Swedenborg's Ontology

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ART. III. — 1. *Emanuel Swedenborg; his Life and Writings.* By WILLIAM WHITE. London. 1867. 2 vols. 8vo.
2. *The Divine Attributes; including the Divine Trinity, a Treatise on the Divine Love and Wisdom, and Correspondence.* By E. SWEDENBORG. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co. 1867.
3. *Heaven and its Wonders, and Hell, from Things seen and heard.* By E. SWEDENBORG. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co. 1867.

THE fundamental problem of Philosophy is the problem of creation. Does our existence really infer a Divine and infinite being, or does it not? This question addresses itself to us now with special emphasis, inasmuch as speculative minds are beginning zealously to inquire whether creation can really be admitted any longer, save in an accommodated sense of the word; whether men of simple faith have not gone too far in professing to see a hand of power in the universe, absolutely distinct from the universe itself. That being can admit either of increase or diminution is scientifically inconceivable, and affronts moreover the truth of the creative infinitude. For if God be infinite, as we necessarily hold him to be in deference to our own finiteness, what shall add to, or take from, the sum of his being? It is indeed obvious that God cannot create or give being to what has being in itself, for this would be contradictory. He can create only what is devoid of being in itself: this is manifest. And yet what is void of being in itself can at best only appear to be. It can be no real, but only a phenomenal existence. Thus the problem of creation is seen to engender many speculative doubts. How reconcile the antagonism of real and phenomenal, of absolute and contingent, of which the problem is so full? By the hypothesis of creation, the creature derives all he is from the creator. But the creature is essentially not the creator, is above all things himself a created being, and therefore the utter and exact opposite of the creator. How then shall the infinite Creator give his finite creature projection, endow him with veritable selfhood or identity, and yet experience no compromise of His own individuality? Suffice it to say that what has hitherto called itself Philosophy has had so little power fairly to confront these difficulties, let alone solve them, as to have set Kant upon the notion of placating them afresh by the old recipe of Idealism; that is, hy the invention of another or *noumenal* world, the world of "things-in-themselves." No doubt this was a new pusillanimity on the part of Philosophy, but what better could the philosopher do? He saw plainly enough that things were phenomenal; but as he did not see that this infirmity attached to them wholly on their subjective or constitutional side, while on their objective or formal side they were infinite and absolute, he was bound to lapse into mere idealism or scepticism, unrelieved by aught but the dream of a noumenal background.

We may smile if we please at the superstitious shifts to which Kant's philosophic scepticism reduced him; but after all, Kant was only the legitimate flower of all the inherited culture of the world, the helpless logical outcome of bewildered ages of philosophy. Philosophy herself had never discriminated the objective or absolute and creative element in knowledge from its subjective or merely contingent and constitutional element. And when Kant essayed to make the discrimination, what wonder that he only succeeded in more hopelessly confounding the two, and so adjourning once more the hope of Philosophy to an indefinite future? But Kant's failure to vindicate the philosophic truth of creation has only exasperated the intellectual discontent of the world with the cosmological data supplied by the old theologies. Everywhere men of far more tender and reverential make even than Kant are being driven to freshness of thought; and thought, though a remorseless solvent, has no reconstructive power over truth. Men's opinions are being silently modified in fact, whether they will or not. The crudities, the extravagances, the contradictions of the old cosmology, now no longer amiable and innocent, but aggressive and Overbearing, are compelling inquiry into new channels, are making it no longer possible that the notions which satisfied the fathers shall continue to satisfy the children. A distinctly supernatural creation, once so fondly urged upon our faith, is quite unintelligible to modern culture, because it violates experience or contradicts our observation of nature. Everything we observe in nature derives from a common or universal substance, and is a particular or objective form of such substance. If, then, the objective form of things were an outward or supernatural communication to them, it would no longer be their own form, but their maker's. Thus, on the hypothesis of a supernatural creation, every natural object would disclaim a natural genesis; and Nature, consequently, as denoting the universal or subjective element in existence, would disappear with the disappearance of her proper forms.

