. "It is no other than the nervous or spirituous fluid. This fluid is the spirit and soul of its body. We may take it for certain, that if this fluid and the soul agree with each other in their predicates, the fluid must be accepted as the

soul"(page 205). Dr. Pond quotes here from the Economy of the Animal Kingdom , and this work is one of Swedenborg's scientific works, which was written before he was called to the task of revelator. Dr. Pond does not know the difference between Swedenborg's fallible scientific ideas and ideas from the revelation of the second coming from the Lord.

"These decisions of Swedenborg as to the nature of the soul are accepted by his followers. or at least by some of them"(page 205). I would never want to assert that no one accepted such ideas. Obviously Dr. Pond did. But he could not be talking about the majority of New Church people. For the majority of these people never read the scientific works and do not know the term "spirituous fluid".

"If the created universe is of the very substance of God, then there is really one substance in the universe. God is everything and everything is God; and this is pantheism"(page 206). This statement is true, but it cannot be applied to the doctrines of the New Church. Dr. Pond thinks so, and here is his reasoning: "If in the beginning, God created all things, not from nothing, but out of Himself, so that everything partakes of the very substance of the Deity; who can deny that the system is pantheism?(page 206)"

Christian theologians and thinkers maintain that God created this universe out of nothing. By saying that they avoid the pitfall of pantheism, because "nothing" cannot be confused or equated with the infinite. But Swedenborg did not repeat this Christian idea. He revealed that the universe could be created only in God from God. However, and here is the answer to Dr. Pond's objection: "That which is created in God from God is not continuous from Him. For God is Esse in itself, and in created things there is not any Esse in itself"(DLW 55).

SPIRITUALISM

J. A. Hill realized that Swedenborg with scientific training and practice was first led to observe and describe phenomena in the natural world, and then he was ready to do the same for the spiritual world.

Dr. Hill calls Swedenborg's interpretations of scripture "fanciful" but never explains why. He only throws out the word, following it with the statement that "the thought is always systematic, and no one can reasonably say that Swedenborg was insane". Fanciful and systematic do not seem to agree with each other.

Dr. Hill found Swedenborg's scripture explanations less interesting than his spiritual experiences. Dr. Hill did not see or did not pursue the clear connection between spiritual experiences and scripture explanations.

These spiritual experiences Dr. Hill does not find hallucinatory, but he does consider them "perilous stuff", and "the Swedenborgians have done wisely not to base much on it"(page 43). Dr. Hill writes a lot here but fails to explain. Why is this perilous stuff, and if Swedenborgians did not base much on it, then what did they base on it? Dr. Hill's vague and intellectually playful style of criticizing the thoughts of another does not leave his reader with much to chew on, but by slick innuendos he does try to tear them down.

Dr. Hill is not interested in exegesis, but wants "proof" for Swedenborg's communication with the other world. He does not find such proof in the Stockholm fire story, but the story of the widow of the Dutch ambassador in Sweden (checked by Immanuel Kant). Dr. Hill should have delved into the exegesis of the scriptures, and after he had seen the divinity of the scripture explanations, he would have seen the necessity of the spiritual experiences. Seeing how these experiences tie in with the scripture explanations, Dr. Hill would have considered the ambassador story an unimportant and even irrelevant piece of evidence.

Dr. Hill does agree that Swedenborg probably had genuine supernormal powers, and that his works, or many of them, display much originality and are worthy of study(page 46,47).

Then he balances this positive statement by "admitting that some of his entries in his Spiritual Diary are very incoherent and suggest mental disorder"(page 47). But, Dr. Hill admits, the Diary was not written for publication. It is not considered divine revelation, but was used by Swedenborg as a notebook for recording his dreams(page 47).

While other critics accuse Swedenborg of continued madness after a fever, Dr. Hill says "we cannot attribute continued madness to him during the next 27 years of his life"(page 48).

Dr. Hill does not accuse Swedenborgians of spiritism or the occult as Dr. Martin does. "The followers of Swedenborg discourage communication with the other world"(page 53). But, according to Dr. Hill, Swedenborg did not forbid others such communication. To prove this he quotes Swedenborg, but does not give retraceable references to Swedenborg's works. Dr. Hill must have misunderstood the reference because Swedenborg definitely warned against the occult.

HERESIES EXPOSED

Introductory Remarks

The article "Swedenborgianism" by Wm Hoste occurs in a booklet with the title "Heresies Exposed". It is published by Loizeaux Brothers, a non-profit organization, devoted to the Lord's work and to the spread of His truth. To expose heresies and false teachings in the light of Divine Truth, two things are required. The exposor has to know the Divine Truth and he has to know the teachings he wants to expose. To know these teachings he must go to the source where these teachings are expounded.

For the article on Swedenborgianism he should go to the Theological Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg. But Mr. Hoste went to "Swedenborgianism Examined" by Dr. Enoch Pond, and of that 250 page book he referred to only 5 pages. Of the 11 references to Swedenborg's Writings, seven are taken from Dr. Pond's book. Dr. Pond refers to paragraphs in the Writings. Mr. Hoste does not know this and while copying from Dr. Pond he refers to pages instead of paragraphs. Mr. Hoste did not read the Writings for himself and so did not do original research.

PAGE 181 EXAMINED

New Dispensation and Last Judgment

"What simplifies our examination of Swedenborgianism is its claim to be a new dispensation, as distinct from Christianity as that was from Judaism. The old church is affirmed to have come to its end in 1757 when the last judgment took place".

Factually Mr. Hoste has the doctrinals right. The fact that Mr. Hoste does not understand why Swedenborg was not judged himself makes it clear to any student of the Writings that Mr. Hoste never delved into the facts concerning the Last Judgment which Swedenborg gives extensively.

To him the idea of the Last Judgment was so preposterous that the very statement proves that Swedenborg's claim is false. In other words, he is right therefore Swedenborg is false. The last judgment took place only on people of the Christian Church in the other world. This fact Mr. Hoste missed. This is clear when he exclaims that he cannot understand why Swedenborg himself was not judged. But Swedenborg was in this world. All he did was observe what happened in the other world.

Mr. Hoste expected the Last Judgment to occur on this earth. In the light of his ignorance of the theology Mr. Hoste is judging, it is amazing to read that in his opinion "all this is opposed to Scripture and facts"(page 181).

Here is how Mr. Hoste argues that the last judgment did not take place. In Matthew the Lord said to Peter: "You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it"(16:18).

The gates of hell will not prevail against His church. When we look at the various denominations in the Christian Church we cannot say with any certainty that they are all from the Lord. This means that some of them may not be from Him. So that it is quite possible that some denominations or even all denominations of the Christian Church are not from the Lord. The gates of hell could and will prevail against such churches. If these churches do not bring the Lord's truth, they will die. But then the Lord will raise a New Church where the truth of the Lord is proclaimed again. Thus a new dispensation is not an invention without foundation, but the Lord's idea.

PAGE 182 EXAMINED

No Church Testimony

"Is it not too much to ask us to believe that there has been no true Church testimony on the earth since 1757, except that of a little handful of self-commended Swedenborgians?", Mr. Hoste asks his reader.

Of course, there has been true church testimony since 1757. Swedenborg never said this or implied it. The Lord works continually with many people all through the ages. He enlightens people all the time. Also, just because a person knows the Writings does not mean that he sees the truth better and more accurately. Mr. Hoste's reasoning here is without much meaning or logic.

The testimony of a church is basically wrong if it teaches wrong ideas about God and about the way to heaven. These ideas are basic to any religion. The Christian Church teaches that we cannot understand the concept of God. Going to heaven in some Christian Churches is predetermined by God (predestination) but in all churches it is a matter of accepting what God did for us 2000 years ago. Once you see that these two ideas are not correct, then it is easy to see that from the pulpits there has been no true church testimony since 1757, yea even before that date.

Churches can exist for centuries and teach incorrect ideas. The study of history exposes this phenomena. Look at the people close to you and see if they are continually

trying to improve their viewpoints. Look around you and see if people can quickly change their opinions and see the truth about a situation.

"Except that of a little handful of self-commended Swedenborgians." If you study the history of man, if you study the development of science and of art, you will see that it often happens that a new truth at first is seen by one person or by a small group of people. Only much later a much larger group of people will acknowledge the truth. And there will always remain a small group of people who never see the new idea. The smallness of the New Church does not disprove the validity of the new revelation, nor does the membership of millions in the Christian Church prove the truths of its doctrines. If this was true we would not dare compare the number of Christians with the number of non-Christians.

Test of new dispensation

"If however, a new dispensation did begin in 1757, might we not expect it to be marked by an increase of spirituality, holiness of conduct, submission to God's Word and separation from the world?", Mr. Hoste exclaims.

The reasoning here is that if the Lord gives new truth, and people receive it, but do not apply it to their life, so that there is increase of spirituality, then the Lord has not given new truth. This simply is not logical because Christianity has existed for 2000 years, and many people today feel that Christianity has not had much influence on the spirituality of our civilization.

Actually there has been an increase of murders, thefts, rapes, and abuse of children. Even Mr. Hoste agrees with this, because when he asks this question, his answer is that none of the marks of improved spirituality are apparent. After 2000 years, Christianity is still a minority among all the religions on the earth.

Mr. Hoste's concept of heaven

"Swedenborg's heaven reminds one of the heaven of the Spiritists - a replica of earth with spiritual cigars, whiskey, armchairs, debating societies, lending libraries and - the antipodes of the heaven of the Apocalypse, neither holy nor happy, but earthy, sensual, devilish, for even the devils and the lost make raids into it. Swedenborg once saw an execrable rabble in heaven."

Now it is true that there are libraries in heaven, and that people debate with each other. What does Mr. Hoste expect? Does he expect that people in the spiritual world will not communicate with each other? Does he think that they will not learn more by reading books? But where he got the idea of cigars and whiskey?

The picture of heaven that is given in the Writings is not only wonderful and attractive, but also most reasonable and not in disagreement with the Old and New Testaments. Actually, these two revelations do not contain much information about heaven and hell. Most of that information is given in the next revelation which are the Theological Writings of Swedenborg.

The picture of hell that is given in the Writings is also full of common sense, and in agreement with the concept of a loving and nonjudgmental God. The same is true of the relationship between heaven and hell. Instead of listening to the bombastic and ignorant remarks of Mr. Hoste, let me suggest you opt for some direct contact with the Writings, so you can make your own decision!