Now if Nature, in her most generic or universal mood, return us at best a discouraging answer to the old problem of creation, what answer does she yield in her most specific — which is the human or moral—form? A still more discouraging one even! In fact, the true motive of the intellectual hostility now formulating to the traditional notion of creation, as an objective work of God, as an instantaneous or magical exhibition of the Divine power, as an arbitrary or irrational procedure of the Divine

wisdom, is supplied by our moral consciousness, by the irresistible conviction we feel of our personal identity. That moral or personal existence should be outwardly generated, should be created in the sense of having being communicated to it supernaturally, contradicts consciousness. For moral or personal existence is purely conscious or subjective existence, and consciousness or subjectivity is a strictly *natural* style of existence, and hence disowns all supernatural interference as impertinent. It is preposterous to allege that my consciousness or subjectivity involves any other person than myself, since this would vitiate my personal identity, and hence defeat my possible spiritual individuality or character. If, being what I am conscious of being, namely, a moral or personal existence invested with self-control or the rational ownership of my actions, I yet am not so naturally or of myself, but by some supernatural or foreign intervention, then obviously I am simply what such intervention determines me to be, and my feeling of selfhood or freedom is grossly illusory. Thus morality, which is the assertion of a selfhood in man commensurate with all the demands of nature and society upon him, turns out, if too rigidly insisted on,—if maintained as a Divine finality, or as having not merely a constitutional, but a creative truth, not merely a subjective or phenomenal, but also an objective or real validity,—to be essentially atheistic, and drives those who are loyal rather to the inward spirit than the outward letter of revelation to repugn the old maxims of a supernatural creation and providence as furnishing any longer a satisfactory theorem of existence.

Faith must reconcile herself to this perilous alternative, if she obstinately persist in making our natural morality supernatural by allowing it a truth irrespective of consciousness, or assigning it any objectivity beyond the evolution of human society or fellowship. It is not its own end, but a strict means to a higher or spiritual evolution of life *in our nature;* and they accordingly who persist in ignoring this truth must expect to fall intellectually behind the time in which they live. Some concession here is absolutely necessary to save the religious instinct. For men feel a growing obligation to coordinate the demands of freedom or personality with the limitations of science; and since Kant's remorseless criticism stops them off— under penalty of accepting his impracticable noumenal world — from postulating any longer an objective being answering to their subjective seeming, they must needs with his successors give the whole question of creation the go-by, in quietly resolving the minor element of the equation into the major, man into God, or making the finite a mere transient experience of the infinite, by means of which that great unconsciousness attains to selfhood. For this is the sum of the Hegelian dialectic,—to confound existence with being, or make identity no longer serve individuality, but absorb or swallow it up: so bringing back creation to intellectual chaos, which is naught.

We ourselves, in common with most men doubtless, have an instinctive repugnance to these insane logical results; but instinct is hot intelligence, and sophistry can be combated only by intelligence. Now, to our mind, nothing so effectually arms the intellect against error, whether it be the error of the sceptic or the error of the fanatic, whether it reflect our prevalent religious cant or our almost equally prevalent scientific cant, as a due acquaintance and familiarity with the ontological principles of Swedenborg. Emanuel Swedenborg, we need not say, is by no means as yet "a name to conjure with" in polite circles, and, for aught we opine, may never become one. Nevertheless numerous independent students are to be found, who, having been long hopeless of getting to the bottom of our endless controversies, confess that their intellectual doubts have at last been dispersed by the sunshine of his ontology. It would be small praise of Swedenborg to say that he does not, like Hegel, benumb our spiritual instincts, or drown them out in a flood of vainglorious intoxication brought about by an absurd exaltation of the subjective element in life above the objective one. This praise no doubt is true, but much more is true; and that is, that he *enlightens* the religious conscience, and so gives the intellect a repose which it has lacked throughout history, — a repose as natural, and therefore as sane and sweet, as the sleep of infancy. Admire Hegel's legerdemain as much as you will, his ability to make light darkness and darkness light in all the field of man's relations to God; but remember also that it is characteristic of the highest truth to be accessible to common minds, and inaccessible only to uplifted ones. Tried by this test, the difference between the two writers is incomparably in favor of Swedenborg. For example, what a complete darkening of our intellectual optics is operated by Hegel's fundamental postulate of the identity of being and thought. "Thought and being are identical." Such indeed is the necessary logic of idealism. Now doubtless our faculty of abstract thought is chief among our intellectual faculties; but when it is seriously proposed to build the universe of existence upon a logical abstraction, one must needs draw a very long breath. For thought by itself affords a most inadequate basis even to our own conscious activity;. and when, therefore, our unconscious being is in question, it confesses itself a simply ludicrous hypothesis.