Conjugal Love

The last thing Mr. Hoste discusses on page 182 is conjugal or marriage love. Here is what he says: "The predominant subject in the teacher's mind was conjugal love which was indeed in his view heavenly love in its highest form, and it is according to him a great subject of interest and conversation among the angels. In spite of our Lord's denial, they do marry and are given in marriage in heaven. There are passages in Swedenborg's Writings so grossly indelicate that they ought never to have been translated.

Swedenborg gives 55 cases in which a married man may judge himself free to be unfaithful to his marriage vows, and in certain cases he permits and even recommends flagrant immorality."

From this passage the superficial reader may conclude that Swedenborg loves to talk about sex. Mr. Hoste obviously did not know that conjugal love really comes from the Lord. In the Lord truth and good are united, but in a human being they are separated to be conjoined in a life of religion, in a life of spiritual rebirth. Heaven is a state in which truth and good are conjoined continually, and so conjugal love is everywhere in heaven, and is heaven.

When religious people, who love the Lord with all their heart, discuss religion, they discuss marriage, and when they discuss marriage, they discuss religion. If a man loves his wife and the wife loves her husband, they think of their love and then they immediately think of their love to eternity. Love and eternity are intimately connected. Love and heaven are also intimately connected. And it is a lovely idea that angels in the heavens are very interested in such marriage love, and love to discuss its principles and attributes. There is nothing wrong with this, and everything is right about such discussion.

Indelicate Passages

"There are passages in the Writings so grossly indelicate, Dr. Pond assures us, that they should never have been translated", Mr. Hoste writes. This sounds bad and could cause a sensitive person to turn away from the Writings. Did you notice Mr. Hoste did not mention any such passage? He did not know any because he took it all on faith from Dr. Enoch Pond. Also, he does not tell you that there are many indelicate passages in the Bible. There are passages in the Bible that are never read in church, and are never taught to children. And still, we accept the Bible as the Word of God. So let us look at the Writings to see what is objectionable. "Indelicate remarks" in the Writings occur, because the Lord addresses in this revelation the very lowest forms of human existence. His purpose is to lift man from such low existence.

The next question is: Did the Lord deny that there is marriage in heaven? Let me quote here the pertinent section of my book "Sexuality and the Word of God".

Marriage in heaven

In Luke 20 verses 34 and 35 we read the following: "And Jesus answered and said to him, The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage. But those who are counted worthy to attain that age, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage".

Some people read this passage and conclude that people after death are not married. However, this is not what this passage says. This passage does not say that after death men cease to be men and women cease to be women. Nor does it say that in heaven people are not in the state of marriage. All it says is that after death people do not marry or are given in marriage. This is done on earth.

Masculinity and femininity are predicated of both the mind and the body. As it is predicated of the mind, it lasts beyond death. The act of marrying and of being given in marriage applies to both man and woman. A heavenly marriage between a man and a woman does not exist unless each partner has been regenerated, spiritually reborn. And this each partner does by marrying and by being given in marriage. By this is meant his actively seeking the Lord and loving Him, and his being sought by the Lord and being conjoined to Him. This process of regeneration takes place "in this age", in the period of life before death, and not after death.

This principle is a very hopeful principle. If two people are married on earth, a number of things can happen.

First, they may both go to heaven, and they stay together as a couple there.

Second, they may both go to heaven, but they do not stay together, but find another partner.

Third, one partner goes to heaven, but the other does not. The partner in heaven finds another partner there. The partner in hell despises marriage and has sexual relationships outside of marriage.

Fourth, neither of them go to heaven and they are not married, but they each have sexual relationships outside of marriage.

Fifth, a person never marries on this earth but does regenerate. When he or she comes into heaven, a partner is found, and they live together to eternity.

PAGE 183 EXAMINED

Subject to the Word of God

In the first half of the page we find a discussion of how the Writings treat the Word of God. First Mr. Hoste asks: "Is Swedenborgianism subject to the Word of God"?

The Writings teach that a man has to read the Word of God, learn what is true, then from that truth see what is evil in him, then he has to shun that evil, as of himself, but acknowledging that he cannot do this by himself but only with the Lord's help. This is how Swedenborgians are subject to the Word of God.

Correspondences

Then Mr. Hoste speaks about "the fanciful system of correspondences". The relationship between the literal sense and the internal sense is given not just by correspondences, but also by representatives and significatives. This not the time and place to define representatives and significatives. Suffice it to say that representatives are totally different from correspondences, and without seeing this Mr. Hoste just cannot make any judgment in this area of theology.

Then he copies Dr. Pond's reference to Mr. Charles Augustus Tulk, who wrote in his book "Spiritual Christianity" that there has not been a single Swedenborgian writer who has correctly understood the doctrine of correspondences. No student of New Church history will deny that Mr. Tulk had studied the Writings. But few will agree with his theological opinions. Few will agree he read the Writings correctly. Is not it foolish to say that there has not been a "single" Swedenborgian writer who has correctly understood the doctrine of correspondences. There are many books in New

Church collateral literature that deal with the doctrine of correspondences and its application. Since the Writings were published, New Church men have been listening to sermons that exposed the spiritual sense of the Word by understanding and applying the doctrine of correspondences.

Examples of Correspondences

Then Mr. Hoste gives the internal sense of the story of the killing of 42 children by bears in 2 Kings 2:24. He does that in two lines and then says: "I hope my readers are edified. To some such interpretations must appear as the ravings of a disordered mind. And why all this talk about the literal Word when Swedenborg rejected many books in the Old and New Testaments, only because these books could not be made to work out on the 'correspondence system'. But alas, a disordered heart beats behind a disordered mind".

No one, except Mr. Hoste, has seen in the Writings a disordered mind and heart. No one else doubts the sanity of Swedenborg. This being the case, we begin to wonder about Mr. Hoste and his understanding of the teachings of the Writings. If the reader would read one of the 30 volumes of the Theological Writings of Swedenborg, he will wonder what Mr. Hoste is talking about.

Doctrine of Grace

"Swedenborg's antipathy to the doctrine of grace amounted almost to monomania". In other words, his antipathy was directed nearly always to one thing, namely the doctrine of grace. This of course is not so. Swedenborg was against the doctrine of grace and equally against the doctrine of a tripersonal God. The two go together. Once you believe in a tripersonal God you can believe in the atonement doctrine. If you believe in the atonement doctrine then you have to believe in a trinity of persons in the Godhead.

In the atonement doctrine there is God the Father who is angry about the sins of men, and who wants to punish sinful men. But then there is also God the Son who feels sorry for the people about to be punished. And so the Son is born on earth, lives and teaches there, and finally He is crucified. On the cross He takes upon Himself all the sins of men, and is punished for those sins. He sheds His blood for them. Now, any men, who accept this sacrifice and accept God the Son as the Lord of their life, will be forgiven by the Father, will not be punished and will be able to enter heaven.

This doctrine of atonement requires that God the Father is so separate from the Son that He can have different thoughts and affections from the Son, and the Son from the

Father. The doctrine of atonement requires a tritheistic concept of God. Tritheism is the doctrine that three persons of the trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) are three distinct Gods, each an independent center of self-consciousness and self determination.

Tritheism

Mr. Hoste says that Swedenborg accuses his opponents of being tritheists as defined in the previous paragraph. And he is right in this, and Swedenborg is right in the accusation. A doctrinal position statement from the Gospel Publishing Association in Birmingham, Alabama says. "There is one God existing eternally in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ died upon the cross as a substitutionary sacrifice, and all who believe in Him are justified on the ground of His shed blood. The Holy Spirit is a divine person, sent to indwell, guide, teach, empower the believer, and convince the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. Man was originally created in the image and likeness of God; he fell through disobedience, incurring thereby both physical and spiritual death. All men are born with a sinful nature, are separated from the life of God, and can be saved only through the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ"(Page 14).

This Doctrinal Position statement very clearly says that they believe in three persons in the Godhead. I have tried long and hard to understand how three persons can still be one person, but never succeeded. I have never found anyone else who understands. Even a catholic bishop did not understand it and said it was a mystery which we cannot understand.

Now Mr. Hoste maintains that the New Church propagates the Unitarian doctrine, but factually he is wrong. The Encyclopedia of American Religions, Vol 1, page 145 says:"Unitarianism means the return to the idea of a unitary God instead of a trinitarian God, and involves the denial of the divinity of Jesus". In the New Church we do believe in one God, but in that one God there is a trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These three are not separate persons but they are parts of one and the same God. At the same time though, New Church men acknowledge the divinity of Jesus. It was Jehovah, the creator, the Father who bowed the heavens and came down to earth, conceived in Mary the baby Jesus, so that from the beginning of his conception Jesus had a divine and not a human soul. This conception therefore did not require human assistance by Joseph. Mary became pregnant but she did not know a man.

"The Lord Jesus is not honored by such daring perversions of the truth but profoundly dishonored", Mr. Hoste claims. It is just the reverse. In the New Church

the Lord Jesus is profoundly honored, as the one God of heaven and earth, the Creator of the world, and the Redeemer and Savior of mankind. In Christianity He is only a part of the Godhead, He has to share the throne with the Father. Christians pray to the Father, not to the Lord Jesus, but then they add for Jesus' sake or in Jesus' name.

Mr. Hoste further says:"In reality His person is denied (1) in his essential deity, for He could have no existence as the eternal son without the Father;(2) in His true Humanity, for the divinity took the place of the human spirit; and (3) in His intrinsic holiness and sinlessness, by the blasphemous attribution to Him of great moral impurities and imperfections. We are therefore called upon to work in ourselves, in our human nature, the same kind of work which He wrought in His".

Most people in the Christian Church turn away from this kind of reasoning because they cannot follow it or connect with it. Admittedly, the Christian concept of the trinity is inconsistent with the Scriptures, and cannot really be understood. When it is questioned, its defenders will finally resort to saying that it is a mystery.

The New Church fully accepts the essential deity of Christ. He has this divinity from the Father and does not exist without the Father. He said that no one can come to the Father but through Him, and if you have seen Me you have seen the Father.

As the soul of Jesus Christ was divine, the body He had from Mary, and the mind which He had from Mary and from sense perceptions in this world. Therefore He had a human which was similar to the human of human beings. From the Divine soul the Lord had holiness and sinlessness. In other words, He was divine and did not commit any evil. But because He had His human He was exposed to temptations by the hells. He was tempted to do evil deeds, thereby to committing sin. But He never committed sin. Because of His inward divinity, the victory over evil was always assured, even before the temptation occurred. Mr. Hoste says that the Writings attribute to the Lord great moral impurities and imperfections but this is not so.

It is true that there is a parallel between the Lord's glorification and man's regeneration. But the parallel is very imperfect. Our regeneration is only an image and likeness of the glorification. Our victory over evil is not at all certain, unless we ask the Lord to do our battles in us.

PAGE 184 EXAMINED

David, Paul, Luther and Calvin

It is correct that the Writings say that people like David and Paul are not in heaven. This fact does not mean that Swedenborg had a dislike for these people. It probably came to him as a big surprise too. And yet, we should not be so surprised that a religious leader in this world turns out to be an evil person. Throughout the centuries the church has witnessed the fall of religious leaders. It teaches us not to keep our eyes on men but on the Lord alone. But Mr. Hoste is not correct when he says that the Writings consign Luther and Calvin to hell.

Under the heading "Separation Necessary" Mr. Hoste compares the Christian ethic with the New Church ethic. He asks himself if the New Church ethic teaches a higher standard of devotion and separation from the world. The answer is that the New Church teaches a higher standard, because in the New Church people have to shun evils as sins against God, while in the Christian Church people only need to accept Christ's work on the cross.

Page 184 and 185 are copied from Pond's Objections 7 and 11 so we refer the reader to the review of these objections.

PAGE 185 EXAMINED

Unworthy of Credence

Mr. Hoste writes:"To accept this evil system, we are asked completely to revise our doctrinal and ethical standards, and to do so on the sole ground of Swedenborg's visions, backed up by no miracles or signs, and by no testimony but his own. They do not bear a moment's investigation from the astronomical or scientific standpoint, being full of absurd blunders and misstatements of the science of the day"(Page 185).

Now it is true that the Lord in His Second Coming brings us ideas that will cause us to revise many of our previous ideas. But we are not asked to do this on the sole ground of Swedenborg's visions.

First of all these visions are from the Lord, and second, the new revelation is filled with scripture quotations. These quotations are the testimony on the basis of which we are asked to believe the Writings.

But the Lord does not try to persuade anyone. He does not produce miracles or signs that would take away our freedom and force us to believe. Here is where the new

revelation is different from the former ones. "No miracles are done this day for they compel man to believe and take away his freedom"(AC 5308). Faith that is caused by miracles does not stay with a man. Also, it would harm people who can receive faith from the Word in freedom(See AC 10751e).

"A miracle induces faith by an external way and not by an internal way, thus from the world and not from heaven. The Lord does not enter by any other way than along the internal way, which is by the Word, doctrine and preachings therefrom"(DP 131). The Writings give definite reasons why the Lord used miracles while working with the Jews. But "the New Church is not being established by any miracles.

In place of them there has been revealed the spiritual sense of the Word, and the spiritual world has been disclosed, and the nature of heaven and hell has been manifested and that man lives as a man after death, which are more excellent than all miracles"(Coro L&LI).

The reason why New Church people believe in the descriptions of the spiritual world in the Writings is that these descriptions are consistent with the explanations of so many scripture passages. Also, today there are thousands of people with near death experiences who have testified to observations that are very similar to the descriptions we find in the Writings.

Why the New Church gains adherents and is persistent

"The question may be asked how such an unchristian system can ever have gained adherence or have persisted to the present day. I think the answer is plain. The system responds in a very marked way to three dominant factors in the natural heart of man: his love of the marvelous, his dislike for the doctrine of grace, and his craving for pleasure; especially when these are found combined in a religion of high pretensions under the imposing title of The New Jerusalem descending out of heaven from God".

When Mr. Hoste calls the New Church an "unchristian" system, he means an "unorthodox" system. In that context there are many such systems that have gained adherence and have persisted to the present day. In fact, 80% of the Christian Church could qualify as a "non-orthodox, unchristian" system.

But could it be that this "unchristian" system is, in actuality, from God, and would that fact perhaps explain its persistence?

Having been a member of the New Church for more than 50 years now, I know that people in the New Church are not there because of the "love of the marvelous". That

love does not find much satisfaction in a small church. Many New Church men do not find it easy to understand the Writings. Most New Church men have never heard of the doctrine of grace, so they cannot dislike it. Their craving for pleasure is not satisfied in their life of religion. If Mr. Hoste knew the many discussions about the name "New Jerusalem" that occur in the New Church, he would not talk about the "imposing title of the New Jerusalem descending out of heaven from God".

Final Conclusion

Our final conclusion of our review of Mr. Hoste' chapter on Swedenborg has to be that this chapter is filled with acid sarcastic remarks, contains many factual inaccuracies, and exhibits a good many illogical and irrational reasonings.

On page 185 Mr. Hoste states that he does not think it is right for Swedenborg to invent words and then to ask his critics to differentiate the new word from other similar words. But after all, in various sciences words are invented all the time. New concepts require new words. Obviously a new revelation is going to introduce new concepts and new words.

CHAOS OF THE CULTS

This book was written by Rev. Jan Karel van Baalen. The first factual error Mr. van Baalen makes when he says that Swedenborg was called to revive a dying Church (page 178). The Lord did not call Swedenborg to revive the Christian Church or to start the New Christian Church, but only to be an instrument of revelation. Most writers on Cults make this mistake and call Swedenborg the founder and leader of the cult. Of course, this fits in better with their generalized description of a cult, but it is not factual.

Then Mr. van Baalen claims that Swedenborg drifted into rewriting the Scriptures to make them tally with his pantheistic and spiritistic intuitions (page 178). First of all Swedenborg did not rewrite the Scriptures. All he did was to canonize the books of the Bible, resulting in a canon different from the Jewish, Protestant and Catholic canons. And what is wrong with that? If the Pope can do it, and if Protestants can do it (without any rational reason), then why could not Swedenborg do it, especially when he has excellent and better reasons for his canon.

A pantheist is a person who identifies God with the universe and denies the personality of God. Swedenborg was not a pantheist which was shown in the review of Observation 15 of Dr. Pond's book.

The term spiritistic is defined as the doctrine or practice of spiritualism. Spiritualism is defined as the doctrine or belief that the spirits of the dead, surviving after the mortal life, can and do communicate with the living, especially through a medium particularly susceptible to their influence.

A spiritist is then a person who either goes to a medium for information from the other world or who is the medium that tries to establish and maintain contact with the other world. A spiritist always takes the initiative. Swedenborg never worked with a medium nor did he act as a medium. While he was able to see into the spiritual world, he never took the initiative, and so he never was a spiritist.

Swedenborg was a revelator, chosen and called by God to reveal His Word. He was like John on the Isle of Patmos, who was in the spirit on the Lord's day and was allowed to see into the other world, and no one calls John a spiritist. Swedenborg did not like nor initiate his introduction into the spiritual world, but underwent it with great resistance and scientific suspicion. To the very end of his life on this earth Swedenborg warned against spiritism, and so you will not find any spiritistic practices in the Church of the New Jerusalem.

All this is well documented. Yet there are orthodox Christians like Mr. van Baalen who persist in maintaining that Swedenborg was a spiritist. The reason is obvious. As long as this falsity is believed, a Christian does not need to take the claim of the Second Coming seriously. A revelator is not a spiritist, and a spiritist cannot be a revelator.

Mr. van Baalen acknowledges that Swedenborg has a great intellect and a deep religious sense. Mr. van Baalen recognizes Swedenborg's intellectual superiority, vast scholarship and unquestionable integrity. He has nothing in common with the "untrained and unscrupulous founders of today's weird American religious cults"(page 178).

In Revelation 22:18 we read this statement: "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book". "These things" are the prophecies of the Book of Revelation, which book was put at the end of the Bible. A new revelation is tantamount to adding to the Bible, and so Swedenborg's claim of a new revelation is wrong.

Mr. van Baalen's argument sounds very logical and is accepted by many Christian laymen and ministers. But note, it says that if any MAN shall add. It does not say that GOD cannot add to His own revelation. As is well known, the Writings are

proclaimed to be a revelation from God, and so the statement from Revelation 22:18 does not apply to these Writings.

But there is more to this question. In Deuteronomy 4:2 the same kind of statement occurs. "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it". That would then mean that any book written after Deuteronomy could not be divine revelation.

Each person individually has to come to accept the divinity of the Bible. Each one of us has to decide for himself which books in the Bible are from the Lord. The Jews accept much less than the Christians, and the Protestants accept less than the Catholics. Do the Protestants accuse the Catholics of "adding" to their Bible? Do the Jews accuse the Christians of adding to divine revelation?

On page 179 Mr. van Baalen explains what Swedenborg teaches about the natural, spiritual and celestial sense of the Word. Though he judges this to be fanciful speculation, he never got this teaching straight. It is embarrassing to read how Mr. van Baalen gets it wrong twice in two succeeding paragraphs.

In the first paragraph on page 179 he states that scripture has "a threefold sense, one for this life (the natural sense), one for the next life (the spiritual sense) and one for the life of angels (the celestial sense)".

Two paragraphs further he reports that the inspiration of the Bible is on three levels : for the natural man (man seeking after God);for the spiritual man (men who, like Swedenborg, can live in two worlds at once, or alternatively) and for the celestial spirits (the angels in heaven). Both times Mr. van Baalen reports on the internal sense of the Bible it is a misunderstanding.

In the next paragraph Mr. van Baalen concludes that Swedenborgianism is a type of gnosticism. Mr. van Baalen leaves it to the reader to define gnosticism and then to determine what a type of gnosticism it is. A gnostic places "gnosis" (knowledge) above "pistis" (faith). In this definition it is clear what knowledge is, but it is unclear what faith is.

In the theology of the New Church faith in man is the conglomeration of truths he has acquired from the Word. In the Christian Church faith is trust in God and in His promises as made through Christ by which man is justified and saved.

In the New Church the doctrine of justification by faith alone is clearly rejected. But that does not make the New Church a type of gnosticism, for in gnosticism this faith is

still below knowledge. In the New Church "faith" is above "knowledges". Faith first of all consists of all the truths that a person has received from the Lord's Word. This faith is not just a collection of knowledges, but truths that have been found in the Lord's Word after repentance.

Final conclusion: The New Church is not a type of gnosticism.

Literal Sense versus Spiritual Sense

According to Mr. van Baalen the natural sense (he means the literal sense) is disregarded for the sake of the spiritual sense. He refers to the first 11 chapters of Genesis. But even in these chapters the natural sense is not disregarded. The natural sense in those chapters is of a different nature than the natural sense in other portions of the Bible. In some portions the natural sense is historic in nature, in others it is poetic, in still others it describes observations in the spiritual world.