But in reality Hegel, in spite of his extreme pretension in that line, never once got within point-blank range of the true problem of ontology; and this because he habitually confounded being with existence, spirit with nature. By being he never meant being, but always existence, the existence we are, conscious of; so that when he would grasp the infinite, he fancied he had only to resort to the cheap expedient of eliminating the finite. It is precisely as if a man should say: "All I need in order to procure myself an intuitive knowledge

of my own visage, is not to look at its reflection in the looking-glass." Think the finite away, said Hegel, and the infinite is left on your hands. Yes, provided the infinite is never a positive quantity, but only and at most a thought-negation of its own previously thought-negation. But really, if the infinite be this mere negation of its own negation, that is, if being turns out to be identical with nothing, with the absence of mere *thing,* then we must say, in the first place, that we do not see why any sane person should covet its acquaintance. Being which has been so utterly compromised, and indeed annihilated, by its own phenomenal forms, as to be able to reappear only by their disappearance, is scarcely the being which unsophisticated men will ever be persuaded to deem infinite or creative. But then we must also say, in the second place, let it be true, as Hegel alleges, that being is identical with the absence of *thing,* we still are at an utter loss to understand how that leaves it identical with pure thought. We need not deny that we hold thing and thought to be by any means identical; but we are free to maintain nevertheless that if you actually abstract things from thought, you simply render thought itself exanimate. Thought has no vehicle or body but language, and language owes all its soul or inspiration to things. Abstract things then, and neither thought nor language actually survives. You might as well expect the body to survive its soul.

But in truth this metaphysic chatter is the mere wantonness of sense. The infinite is so far from being negative of the finite, that it is essentially creative — and hence exclusively affirmative — of it. The finite indeed is only that inevitable diffraction of itself which the infinite undergoes in the medium or mirror of our sensuous thought, in order so to adapt itself to our dim intelligence. It is accordingly no less absurd for us to postulate a disembodied or unrevealed infinite — an infinite unrobed or unrepresented by the finite — than it would be to demand a father unavouched by a child. The infinite is the sole reality which underlies all finite appearance, and in that tender unobtrusive way makes itself conceivable to our obtuse thought. Should we get any nearer this reality by spurning the gracious investiture through which alone it becomes appreciable to us? Is a man's intelligence of nature improved, on the whole, by putting out his eyes? If, then, the infinite reveals itself to our nascent understanding only by the finite, — i.e. by what we already sensibly know, — how much nearer should we come to its knowledge by rejecting such revelation? We who are not infinite cannot know it absolutely or in itself, but only as it veils or abates its splendor to the capacity of our tender vision, — only as it reproduces itself within our finite lineaments. In a word, our knowledge of it is no way intuitive, but exclusively empirical. Would our chances of realizing such knowledge be advanced, then, by following Hegel's counsel, and disowning that apparatus of finite experience by which alone it becomes mirrored to our intelligence? In other words, suppose a man desirous to know what manner of man he is: were it better for him, in that case, to proceed by incontinently smashing his looking-glass, or by devoutly pondering its revelations? The question answers itself. The glass may be by no means achromatic; it may return indeed a most refractory reply to the man's interrogatory; but nevertheless it is his only method of actually compassing the information he covets, and in the estimation of all wise men he will stamp himself an incorrigible fool if he breaks it.

But the truth is too plain to need argument. There is no antagonism of infinite and finite, except to our foolish regard. On the contrary, there is the exact harmony or adjustment between them that there is between substance and shadow: the infinite being that which really or absolutely *is,* and the finite that which actually or contingently *appears.* The infinite is the faultless substance which, unseen itself, vivifies all finite existence; the finite is the fallacious shadow which nevertheless *attests* that substance. The shadow has no pretension absolutely to be, but only to exist or appear as a necessary projection or image of the substance upon our intellectual retina; and when consequently we wink the shadow out of sight, we do not thereby acuminate our vision, we simply obliterate it. That is to say, we do not thereby approximate our silly selves to the infinite, but simply degrade them out of the finite into the void inane of the indefinite. To you who are not being, being can become known only as finite or phenomenal existence. If then you abstract the finite, the realm of the phenomenal, you not only miss the infinite substance you seek to know, but also and even the very shadow itself upon which your faculty of knowledge is suspended. Such, however, was the abysmal absurdity locked away in Hegel's dialectic, which remorselessly confounds infinite form and finite substance, real or objective being, with phenomenal or subjective seeming; that jolly dialectic which turns creation upside down, by converting it from an orderly procedure of the Divine love and wisdom into a tipsy imbroglio, where what is lowest to thought is made to *involve* what is highest, and what is highest in its turn to *e*volve what is lowest: so that God and man, Creator and creature, in place of being eternally individualized or objectified to each other's regard, become mutually undiscoverable, being hopelessly swamped to sight in the miserable mush of each other's subjective identity. But what is Hegel's supreme shame in the eyes of philosophy, namely, his utter unscrupulous abandonment of himself to the inspiration of idealism, will constitute his true distinction to the future historiographer of philosophy. For idealism has been the secret blight of philosophy ever since men began to speculate; and

what Hegel has done for philosophy in running idealism into the ground, has been to bring this secret blight to the surface, so exposing it to all eyes, and making it impossible for human fatuity ever to go a step further, in that direction at all events.

The correction which Swedenborg brings to this pernicious idealistic bent of the mind consists in the altogether novel light he sheds upon the constitution of consciousness, and particularly upon the fundamental discrimination which that constitution announces between the phenomenal identity of things and their real individuality; between the subjective or merely quantifying element in existence, and its objective or properly qualifying one. The old philosophy was blind to this sharp discrimination in the constitution of existence. It regarded existence, not as a composite, but as a simple quantity, and consequently sank the spiritual element in things in their natural element,—sank what gives them individuality, life, soul, in what gives them identity, existence, body, — in short, sank the *creative* element in existence — what causes it absolutely or subjectively to *be* — in its *constitutive* or generative element, in what causes it phenomenally or subjectively to *appear*. For example, what was its conception of man? It regarded him simply on his moral side, which presents him as essentially selfish or inveterately objective to himself, and left his spiritual possibilities, which present him as essentially social, or spontaneously subject to his neighbor, wholly unrecognized.* In short, it separated him from the face of Deity by all the breadth of nature and all the length of history; and suspended his return upon some purely arbitrary interference exerted by Deity upon the course of nature and the progress of history.

* The best and briefest definition of moral existence is, *the alliance of an inward subject and an outward object;* and of spiritual existence, *the alliance of an outward subject and an inward object.* Thus in moral existence what is public or universal dominates what is private or individual; whereas in spiritual existence the case is reversed, and the outward serves the inward.

Swedenborg's analysis of consciousness stamps these judgments as sensuous or immature, and restores man to the intimate fellowship of God. Consciousness according to Swedenborg claims two most disproportionate generative elements; — one subjective, cosmical, passive, organic; the other, objective, human, active, free. The former element gives us fixity or limitation; *identifies* us, so to speak, by relating us to the outward and finite, i.e. to nature. The latter element gives us freedom, which is *de*-limitation or *de*-finition; *individualizes* us, so to speak, by relating us to the inward and infinite, i.e. to God. This latter element is absolute and creative, for it gives us potential being before we actually exist or become conscious. The other element is merely phenomenal and constitutive, making us exist or go forth to our own consciousness in due cosmical place and order.