In the first 11 chapters of Genesis the natural sense is neither historic nor scientific but it is symbolic or correspondential. It is language that was written long before Moses was born, in a church that was different and spoke a different language.

Why there is a Word in heaven

"Angels are in need of Scripture, not for the same reasons sinners on earth are, but because they delight in the search of Truth which is contained in the celestial sense of the words", Mr. van Baalen writes. This statement is incorrect and vague as to meaning and purpose. Angels communicate with the internal sense of the Word, but that internal sense which is on their level of heaven. Natural angels communicate with the natural sense, spiritual angels with the spiritual sense, and celestial angels with the celestial sense. All three senses are the Divine Word, equally divine as the Divine Word on earth.

"Angels need the Word for a different reason than sinners on earth, BECAUSE they delight in the search of truth". Do you understand the "because"? This is not so! People on earth need the Word to learn the truth, and by applying this truth to their life they regenerate, they walk towards heaven. The angels in heaven need the Word for the same reason, for we do not stay in heaven unless we regenerate every moment of our life.

No revelation from angels, spirits or men

"How did Swedenborg himself know of the spiritual and celestial meanings of Scripture? Because he lived in continuous rapport with spirits and angels who revealed to him many things". This is what Mr. van Baalen thinks. Now let me quote from Swedenborg's Spiritual Diary. This is the daily Diary he kept while he was led to observe things in the spiritual world. "When spirits begin to speak with man, he must beware lest he believe them in anything; for they say almost anything. Things are fabricated by them and they lie, for if they were permitted to relate what heaven is, and how things are in the heavens, they would tell so many lies, and indeed with solemn affirmation, that man would be astonished. Wherefore, when spirits were speaking, I was not permitted to have faith in the things they related"(SD 1622).

Swedenborg not a rationalist

"His rationalism which made him demand that Scripture should be in harmony with the human reason, led him astray". Swedenborg never made such a demand. He allowed himself to be taught by the Word, and he advised others to be taught by the Word. And we find that the Word teaches man to cultivate a rational, common sense thinking mind, so he will perceive what is true and what is false.

Van Baalen and Luther

"He was convinced that he, Swedenborg himself, had succeeded after many efforts, to bring the spirit of Martin Luther to peace at last by causing that spirit to repent of Luther's nefarious doctrine of justification by faith"(Page 181)

In the True Christian Religion nr.796 we read the following: "After Luther had been convinced that he had not taken the principal dogma of justification by faith alone from the Word but from his own intelligence, he suffered himself to be instructed concerning the Lord, charity, true faith, free-will and redemption; AND THIS SOLELY FROM THE WORD". Obviously then Swedenborg was not the one who taught him but the Lord.

The Problem of Sin

"Here we deal with two errors: Sin to Swedenborg was exclusively something that has to be wiped out ethically; and man, although a sinner, can repent at any time he feels like doing so"(p181)

First, Swedenborg makes a distinction between evil and sin. Evil is any love or deed that is against the Lord and against divine order.

This evil separates man from the Lord. Man commits a sin if he does an evil and knows it to be an evil. A sin cannot be undone. It is forever in his past. But before he sins, he can recognize the evil because the Lord teaches him in His Word, and then, if man shuns the evil, he asks the Lord for help, and the Lord will give him the power to resist. It is true that man can repent of his evils any time he wants to do this. Man has this freedom, and thank God he does.

"Swedenborg clung to the doctrines he had learned in his youth to such an extent as not to abandon such practices as baptism and the Lord's supper"(p 181). But Swedenborg never showed any sign that he wanted to stick to youthful attitudes. In fact, he revealed new ideas about the sacraments.

THE KINGDOM OF THE CULTS

Three Main Subjects

In his review of Swedenborg and the New Church Dr. Martin touches on three main subjects. First, Swedenborg the man and the New Church both receive an excellent review. Second, as an orthodox Christian Dr. Martin of course thoroughly disagrees with the theology of the New Church. This is quite acceptable because the New Church thoroughly disagrees with orthodox Christianity. The third subject deals with Swedenborg presence in the spiritual world.

How to look at Swedenborg

A great deal has been written about the person of Swedenborg. None of this helps us understand his Theological Writings. None of this helps us decide if these Writings are a divine revelation, as he claims they are.

Some of the prophets in the Old and New Testament are considered strange, to say the least. A number of Old Testament figures were polygamists. King David was a adulterer and premeditated murderer. John the Baptist was a strange recluse. The apostle Paul could be mentioned for his degrading attitude towards women and marriage.

Some artists are accused of various unusual life styles. And yet we recognize they created beautiful works of art. We may be disturbed by the perceived connection between a lifestyle and a piece of art. But we cannot deny the work of art. Apparently there is no connection between the two, and we should not examine it. God seems to use people, and do a good work with a fallible and even evil instrument.

One of the doctrines of the Writings is that we should look from the use to the person, and never from the person to the use. For example, if we look at a priest, and we first look at his personality, and from there to his use and work, then we will concentrate on his personal traits and possibly miss the good things of his work. But if we first look at his use and work, and from there to his personality, then we will see his good work and excuse his personality traits.

This doctrine would also apply to how we regard Swedenborg. It does not matter what we think about him. May be he was a revelator, or may be he was just a theologian. In either case, we should look at his person only after we have looked at his works. We should not judge his works solely on what we think of his person.

It does not help at all to know anything about Swedenborg's life. Such knowledge does not help us to understand the message of the Writings any better. In fact, it could obstruct enlightenment. We should try to understand the Lord and that's all we need to concentrate on. Knowing how Swedenborg behaved in the various periods of his life, how he was prepared for his job as revelator, and how he changed his life's goals from his early years to his older years, does not help us to understand the Lord's revelation any better.

Some New Church scholars need to delve into Swedenborg's life to defend against attacks on the New Church. Various critics of the Writings have delved into Swedenborg's life, have attacked it, and have tried to show that his personal life gives us reason to disbelieve his claims that the Lord has made His second coming, and that the Writings are a revelation from God. But such attacks do not address the all important question: "Did the Lord make His Second Coming, and do we have a new and most enlightening revelation"?

And so in this book we will have to look at his life and answer his critics. We need to look at various attacks, objectively evaluate them, and respond to them.

There have been many revelators and yet collectively we know very little about them. That has never bothered believing Christians. Many people love the Psalms of David and sense they contain Divine truth everywhere. And yet, David was both an adulterer and a premeditated murderer. But the knowledge of that fact still does not cause us to reject the Psalms, and rightly so.

After all, if the Lord chooses a man to be His revelator, He must consider him to be a good and capable instrument, and the Lord must have considered the detrimental details of his private life. As the Lord can look so much deeper into a man's life and heart, who are we to try to dissect the little that we know, and make a sensible

judgment? Our task is not to view the revelator, but the revelation. Our task is to decide if we see the Lord there and if we can accept that revelation as coming from the Lord with all the authority of the infinite God.

The critics should only write about that revelation. That really is their main task. But very few critics of Swedenborg have taken it that way. Most of them write about Swedenborg's personal life. And they try to use that life to discredit the divinity of the revelation. The unfortunate fact is that we know so much more about Swedenborg than any other revelator, and so an attack can have a much broader front.

While we believe that the main focus should be on the divinity of the revelation, we must answer the attacks that are leveled against his person. Once this answer has been given, most people are going to see that the critics have been unfair and vicious. Most people are going to distrust even the critical remarks that they made about the revelation.

Attacks and Insinuations

Swedenborg was exposed to many attacks. Many insinuations about his behavior were published. Let me answer negative statements made by one cult writer with statements that were made by other cult writers. For example, Mr. Hoste insinuated that Swedenborg's scientific speculations overtaxed his brain. But Dr. Walter Martin, the guru of the cult writers of this century, said that Swedenborg was one of the most gifted and respected intellectuals of any age.

Mr. Hoste makes a statement that is even worse. In the midst of his speculations on the human soul, Swedenborg at the end of 1744 is stricken down with fever and delirium. This illness, "it is charitable to suppose, affected his mind for the rest of his life". But Dr. Hill felt that Swedenborg's spiritual experiences were not hallucinatory, and that we cannot attribute continued madness to Swedenborg during the next 27 years of his life.

Mr. X accused Swedenborg of being the Antichrist. But here is what orthodox Rev. van Baalen says:"Swedenborg has a great intellect and deep religious sense, intellectual superiority, vast scholarship and unquestionable integrity". Neither he nor any of the other cult writers claim that Swedenborg is the Antichrist.

Around Swedenborg's introduction to the use of revelator and around his introduction into the spiritual world we find many accusations. But Dr. Martin says "Swedenborg was the associate of kings, princes, scholars, mathematicians, engineers, astronomers and theologians. Few men ever attained the degree of acceptance and prominence which Swedenborg enjoyed during his long life, a recognition which

extended to multiple fields of interest, and was a lasting tribute to his intellectual breadth and brilliance".

Dr. Martin felt that he could not ignore the person of Emanuel Swedenborg; in fact, as the years pass, through the church which he inspired and the reputation which he earned, he is becoming a growing influence to be reckoned with and carefully examined in the light of historic Christianity.

Dr. Hill did not doubt that Swedenborg had genuine supernatural powers. His writings display much originality and worth of study. And finally, Dr Ellwood says that Swedenborg is the most pivotal and influential figure from the 18th century.

When we view the very complimentary statements about the abilities and state of mind of Swedenborg, made by certain cult writers, we can safely conclude that any derogatory statements made by other cult writers can be disregarded.

Introduction into the spiritual world

Swedenborg was introduced into the spiritual world and spent many conscious hours over a period of many years in that environment. Most people never have such experiences, and so it is obvious that most of us are not going to recognize these experiences.

For example, before he began to function as a revelator, Swedenborg was called to this use by the Lord. In fact, the Lord appeared to him. With his training as a factual scientist, Swedenborg described some of these experiences in detail. Certain cult writers then seize upon these descriptions, aiming to discredit Swedenborg as a revelator.

First of all, none of the cult writers have psychiatric training and so they are not really qualified to evaluate Swedenborg's descriptions. They are not able to distinguish normal revelatory experiences from hallucinatory ones. In the past 35 years I have known five New Church psychiatrists and none of them have ever indicated to me that Swedenborg's experiences were strange or abnormal. Nor have I ever come across psychiatrist outside the New Church who felt that Swedenborg's mind was derailed in any way.