Now the immense bearing which this analysis of consciousness exerts upon cosmological speculation, or the question of creation, becomes at once obvious when we reflect that it utterly inverts the long-established supremacy of subject to object in existence, and so demolishes at a blow the sole philosophic haunt of idealism or scepticism. The great scientific value of the Critical Philosophy lay in Kant's making manifest the latent malady of the old philosophy by dogmatically affiliating object to subject, the *not-me* to the *me.* His followers only proved themselves to be his too apt disciples, in endeavoring to paint and adorn this ghastly disease with the ruddy hues of health, by running philosophy into pure or objective idealism. For if the subjective element in existence alone *identifies* it or gives it universality, then manifestly we cannot allow it also to *individualize* it or give it unity, without making the being of things purely subjective, and hence denying it any objective reality. Kant is scrupulously logical. He accepts the deliverance of sense as final, that the *me* determines the *not-me;* that the conscious or phenomenal element in experience controls its unconscious or real one; and hence he cannot help denying any absolute truth to creation. He cannot help maintaining that however much the creator may *be,* he will at any rate never be able to *appear;* that however infinite or perfect he may claim to be in himself, that very infinitude must always prevent him incarnating himself in the finite, and consequently forbid any true revelation of his perfection to an imperfect intelligence. And Mr. Mansel, who is Kant's intellectual grandson, is so tickled with this sceptical fatuity on the part of his sire, as to find in it a new and fascinating base for our religious homage; and he does not hesitate accordingly to argue that the only stable motive to our faith in God is supplied by ignorance, not by knowledge.

Swedenborg, we repeat, effectually silences these ravings of philosophic despair by simply rectifying the basis of philosophy, or affirming an absolute as well as an empirical element in consciousness, an infinite as well as a finite element in knowledge. He provides a real or objective, no less than a phenomenal or subjective, element in existence; an element of unconditional being as well as of conditional seeming; a creative element, in short, no less than a constitutive one. This absolute or infinite element in existence is what *qualifies* the existence, is what gives it natural or generic unity, and so permits it to be objectively *individualized* as *man, horse, tree, stone;* while its empirical or finite element merely *quantifies* it, or gives it specific variety, and so permits it to be subjectively *identified* as *English*-man, *French*-man; *race*-horse, *draught*-horse; *fruit*-tree, *forest*-tree; *sand*-stone, *lime*-stone. Or let us

take some artificial existence, say a statue. Now of the two elements which go to make up the statue, one ideal, the other material, one objective or formal, the other subjective or substantial, the latter, according to Swedenborg, finites the statue, fixes it, incorporates it, gives it outward body, and thus identifies it with other existence; while the former *in*-finites it, frees it from material bondage, vivifies it, gives it inward soul, and so individualizes it from all other existence. Thus the statue as an ideal form, or on its qualitative side, is absolute and infinite with all its maker's absoluteness and infinitude; and it is only as a material substance, or on its quantitative side, that it turns out contingent, finite, infirm.

This discrimination, so important in every point of view to the intellect, gives us the key to Swedenborg's ontology, his doctrine of the Lord or Maximus Homo. Swedenborg's cosmological principles make the natural world a necessary implication of the spiritual, and consequently make the spiritual world the only safe or adequate *explication* of the natural. In short, his theory of creation assigns a rigidly natural genesis and growth to the spiritual world; and as this theory is summarily comprised in his doctrine of the God-Man or Divine Natural Humanity, we shall proceed to test the philosophic worth of this doctrine, by applying it to the problem of our human origin and destiny. But before doing this it may be expedient briefly to recall who and what Swedenborg was, in order to ascertain whether his private history sheds any light upon his dogmatic pretensions. It is known to all the world that Swedenborg, for many years before his death, assumed to be an authorized herald of a new and spiritual Divine advent in human nature. Similar assumptions are not infrequent in history, and it cannot be denied that our proper *a priori* attitude toward them is one of contempt and aversion. But Swedenborg's alleged mission, both as he himself conceived it and as his books represent it, claimed no personal or outward sanction, and accepted no voucher but what it found in every man's unforced delight in the truth to which it ministered. He was himself remarkably deficient in those commanding personal qualities and graces of intellect which attract popular esteem; and we are quite sure that no such insanity eyer entered his own guileless heart as to attribute to himself the power of complicating in any manner the existing relations of man and God.