Most of us are not trained psychiatrists, so even if we had learned psychiatric dissertations in this book, defending the sanity of Swedenborg, most of us will probably get lost in

them. One New Church psychiatrist, Dr. Wilson van Dusen, did write on Swedenborg's experiences. His books are in most public libraries in case you are interested.

What is so strange and inconsistent is the fact that orthodox writers, who ascribe insanity to Swedenborg, do not compare his behavior with the behavior of biblical revelators and persons described in the Old and New Testaments. It seems that these orthodox writers apply standards to Swedenborg's behavior which they do not apply to Biblical writers and persons when their interpretation of the Bible tells them that there cannot be a new revelation after the Bible.

Here we return to our original premise. We should examine the new revelation to search for the Lord there, and decide after such examination if the revelation is from God or not.

Approach to New Church Theology

Dr. Martin's approach to the theology of the New Church seems very strange. As a Baptist minister he finds Swedenborg's claim of the second coming less interesting than the spiritual experiences the Lord gave Swedenborg while preparing him for the revelation of the second coming.

He examines extensively very unimportant spiritual experiences, but says hardly anything about Swedenborg's observation of the Last Judgment in the spiritual world. Dr. Martin fails to note the connection between this Last Judgment and the Book of Revelation and the Second Coming. Instead, he spends half a page on Swedenborg's vision of a fire in Stockholm, which vision has nothing to do with the theology of the New Church, and as a vision could have been had by many others. Dr. Martin also fails to point out that this vision was not sought by Swedenborg, like so many other people seek communication with the spiritual world.

To discredit the theology of the New Church Dr. Martin quotes Leviticus 19:31 and 20:6: "Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them: I am the Lord your God. And the soul that turneth after such as have familiar spirits, and after wizards, to go a whoring after them, I will even set my face against that soul, and will cut him off from among his people".

These two passages warn against trying to force contact with the spiritual world, trying to force visions. Just because a person has a vision, does not mean he is going against the Leviticus command. The Apostle Paul had a vision on the road to Damascus. John had a vision on the isle of Patmos. Lot saw angels, Gideon saw angels

near a winepress, the disciples saw the Lord entering a house through the walls. Prophets like Isaiah, Daniel and Jeremiah had visions of all kinds.

When Swedenborg sees into the spiritual world, Dr. Martin feels that this fact "would be sufficient to make any thoughtful Christian suspicious of his theological system, even before examining it thoroughly"(Page 246).

If Dr. Martin was consistent, he would distrust the apostle Paul when he claims that he saw and spoke with Jesus Christ. He should also stop reading the Book of Revelation as soon as he reads that John was in the spirit on the Lord's day and had a spiritual vision (see Rev.1:10).

Swedenborg's observations in the spiritual world were required so he could reveal that the Last Judgment and the Second Coming took place in the spiritual world and to reveal to mankind the nature and the meaning of the written Word on earth.

Argument against Divinity of the Writings

On page 248 Dr. Martin formulates a very interesting argument against the divinity of the Writings. In various parts of the Writings we read an explanation and discussion of Mark 16:16. But Dr. Martin believes that it is now conceded by Biblical scholarship that Mark 16:9-20 are spurious and were not written by Mark at all, since they are missing from the best manuscripts of the New Testament. And so Dr. Martin concludes that Swedenborg was wrong in claiming divinity for these Mark passages in his Miscellaneous Theological Works. This is only one more proof, Dr. Martin writes, "that it is unsafe to impute to God one's own theological interpretations, since the Deity has the disconcerting habit of acquitting Himself at the expense of would be seers, in this case, Swedenborg".

Dr. Martin does not have any logical reasoning for the divinity of any scripture in the Old and New Testament. All he can point to in the history of the Christian Church is debate, uncertainty for centuries, and then a papal decision. Dr. Martin thinks he must accept the divinity of scripture because it was affirmed by the early church, the apostles, and the church fathers. In this framework of thought Dr. Martin should take issue with any scholarship that deletes text from one of the gospels.

Who says that God is speaking through "contemporary biblical scholarship", another field of biblical debate and uncertainty? Here we would agree with Dr. Martin that we should not accept the pronouncements of so called "biblical scholars" as they already have said so much that later was proven to be wrong by other scholars.

In the New Church there is a much more convincing and overpowering reasoning that convinces the rational mind that the canon given in the Writings and the Writings themselves are from the Lord. For the portion in Mark has an internal sense which connects with the internal sense of the beginning of the last chapter of Mark. This argument is far more important and weighty than the arguments of textual scholars.

Dr. Martin's reasoning here proves the weakness of a literal approach to the literal sense, and not so much the falsity of the doctrine of the internal sense as given in the Writings. Not only is Dr. Martin inconsistent in his reasoning, he also points to the inherent weakness of his orthodox position. If Mark 16:9-20 is not divine revelation, then a lot of orthodox Christians have been wrong for centuries about Mark 16:9-20, and then it is possible they will also be proven wrong about the divinity of the letters of Paul in the future.

Dr. Martin has actually proven that even he believes it is quite possible that the canon of orthodox Christianity is wrong in other places. The divinity of the Bible is not as certain as is claimed in the circles of orthodox Christianity.

Paul's Letters

On page 249 we find Dr. Martin discussing statements in the Writings concerning Paul and his letters. There is no question that the Writings disagree with certain portions of Paul's letters. Also, Paul's letters did not find their way into the New Church canon. In other words, they are not authoritative divine revelation. Many Christians will not be upset about all this. There is considerable resistance to Paulinian doctrine in the Christian Church. I can vividly recall such discussions in the Dutch Reformed Church in the 1940s.

Paul himself in all his letters never referred to what the Lord said in the four gospels. If he is "a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle"(Romans 1:1, 1Cor 1:1, 2Cor 1:1, etc.), then should not he have quoted Jesus Christ often? Take your Bible and check out all the references to the four gospels you find in the middle of the page.

You will find that Paul never quotes the Lord. Now read Paul's letters and yellow the sections where he talks about himself. Then underline the passages that are vague, that you cannot understand, and that really do not teach you anything about God and the way to heaven. Such independent examination will cause enough doubt about the divinity of Paul's writings. It causes us to ask why Paul was given such a prominent place in the Christian Church. Apart from all that, the Writings approach Paul's letters in a different way.

The Writings say that Paul's letters do not have an internal sense, therefore are not from God, and are not authoritative. But they also say that his letters are useful doctrinal works. New Church ministers will not hesitate to quote from certain portions his letters.

On page 249 Dr. Martin mentions how Swedenborg "detested with abject horror" Romans 5 through 8. Read through these chapters in one sitting. You will find it hard to plow through Paul's reasonings. Most of the time you will feel "under water". Only so now and then will you feel good when his statements are lucid and clear. Now read chapter 9. Again very difficult and unclear writing. The more I read in Paul's letters, the more I try to understand them, the more I can understand why early Christians clung to the gospels and not to Paul's letters.

Orthodoxy the Authority?

There is another statement by Dr. Martin that we need to examine. "The New Testament is the criterion for measuring all subsequent revelations, and whatever is found to be contrary to it, must be and always has been, rejected by the Christian Church".

Please note that Dr. Martin does not deny the possibility of a revelation after the New Testament. Some Christians do deny this possibility on the basis of a statement in the last chapter of the Book of Revelation: "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book"(verse 18). Dr. Martin is consistent here because it does not say in this passage that God cannot add to these things.

But his logic fails in this that he assumes that the canon of the New Testament is correct and that Paul's letters are from the Lord. For this assumption he has no basis except the edict of a pope.

The great majority of Christians are not going to agree with Dr. Martin when he says that we all have to agree with what people thought and decided hundreds of years ago. People of the present day just will not accept this attitude. It is an irrational attitude that will be rejected by increasing numbers of people in the future. Especially when they see how the New Church offers an alternative that leads away from some irrational Christian denominations and cults.

Interpretation of Dreams

On page 249 Dr. Martin claims that Swedenborg did not remember the teaching in Genesis 40:8 that interpretations of dreams belong to God. He also quotes Galatians 1:8 in which we are told not to accept revelation from any angel, but from the Lord alone. But in the Arcana Coelestia Swedenborg pens down the internal sense of this Genesis statement. Also, does not Dr. Martin realize that Swedenborg disowned authorship of his Theological Writings and that he claims that he did not receive any doctrine from any man or any angel, but from the Lord alone?

The Trinity

On page 249 Dr. Martin quotes 2 Peter 1:21 where it says: "Prophecy came in old time not by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit". It is true that the Writings do not accept the tripersonal concept of God of the Christian Church. Instead, the Holy Spirit is the Lord proceeding to the finite, speaking to human beings. And so the Writings do not reject the counsel of Peter, but agree with it. However, in Dr. Martin's logic, not accepting his concept of God is the same as not accepting inspiration by the Holy Spirit.

I once discussed the tripersonal concept of God with a catholic bishop. First I pointed out that the four gospels actually mention four names for God. There is the Father, the Son of God, the Son of Man, and the Holy Spirit, so that perhaps we should accept a quatropersonal concept of God. We did not pursue this point any further.

Then I asked him: "Is Jesus Christ the son of the Father or the son of the Holy Spirit. The bishop assured me immediately that He was the son of the Father. Then I pointed out that the gospels say that he was conceived by the Holy Spirit. The bishop confirmed. So the son could be the son of the Father and/or the son of the Holy Spirit? The bishop acknowledged that he did not understand.

Now it is fine if we human beings do not understand something about God. But as long as we do not understand, we cannot be sure that we understand contradictory statements in divine revelation, and we should not insist that our definitive statements about God should be taken seriously. As long as we do not understand, we cannot be sure, and we must allow someone else to have a different opinion.

While theologians have a very difficult time with the trinity concept, and could not decide it for a long time, according to Dr. Martin it is easy. It is clearly taught (and easily understood) in the Old and New Testaments. Here are the passages he cites, with my comments.

Genesis 1:26 and 27

In Genesis 1:26 we read: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness". The argument of Christians here is that the words "us" and "our" indicate that there is more than one person in the Godhead. If there were really 3 divine persons creating the finite world, then it would say: "And Gods said, let us make man". Moreover, it says: "Let us make man, in our image, after our likeness". If there are 3 persons in the creating God, then man will be in their image and likeness, and so there will be 3 persons in created man too.

Now please look at verse 27. There it says: "So God created man in his image, in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them". So in verse 27 we find a repeat of God's actions in verse 26, and the "us" and "our" concept is gone. How can anyone say that in Genesis 1:26 it is clearly taught that there are 3 persons in the godhead?