Swedenborg, as we learn from his latest and best biographer, Mr. White, — whose work is almost a model in its kind, and does emphatic credit both to his intellect and conscience, — was born at Stockholm in 1688. His father, who was a Swedish bishop distinguished for learning and piety, christened the infant Emanuel, "in order that his name might continually remind him of the nearness of God, and of that interior, holy, and mysterious union in which we stand to him." The youth thus devoutly consecrated justified all his father's hopes, for his entire life was devoted to science, religion, and philosophy. His history, as we find it related by Mr. White, was unmarked by any striking external vicissitudes; and his pursuits were at all times so purely intellectual as to leave personal gossip almost no purchase upon his modest and blameless career. He held the office for many years of Government Assessor of Mines, and appears to have enjoyed friendly and even intimate personal relations with Charles XII., to whose ability as a mathematician his diary affords some interesting testimonies. While he was not professionally active, his days were devoted to study and travel; and by the time he had reached his fiftieth year, his scholarly and scientific repute had been advanced and established by several publications of great interest. We may say generally that the pursuits of science claimed all his attention till he was upwards of fifty years old; that his life and manners were pure and irreproachable, and his intellectual aspirations singularly elevated. To arrive at the knowledge of the soul by the strictest methods of science had always been his hope and endeavor. He conceived that the body, being the fellow of the soul, was in some sort its continuation; and that if he could only penetrate therefore to its purest forms or subtlest essences, he would be sure of touching at last the soul's true territory. Long and fruitless toil had somewhat disenchanted him of this allusion previously; but what he calls "the opening of his spiritual sight," which event means his becoming acquainted with *the spiritual sense of the Scriptures,* or the truth of the DIVINE NATURAL HUMANITY, effectually put an end to it, by convincing him that the tie between soul and body, or spirit and letter, is not by any means one of sensible continuity, as from finer to grosser, but one exclusively of rational correspondence, such as obtains between cause and effect. From this moment, accordingly, he abandoned his scientific studies, and applied himself with intense zeal to the unfolding of the spiritual sense of the Scriptures "from things seen and heard in the spiritual world." This internal sense of the Scriptures is very unattractive reading to those who care more for entertainment than instruction, and we cannot counsel any one of a merely literary turn to undertake it. But it is full of marrow and fatness to a philosophic curiosity, from the flood of novel light it lets in upon history; its substantial import being, that the history of the Church on earth, which is the history of human development up to a comparatively recent period, has been only a stupendous symbol, or cover, under which secrets of the widest creative scope and efficacy, issues of the profoundest humanitary significance, were all the while assiduously transacting. It is fair to suppose,

therefore, that our sense of the worth of Swedenborg's spiritual pretensions will be somewhat biassed by the estimate we habitually put upon the Church as an instrument of human progress. If we suppose Church and State to have been purely accidental determinations of man's history, owning no obligation to his selfish beginnings on the one hand, nor to his social destiny on the other, we shall not probably lend much attention to the information proffered by Swedenborg. But if we believe with him that the realm of "accident," however vast to sense, has absolutely no existence to the reason emancipated from sense, we shall probably regard the Church, and its derivative the State, as claiming a true Divine appointment; and we *may* find consequently in his ideas of its meaning and history an approximate justification of his claim to spiritual insight. At all events no lower justification of his claim is for a moment admissible to a rational regard. As we have already said, his books are singularly void of literary fascination. We know of no writer with anything like his intellectual force who is so persistently feeble in point of argumentative or persuasive skill. His books teem with the grandest, the most humane and generous truth; but his reverence for it is so austere and vital, that, like the lover who willingly makes himself of no account beside his mistress, he seems always intent upon effacing himself from sight before its matchless lustre. Certainly the highest truth never encountered a more lowly intellectual homage than it gets in these artless books; never found itself so unostentatiously heralded, so little patronized in a word, or left so completely for its success to its own sheer unadorned majesty.

It must be admitted also that the books, upon a superficial survey, repel philosophic as much as literary curiosity, by suggesting the notion of an irreconcilable conflict between our conscious or phenomenal freedom and our unconscious or real dependence. To a cursory glance they appear to assert an endless warfare between the interests of our natural morality on the one hand, and of our spiritual destiny on the other. It seems, for example, to be taught by Swedenborg, that human morality serves such important theoretic ends in the economy of creation, that it may even be allowed to render the creature utterly hostile to his creator, or endow him with a faculty of spiritual suicide, and yet itself incur no reproach. In other words, our moral freedom is apparently made to claim such extreme consideration at the Divine hands, in consequence of its eminent uses to the spiritual life, as justifies it in absolutely deflecting us, if need be, from the paths of peace, and landing us ultimately in chronic spiritual disaffection to our Maker. Such, no doubt, is the surface aspect of these remarkable books, — the aspect they wear to a hasty and prejudiced observation; and if the reality of the case were at all conformable to the appearance, nothing favorable of course would remain to be said, since no sharper affront could well be offered to the creative perfection, than to suppose it baffled by the inveterate imbecility of its own helpless creature.

But the reality of the case is by no means answerable to this surface seeming; and it is only from gross inattention to what we may call the author's commanding intellectual doctrine, —his doctrine of the Lord or Maximus Homo, — that a contrary impression prevails to the prejudice of his philosophic repute. This doctrine claims, in the estimation of those who discern its profound intellectual significance, to be the veritable apotheosis of philosophy. What then does the doctrine practically amount to? It amounts, briefly stated, to this: that what we call Nature, meaning by that term the universe of existence, mineral, vegetable, and animal, which seems to us infinite in point of space and eternal in point of time, is yet in itself, or absolutely, void both of infinity and eternity; the former appearance being only a sensible product and correspondence of a relation which the universal heart of man is under to the Divine Love, and the latter, a product and correspondence of the relation which the universe of the human mind is under to the Divine Wisdom. Thus Nature is not in the least what it sensibly purports to be, namely, absolute and independent; but, on the contrary, is at every moment, both in whole and in part, a pure phenomenon or effect of spiritual causes as deep, as contrasted, and yet as united, as God's infinite love and man's unfathomable want. In short, Swedenborg describes Nature as a perpetual outcome or product in the sphere of sense of an inward supersensuous marriage which is forever growing and forever adjusting itself between creator and creature, between God's infinite and essential bounty and our infinite and essential necessity. But these statements are too brief not to require elucidation.

Let it be understood, then, first of all, that creation, in Swedenborg's view, is of necessity a composite, not a simple, movement, inasmuch as it is bound to provide for the creature's subjective existence, no less than his objective being. The creature, in order to be created, in order truly to be, must exist or *go forth from* the creator; and he can thus exist or go forth only in *his own form,* of course. Thus creation, or the giving absolute being to things, logically involves a subordinate process of *making,* which is the giving them phenomenal or conscious form. In fact, upon this strictly incidental process of formation, the entire truth of creation philosophically pivots; for unless the creator be able to give his creature subjective identity (which is natural alienation from, or *otherness than,* himself), he will never succeed in giving him objective individ-

uality, which is spiritual oneness with himself. In other words, the creature can enjoy no real or objective conjunction with the creator, save in so far as he shall previously have undergone phenomenal or conscious disjunction with him. His spiritual or specific fellowship with the creator presupposes his natural or genuine inequality with him. In short, the interests of the creature's natural identity dominate those of his spiritual individuality to such an extent that he remains absolutely void of being, save in so far as he exists or goes forth in his own proper lineaments. If creation were by possibility the direct act of Divine omnipotence, which men superstitiously deem it to be, — in other words, if God could create man magically, i.e. without any necessary implication of man *himself,* without any implication of his mineral, vegetable, and animal nature, — then of course creator and creature would be undistinguishable, and creation fail to avouch itself. Thus the total truth of creation spiritually regarded hinges upon its being a reflex not a direct, a composite not a simple, a rational not an arbitrary exertion of Divine power, — hinges, in short, upon its supplying a subjective and phenomenal development to the creature every way commensurate with, or adequate to, the objective and absolute being he has in the Creator.