Isaiah 6:8

In Isaiah 6:8 it says: "Also I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me". Here again we have the use of the word "us". If this word "us" would indicate that there are 3 persons, we ask ourselves why it is that the Lord said: "whom shall I send"? This passage does not clearly teach a tripersonal god, but is too vague for clear interpretation.

Zechariah 12:10

In Zechariah 12:10 we read: "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn".

The "I" in this passage is clearly the Lord. Please read the first 9 verses of this chapter. When you read them you will notice that the overall and particular meaning of these verses is unclear. These verses, in the literal sense, are like so many others - inscrutable, vague and not open to interpretation as to time and meaning.

In verse 10 we wonder who is the one they have pierced. I can see how some people will say that it is Jesus Christ - because he was pierced while on earth. But then Jehovah is the same as Jesus Christ, because Jehovah is the "I" in this passage and so is the "me". This would not agree with the tripersonal concept of God.

When it says that "they shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born" it is obvious that "son" does not refer to Jesus Christ for two reasons.

First, the same son is called his only son and his first born son, so that the "son" does not refer to Jesus Christ, as he could only be "the only son". Second, to call Jesus Christ the "first born son" would make him the son of a human father as "first" would imply one of several. Again, does this passage "clearly" teach a tripersonal God?

Luke 1:35

In Luke 1:35 we come to the passage that was used in the conversation with the catholic bishop. It says: "And the angel answered and said unto her, the Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God".

As you can see, three terms are used for God: The Holy Spirit, the power of the highest, and the Son of God. But we cannot clearly draw conclusions, as this passage poses all kinds of questions:

1. The term "Holy Spirit" is used here but elsewhere in the New Testament it says that the Holy Spirit was not yet.
2. Also, this passage does not speak about the Father conceiving the child.
3. The power of the highest cannot be equated to the person of the Father.
4. Jesus Christ is called the Son of God, and if I were to assume a tripersonal God, then it is not clear here whose Son Jesus is.

Again, there is no clarity of teaching in this passage but only obscurity and ambiguity.

Matthew 3:16 and 17

In Matthew 3:16 and 17 we read: "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water, and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased".

This passage obviously describes an observation in the spiritual world and not in this world. It says that the heavens were opened unto him and he saw! What he saw was a representation of the Holy Spirit or the spirit of God. It was represented by a dove. But this representation does not imply logically and automatically that the spirit of God is a divine person separate from the Son or the Father.

In verse 17 an unknown voice speaks and says: "This is my beloved son". We wonder: Is this voice the voice of the Father or of the Holy Spirit? And again we ask, are these verses clearly teaching a tripersonal God?

Matthew 28:19

In Matthew 28:19 we are taught: "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit". This passage certainly does not teach a tripersonal God. For in verse 18 it is Jesus who says that all power is given to him, not to the Father and not to the Holy Spirit. In verse 20 it says that he, Jesus, and not the Father or the Holy Spirit, will be with his followers until the end of the age.

There is no question about the fact that the Writings teach against the idea of a tripersonal God, and instead teach a one person God in whom there is a trinity of soul, body and operation. That places the New Christian Church outside the "orthodox" Christian Church. New Church men are anxious that this distinction is made and maintained. Many people in the Christian Church tell me they believe what the New Church teaches, and do not believe that their church teaches a tripersonal God.

According to Dr. Martin, Peter expressly and explicitly says in the Book of Acts that the Holy Spirit is a person to whom man could lie. Here is what it says in Acts 5:3 and 4: "But Peter said, Ananias, why has Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Spirit? Thou hast not lied unto men but unto God". Where now is in this statement the express and explicit teaching that the Holy Spirit is a person and one of the persons of the Godhead?

According to the students of cults, there is a steady and consistent attack of the cults on the orthodox doctrines of the Trinity. And yet all these attacks never seem to cause the orthodox to consider it possible that they are wrong and that the cults are right.

Dr. Hodge and his opinions

On page 249 Dr. Martin quotes Dr. Charles Hodge, the Princeton theologian, from his Systematic Theology Vol II pages 421-423. Dr. Hodge does not really attack Swedenborg and the Writings. But Dr. Hodge is not always correct in what he says about the teaching of the Writings. It is true that the Writings teach that those who knew each other in this material world may enjoy mutual recognition in the world to come, but Dr. Hodge is wrong when he says that the Writings teach that this is

possible because of the correspondence between the material body and the spiritual body.

It is true that the soul forms for itself a body for action, but it is not true that the essence of God forms for itself a spiritual body for external manifestation. Dr. Hodge did not study the doctrine of the Lord in the Writings carefully enough, and his conception is too simple and too incomplete to really be equal to the truth.

Man's soul begets a body, lives in this world, the body dies, and his person lives on in the other world. But the Divine soul's Human is not that simple. First the Divine soul takes on a Human for manifestation to mankind as an accommodation to man on different levels of human existence. Then it is also in accommodation to man at different times. In the theology of the Writings we learn about the Divine Celestial, the Divine Spiritual and the Divine Natural, as well as the Divine Rational, the Divine Moral, and the Divine Sensual. Some of these existed before the incarnation, others did not. We also differentiate between the Holy Spirit before and after incarnation.

There are other statements in Dr. Hodge's Systematic Theology, but as he uses terminology that cannot be identified with the terminology of the Writings, it is useless to try to tackle his statements. But why does Dr. Martin quote what Dr. Hodge says about Swedenborg. Why does not he study Swedenborg for himself, and make his own comments?

Vicarious Atonement

Dr. Martin then gives references to passages that irrefutably teach the idea of the vicarious atonement. The doctrine of the vicarious atonement teaches that the Son suffered the punishment which the Father would have given to sinful mankind, and as long as a man accepts this act of the Son, he is saved. These passages are Isaiah 53, Matthew 20:28, Mark 10:45, 1Peter 2:24.

The Second Coming

On page 250 Dr. Martin denies the truth that the Lord has made His Second Coming. But he does not examine those portions in the Writings where the fulfillment of Second Coming prophecies are given.

Dr. Martin admits that Swedenborg is brilliant and has abilities, but in too many places Swedenborg is in opposition to the teachings of the Word of God. What Dr. Martin really means is that the teachings of the Writings are against his interpretation of the Word of God.

When people approach the literal sense of the Word in a literalistic way, then they believe that by quoting the Word of God, they are speaking divine truth. This in itself is already not true. But to prove the "orthodox" doctrines, literalists have to go further. They have to maintain that their interpretations of the Bible are not interpretations but are the clear teachings of the Bible.

A good example of this typical behavior of literalists you can find a few paragraphs earlier when I quote Dr. Martin saying that "the apostle Peter most explicitly declared that the Holy Spirit was a person". Another example is his assertion that there are so many passages in the New Testament that teach the vicarious atonement that Swedenborg's denial of this doctrine does not need to be refuted.

Dr. Martin then states that Swedenborg's type of mind has been described by Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:17-31. First I asked myself what Paul is trying to say. Then I asked myself what is Dr. Martin trying to say. Dr. Martin leaves it to the reader.

Immediately after describing Swedenborg's mind, he returns to the same approach. "It would be possible to go on at some length in a refutation of Swedenborg's theology, but the issues, we believe, are clearly discernable, as is the verdict of Scripture"(page 251). Dr. Martin leaves his reader in the same position as before. The reader has to take Dr. Martin's word that Swedenborg goes against scripture.

Rationalist and Mystic

Like van Baalen, Dr. Martin puzzles about Swedenborg being a rationalist and at the same time a mystic. These two men felt that they had met with a paradox in Swedenborg. A rationalist is a person who believes that he can come to religious truth with his reason alone, unaided by divine revelation. Anyone who reads Swedenborg can readily see that he was not that kind of a rationalist. He deeply believed in God and acknowledged his total dependence upon the Word of God. The first of Swedenborg's Rules of Life, which many New Church men have in their homes, says: "Diligently read and reflect on the Word of God".

For his own theological work Swedenborg felt totally dependent on the Word of God. Why would he otherwise make a Concordance of the Bible before beginning the systematic explanation of the Bible?

Now it is true that Swedenborg was a rational man. After all, he was a scientist for a good part of his life. It is somewhat useless to call Swedenborg a mystic when that word is not defined by its user. But it is true that Swedenborg had visions and saw into the spiritual world. However, there is nothing paradoxical about this. Science

would be nowhere without dreams and visions. Kekule first dreamt about the benzene ring, before he wrote about it in a scientific journal. Most people have had some mystical experiences, and yet are normal and rational.

If anyone was able to observe and describe in a scientific manner the spiritual world, it was the scientific, rational Swedenborg. No wonder that the new revelation is called the Divine Rational, or, the rational expression on earth of the Divine truth in the heavens. So even when we say that Swedenborg was a rational man who could see in the spiritual world, we still do not have a paradox but a logical combination of two human attributes.

The Canon of the Word

Dr. Martin's effort to relate Swedenborg to other philosophers is useless and throws no light on the subject, but still is harmless. What is really very wrong is Dr. Martin's suggestion that Swedenborg adopted the New Church canon of the Scriptures so he could discard the divinity of books of the Bible which Dr. Martin says teach doctrines that disagree with Swedenborg.

The canon of the Scriptures in the New Church is not set by Swedenborg or by the doctrines of the Christian Church but by the presence or absence of a continuous internal sense. As soon as a book has the three internal senses from beginning to end, then we are dealing with divine revelation, and do we place that book on the level of divine authority. Dr. Martin wrote more as a proponent of orthodox Christian theology than as a scholar of comparative religions when he said that Swedenborg "continues to deceive many so-called intelligent persons today".

If you go to any New Church congregation and begin to talk with the people there, you will find all kinds. You will meet intelligent and simple people, educated and uneducated people, professional and blue-collar people. In other words, you will find all kinds of people deceived by Swedenborg.

The Writings teach that the Lord's providence watches with great care that human beings never lose the chance to reach heaven. Our eternal welfare has His eternal attention. The Lord's Word plays a very important role in our reaching our home in heaven. It is like a map that we need to travel into unknown territory. Therefore the Lord makes sure that His Word always remains visible to people on earth.

Go to the library and read about the history of canonization. Read how there have been centuries of discussions about whether a book belonged in the Bible or not. The Book of Revelation is a good example.

Of course, in all history you can discern God's providence. But you can see it best in the history of canonization. One thing obviously has the Lord's attention. He must make sure that all books of the Divine canon remain there. It does not matter if a non-divine book slips into the canon, as long as all divine books remain in the canon.

The canon of the New Church could not have been revealed earlier, because people could not have understood it. Dr. Martin did not understand the internal sense, and therefore could not see the New Church canon of the Bible. He rejected it and was offended by it.

But today the internal sense is revealed and can be understood. And once this sense is understood, it is obvious that the Christian canon had to be longer than the New Church canon, and the Lord in His second coming had to take books out of the Bible. But in His providence not one divine book was lost during the centuries' long discussion of the canon in the Christian Church.

Inquisition and Judgment

On page 250 Dr. Martin writes that the followers of Swedenborg should heed the warning of Paul, when he said: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ(Col 2:8)". Anyone who studies the Theological Writings of Swedenborg in any depth will laugh at the idea that Paul's quotation applies in the slightest to the Writings.

The Writings and the Bible

"The great tragedy of Emanuel Swedenborg is that he would not submit himself and his great mind to the discipline of the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures"(page 250). Anyone who approaches the Theological Writings, very quickly notes that Swedenborg was deeply interested in Scripture. His first Rule of Life is that we are to read the Word of God daily and diligently. Also, before acting as a revelator, Swedenborg went through the whole Bible to make an index. Obviously Swedenborg wanted to be able to learn and quote from the Bible.

In the Writings we find voluminous quotations from the Bible, even from those parts that do not have an internal sense, like the letters of Paul. Any serious reader of the Writings acknowledges that Swedenborg was deeply involved in the Scriptures and that he proved his doctrines by means of statements from these Scriptures.

The Writings reveal how the Lord deals with a revelator, that is, how the Holy Spirit (the Lord proceeding to man) deals with a revelator. Swedenborg was clearly made aware of the fact the Writings were not his, but the Lord's only, and he knew it acutely himself.

Spiritism and the Occult

Dr. Martin then blames Swedenborg for "deliberate preoccupation with spiritism and the occult". This statement does not even come near the factual truth. First of all, Swedenborg was a disciplined scientist with no mystic, spiritistic or occult interests and tendencies. In fact, when the Lord introduced him into the spiritual world, he was frightened and repelled. Had it been up to Swedenborg, he would have tried to avoid such entrance. But Swedenborg had to perform the task of revelator, and after this was made clear to him, Swedenborg yielded to the Lord's leading. Before his introduction into the spiritual world and also after it, Swedenborg did not like to delve into spiritism and the occult. He knew it was dangerous and against scripture. And so he warned his readers against such efforts.

Since 1950 I have been in the New Church, both in the center, in larger societies, in smaller groups, and in total isolation, and not once have I seen any New Church man interested and/or involved in spiritism or the occult.

"He was deceived by dreams and visions and the machinations of evil spirits"(page 250), Dr. Martin believes. This statement is quite acceptable as long as the person making such a statement does not accept anybody's dreams and visions. But Dr. Martin is not such a person. He accepts the nonscientific, dreamlike accounts in the first 11 chapters of Genesis. He accepts the visions of Old Testament prophets and of Jewish leaders. He accepts the visions of John on the Isle of Patmos. He accepts Paul's vision of conversion. He accepts these literally on the authority of apostles, church fathers and a Pope, without any rational reason for such acceptance. Why then cannot Dr. Martin not accept that others could accept the dreams and visions of Swedenborg.

In Leviticus 19:31 we read: "Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them. I am the Lord your God". In chapter 20:6 we read: "And the soul that runs after such as have familiar spirits, and after wizards, to go a whoring after them, I will even set my face against that soul, and will cut him off from among his people". The meaning of these two passages is very clear. Follow God, listen to Him. Do not take authoritative ideas from any intuition you have from yourself or from other people, be they on this earth or in the spiritual world. These passages speak about man following suggestions from evil people. We should not go a whoring after them.

Now Dr. Martin believes that he has found a case in which Swedenborg can be accused of "going a whoring after evil spirits". He recounts the well known story of the deceased Dutch ambassador. According to Dr. Martin this is a remarkable piece of clairvoyance. I never heard this story mentioned in the New Church theological school. I never took the trouble to teach it in any religious class. Nobody would really care. Clairvoyance is a well known phenomena, experienced by many people. But in no way does it prove that the clairvoyant person is a revelator. In the very great majority of cases he is not.

If you are in another country where you meet another person, and this person asks you to give a message to his relative in your own country, then your transmitting that message is totally harmless, and not against the Divine law. It is the same when that other land is the spiritual world, and your own land is the natural world.

In Acts 9 we read about Paul's meeting with the Lord (verses 3-8). Please read these verses. If Dr. Martin can accept this story, which is similar to Swedenborg's account of his meeting with the Lord, why would he classify Swedenborg's experience as occult?

The Writings are full of descriptions of the spiritual world. The Bible is filled with such descriptions. His statement that Swedenborg is a spiritist because people like Sir Arthur Canon Doyle claim Swedenborg as a medium is illogical and irrational.

"In some ways it is comical how the New Church can be accused of following spiritists and of being a cult when often the very accusers believe and practice many things which are far more spirit-oriented and cult like than New Church men ever have been. How many fundamentalist television preachers today claim to have had visions, the power of healing and casting out demons? How many regularly speak in tongues or send their parishioners in swoons by the touch of the hand, or claim to have seen a vision of Jesus or the Holy Spirit. There are also other areas, like offering quick fix solutions to life, keeping close tabs on church members' private lives, using persuasive techniques in preaching, and many other things which they use in their description of a cult when accusing others, but cannot see it in themselves"(Rev. Grant Schnarr, New Church Life, 1987, page 211).

So far Dr. Martin's original Kingdom of the Cults. Now let us examine his 1985 version.

Relationship Christian and New Church

On page 516 Dr. Martin tells us that according to Swedenborg, the orthodox churches must give way to the New Church. Factually wrong. People in the New Church do not

believe that the Christian Church will disappear, just as the Jewish Church did not disappear when the Lord became incarnate.

On page 517 Dr. Martin says that the New Church was formed in Swedenborg's honor. People in the New Church are thoroughly convinced that the Writings are a divine revelation, and so they found churches not in Swedenborg's honor but for the worship of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is quite a difference.

"Young people may join the New Church, but only after they have read the Writings for 6 months". Never heard of that requirement!

Did Dr. Martin look into the sacraments and rites of the New Church? Did he study the Liturgy of the General Church? Baptism and the Holy Supper are not copied from the Christian Church. The elements of water, bread and wine are from the Gospels. But then come the differences, which are from the new revelation.

According to Dr. Martin, church government is episcopal with minor alterations. With a little more study it can be discovered that these alterations are more fundamental or major, than minor.

Judging before the facts are in

On page 519 Dr. Martin advocates that thoughtful Christians should be suspicious of the theology of the Writings, even before examining it thoroughly. Is this good advice? Is this good scholarship? Is it right to lean a certain way before all the facts are in? Every fair prosecutor and judge will discipline himself to stay away from drawing conclusions prematurely. The same is true for every scientist, and should be true for every theologian.

Paul and the New Church

There is no doubt that Pauline theology is at odds with New Church theology. Many people in the Christian Church do not like Pauline theology. They do not like his philosophical reasonings. They do not like his attitude towards women and marriage. They do not like his boasting about himself. And yet, there are also very beautiful portions in Paul's letters. And so we notice that Swedenborg often quotes from Paul.

Swedenborg was taught by the Lord that if a book of the Word is to be from the Lord, then it has to have internal senses from beginning to end, and as Paul's letters do not have such internal senses, Swedenborg was led to see that these letters were not to be

vested with divine authority. The point was not that Swedenborg was right and Paul was wrong.

It is true that Swedenborg spoke with Paul, Luther and Calvin, and that these men were convinced by the Lord and the truths of His Second Coming. Swedenborg had nothing to do with this conviction, and so it was not Swedenborg's ego that triumphed, but the power of the Lord's truth.

On page 522 Dr. Martin states that the New Testament is the criterion for measuring all subsequent revelations, and this is true. And the Writings meet this criterion, because they show how they are the fulfillment of all New Testament prophecies, and how great the agreement between the New Testament and the Writings is.

Swedenborg did follow Genesis 40:8 as he was led into all visions and interpretations of visions by the Lord, and never received anything from any angel or man.

Dr. Martin accuses Swedenborg of not believing in the person of the Holy Spirit, and so how can he be moved by the Holy Spirit? This is Dr. Martin's logic of exclusivity. There is only one doctrine of God, namely his, and that is the idea that there are three persons in the Godhead, of which the Holy Spirit is one person. If you do not believe in this doctrine, you cannot believe in any other doctrine, and therefore you cannot believe in any instructions from the Holy Spirit.

"True to the pattern of most non-Christian cults, Swedenborg vigorously attacked the Christian doctrine of the Trinity"(page 522). Dr. Martin refers here to the orthodox doctrine of the trinity of persons. The New Church believes in the doctrine of the trinity if you call it the Trinity of attributes. New Church men do not believe in the trinity of person because that way they stick to Dr. Martin's pattern of the cults. Instead they do not believe in the trinity of persons because it is a false doctrine. The pattern, which assumes a causal relationship between the doctrine of one cult and another, does not exist.

Peace of God

On page 17 Dr. Martin writes: "No cult has ever been able to originate peace with God and fellowship with His Son Jesus Christ". This enormous generalization has absolutely no basis in actual fact. How can Dr. Martin know anything about the peace of God experiences of others. He has no measure of comparison to backup his quoted statement. Is this kind of statement not subjective?

False Prophets

On page 15 Dr. Martin writes how the Bible speaks about false prophets and deceitful works. But there cannot be the immediate assumption that Dr. Martin is a disciple, and others who disagree with him are the false prophets.

Of course, we can expect false prophets in any movement, but this kind of name calling is so useless as it can never be established with any certainty who are the false prophets.

As ministers of a church we are limited. All we can do is work hard to find the truth, pray hard for enlightenment to see the truth, and acknowledge openly that we are fallible, can make a mistake, and have believed in an idea that later on turned out to be wrong.

In this connection we should emphasize that truth is not established by apostles or by popes or by church fathers or by reformers, or by learned theologians or by committees of professors or by longevity of time or by orthodoxy or by private words from God or by words of knowledge.

Each individual, after reading the Word of God, is supposed to think things through and decide what he can accept as truth. Whenever I read my Christian colleagues writing about false prophets, I always wonder: "Don't they ever look inward? Don't they ever wonder: Could I be wrong?"

The Language Barrier

In Chapter 2 of his book, Dr. Martin decries the fact that cults speak the same words but give them a different definition. And he blames this on the scientific age we live in (p 18). Dr. Martin also notes that modern Christian theologians redefine classical terms, and use the terminology of the Bible and historic theology in an entirely different sense from that intended by the writers of scripture (page 18).

Here Dr. Martin goes too far. Is he the only one who knows what the writers of scripture intended.? On what basis can he say that the orthodox theologian is right and the modern theologian is wrong? Does Dr. Martin have a special telephone line with the writers of scripture enabling him to know what they intended to convey?

Theologians in the New Church have experienced similar language and definition problems. If Dr. Martin wants to understand New Church teachings, he will have to understand them in the context and language limitations of the Writings. All of us had to do this, and all people in the future will have to do it.

Communists use democratic terminology in their own way, and this has annoyed western democratic thinkers. But this should not bother us. We can handle it. The same is true for religionists. Different definitions help us to understand in more depth. Only the superficial person may be deceived and/or irritated.

Let me give one example. Today, the idea of tripersonal God is not pushed in a number of Christian denominations, including the Catholic Church. But push through to a consequence of this doctrine of God, like the doctrine of salvation. You will find it is still the doctrine of atonement, and this doctrine cannot exist without the doctrine of a tripersonal God. Language can confuse only temporary, but as soon as we acquire ideas in a deliberate and thoughtful way, we will find the truth.

Too bad Dr. Martin goes on a useless and uncharitable road when he suggests that "cults play a type of hypnotic music upon a semantic harp of terminological deception"(p 19).

The essential problem of evil

On page 20 Dr. Martin complains "that cults hardly ever discuss the essential problem of evil, the existence of personal sin, or the necessity of the substitutionary atonement of Christ as the sole means of salvation from sin".

Dr. Martin's statement does not apply to the New Church at all. In the Writings of Swedenborg there is a great deal of discussion about the nature of evil and sin. There is also a good deal of discussion of the famous atonement doctrine and how this doctrine is incorrect and not at all the means of our salvation. Even things like original sin and hereditary evil are thoroughly discussed.

Did not Dr. Martin notice how uniquely the Writings handle the removal of personal evil and sin by the Lord and the role that "remains" play in the process of spiritual rebirth.

Most New Church men will be amazed and dumbfounded to find out that we have more than 100,000 members throughout the world. Ten thousand would still be too much! What is even more amazing is the statement that the New Church wields a considerable influence in intellectual church circles.

Bibliography

Dr. Martin's bibliography lists 12 titles, and 6 of them are non New Church authors. Next time Dr. Martin's book is reprinted, I suggest his editor spend some time with

New Church scholars who would be happy to help him strip the section on Swedenborgianism of the many factual errors and incorrect reasonings.

In 1999 I understood that the chapter on Swedenborg has been removed entirely. They say it is because the New Church is too small, but I am sure it is because they saw the quality of scholarship.

CULTS AND ISMS

Two pages of this book are devoted to the New Church. First the book says: "The Second Coming is now under way"(page 107). The Lord has already made His objective Second Coming in the Theological Writings of Swedenborg some 200 years ago. That coming is not on the way. This is a very fundamental concept.

Another statement: "Swedenborgianism wishes to be understood as standing within the limits of Christianity, rather than outside as a heresy"(page 107). Swedenborgianism considers itself outside the Christian Church, as a new dispensation. Its relationship to the Christian Church is as the relationship of the Christian Church to the Jewish Church. Of course, we do not believe our religion is a heresy.

BOOK OF CULTS

On page 396 we find Bob Larson's write up of Swedenborgianism. It opens up with a description of the purchase in England of the skull of Swedenborg in London, two hundred years after his death. The connection with our religion escapes me.

On page 397 Mr. Larson states that Swedenborg was convinced by spirits that "the Bible needed special interpretation". Neither Swedenborg nor any New Church man has claimed that the Writings of the New Church are a special interpretation of the Bible. The Writings reveal what is within the Bible and give additional truth about God and heaven.

"Each soul retains the physical appearance of early adulthood as it was lived on earth"(page 397). Now it is true that the physical appearance of people in the other world is that of a young man or a young woman. But this appearance has nothing to do with the appearance of early adulthood while on earth. Instead, the appearance of a person corresponds to the state of the mind of that person.

"In hell, one becomes an evil spirit, but in heaven an angelic status awaits"(page 397). It is on earth that a person becomes either an evil spirit or an angel. After death, the

evil spirit finds his way to hell, the angel finds his way to heaven. The angelic status is not the reward that awaits us in heaven after death. If a person regenerates, he is an angel even while on earth.

Mr. Larson's description of Swedenborg's concept of the Divine trinity is so vague and unclear that we are unable to analyze it.

WHAT THE CULTS BELIEVE

In the second paragraph of his section on Swedenborgianism, Robertson reports that he has learned that the Church of the New Jerusalem claims to be a Protestant Church, based upon the Bible. He has this from a Bulletin of the Church of the Holy City. This statement is not correct. Swedenborg never claimed that the Church of the New Jerusalem was a Protestant Church based upon the Bible.

On page 87 Mr. Robertson reports that Swedenborg teaches that after death, in the world of spirits, the selfish and vile man may change. This is not a teaching of Swedenborg. A selfish and vile man does not change in the world of spirits but stays selfish and vile.

RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL GROUPS IN MODERN AMERICA

There is a distinct difference between Dr. Ellwood's books and the books of other cult writers. Dr. Ellwood writes from a different perspective. He looks at all kinds of religions in a dispassionate way, and tries to see how they relate to each other, and how they have been influenced by each other. When reading Dr. Ellwood's books one does not get that uncomfortable feeling that this author sees everything from his personal bias.

Dr. Ellwood, in his personal views, believes in theosophy, but when he writes about various "new thought" religions, he does not try to advance his own ideas, and he does not try to prove that others have the wrong idea.

Dr. Ellwood describes Swedenborg as "the most pivotal and influential individual figure from the 18th century"(page 64). Unlike most of the other writers, Dr. Ellwood notices that after he was called to become a revelator, Swedenborg became an extraordinarily prolific writer.

But I do not see that Swedenborg "was at pains to keep a Christian facade". In the area of fundamental Christian doctrines, i.e. in regard to the Divine nature of Christ

and in regard to the doctrine of salvation, Swedenborg openly and strongly broke with the Christian Church.

New Church men do not mind when scholars of comparative religions like Dr. Ellwood connect ideas in the Writings with the ideas of thinkers and movements either before or after. But in giving the internal sense of the Word, the Writings speak about a lot more than just correspondences. In fact, the meaning of the Lord's Word remains a mystery if we only consider correspondences.

It is pretty certain that Swedenborg influenced the thinking of others. For example, it is true that he influenced Christian Science, but that does not mean that Swedenborg is a Christian Scientist. In fact, there are fundamental disagreements between Christian Science and Swedenborgianism, like the reality of evil.

ALTERNATIVE ALTARS

Dr. Ellwood's insight into the development of Swedenborg's mind is correct. Dr. Ellwood saw that Swedenborg in his revelation years had moved away from intellectual pride, and had become a humble seeker of truth. Dr. Ellwood also believes that Swedenborg's introduction to his use as revelator was not abnormal. When he reports on Swedenborg's theological ideas, Dr. Ellwood is correct.

Dr. Ellwood loses me on page 88 with this sentence: "For all its queer kabbalism, Swedenborg's thought can be interpreted not only as a throwback to Neoplatonism, but also as presenting a new secular Christ and as a new dispensation for mankind come of age".

Doctrinal and philosophical disagreements between people will always exist, and they are quite acceptable. What dismays is when one's position is grossly misrepresented. From that point of view Dr. Ellwood's books are a sheer delight.

1. **THESE ALSO BELIEVE: Modern American Cults & Minority Religious Movements** by Charles Samuel Braden published in 1960
2. **SWEDENBORGIANISM EXAMINED** by Dr. Enoch Pond, a book of 250 pages, exclusively devoted to examining the New Church. Published in 1861.
3. **HERESIES EXPOSED**, A brief critical examination in the light of the Holy Scriptures of some of the prevailing heresies and false teachings of today, compiled by Wm. C. Irvine. The chapter on Swedenborgianism was written by Wm. Hoste, pages 181-186. The book was published in 1919.
4. **CHAOS OF THE CULTS**, by Jan Karel van Baalen. The chapter on Swedenborgianism can be found on pages 177-187. The book was written before 1968.
5. **THE KINGDOM OF THE CULTS**, by Dr. Walter R. Martin. The chapter on the Church of the New Jerusalem or Swedenborgianism in the 1965 version is on pages 241-251. His 1985 version discusses Swedenborg on pages 513-525.
6. **SPIRITUALISM**, by J. A. Hill. Chapter 2 on Swedenborg is on pages 41-54. Published in 1913.
7. **CULTS AND ISMS**, Russell P. Spittler, pages 106-107. Published in 1962.
8. **BOOK OF CULTS**, Bob Larson, pages 396-397. Published in 1982,
9. **WHAT THE CULTS BELIEVE**, Irvine Robertson, pages 85-87. Published in 1966.
10. **RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL GROUPS IN MODERN AMERICA**, by Dr. Robert S. Ellwood, pages 64-66. Published in 1973.
11. **ALTERNATIVE ALTARS**, by Dr. Robert S. Ellwood, pages 84-89. Published in 1979.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND THE BOOK

Born in the Netherlands in 1927, Mr. Weiss went through World War II living under Nazi occupation as an adolescent member of the underground forces. After the war, while studying for a BS in Chemical Engineering, he became very interested in the Writings of the Second Coming, and decided to become a minister.

In the U.S. he acquired a BS in Education and a Master's Degree in Theology. He served for six years as an ordained minister of the New Christian Church. Then he went back to engineering and worked for several engineering companies.

In 1986 he founded New Church Outreach to bring the New Christian religion to others. He created some 50 half hour TV programs on the religion, and then produced several computer programs that can search

the Bible and the Writings of the Second Coming. He also authored five booklets.

About the Book

When I began to study the Writings of the Second Coming, and when I began to move in the circles of the American Academy of Religion, I came across books that examined these Writings, and took opposite positions. So I began to study these critics, to see what they said, and what I thought of these thoughts.

Since 1860 there have been 10 people who have done this, some writing many pages (250) and others writing only a few pages. I tried to see what they said, and what I thought about what they said. I am not interested in argumentation. I hope this book is useful to your study of religion.