We may clearly maintain, then, that the truth of creation is wholly contingent upon the truth of the creature's identity. If the creator is able to afford the creature valid selfhood or identity, then creation is philosophically conceivable, otherwise not. All that philosophy needs, in permanent illustration of the creative name, is to rescue the creature subjectively regarded from the creator, or put his identity upon an inexpugnable basis. To create or give being to things is no doubt an inscrutable function of the Divine omnipotence, to which our intelligence is incapable of assigning any *a priori* law or limit. But we are clearly competent to say *a posteriori* of the things thus created, that they *are* only in so far as they exist or go forth in their own form. That is to say, they must, in order to their being true creatures of God, not only possess spiritual form or objectivity in Him, as the statue has ideal form or objectivity in the genius of the sculptor, or the child moral form and objectivity in the loins of his father, but they must actually go forth from Him, or exist in their own proper substance, in their own constitutional identity, just as the statue exists in the appropriate constitutional substance which the marble gives it, or the child in the proper constitutional lineaments with which the mother invests it. The legal maxim is, *de non apparentibus et non existentibus eadem est ratio.* The philosophic demand is broader. It says, no *esse* without *existere;* no reality without corresponding actuality; no soul without body; no form without substance; no being without manifestation; in short, no creation on God's part save in so far as there is a rigidly constitutional response and reaction on ours. The creative perfection is wholly active; that is to say, God is true creator only to the extent that we in our measure are true creatures. Thus, before creation can be worthy of its name, worthy either of God to claim it or of us to acknowledge it save in a lifeless, traditional way, it implies a subjective experience on our part, an historic evolution or process of formation, by which we become eternally projected from God, or endowed with inalienable self-consciousness, and so qualified for His subsequent spiritual fellowship and converse. In other words, creation is practically and of necessity to our experience a formative or historic process, exhibiting a descent of the Divine nature exactly proportionate to the elevation of the human, and so presenting creator and creature in indissoluble union. This is the inexorable postulate of creation, that the creature be *himself,* — have selfhood or subjective life, — a life as distinctively his own as God's life is distinctively His own. Not only must the creature aspire, instinctively and innocently aspire, "to be like God, knowing good and evil," i.e. to be sufficient unto himself, but the creative perfection is bound to ratify that aspiration, and endow its creature with all its own wealth of goodness and wisdom. The aspiration itself is the deepest motion of the Divine spirit within us. It is impossible to be spiritually begotten of God without desiring to be like Him; that is, to be wise and good even as He is, not from constraint or the prompting of expediency, but spontaneously, or from a serene inward delight in goodness and wisdom. Evidently no fellowship between God and our own souls is possible until this instinct be appeased; for up to that event all our life will have been only the concealed motion of His spirit in our nature. He alone will have been really living in us, while we ourselves will have only seemed to live,— will have been, in fact, mere unconscious masks of His life.

Now how shall creation ever be seen to bear this surprising fruit? From the nature of the case, creation must be a purely spiritual operation on God's part, since He alone is, and there is nothing outside of Him whence the creature may be summoned. By the hypothesis of creation, God alone is, and the creature exclusively by Him. How is it conceivable, therefore, to our intelligence, that the creature should possess selfhood or subjective identity, without a compromise to that extent of the Divine unity? How is it conceivable that God, the sole being, should Himself create or give being to other existence without impairing to that extent His own infinitude? The creature has no being which he does not derive from the creator; this is obvious. And yet the hypothesis of creation binds us to regard the creator as communicating his own

being to another, without any limitation of its fulness. The demand of our intelligence is insatiable, therefore, until it ascertain how these things can be, — until it perceive how it is that the creator is able to impart selfhood or moral power to the absolutely dependent offspring of his own hands, the abjectly helpless offspring of his own perfection. By an indomitable instinct, the mind claims to know, and will never rest accordingly until it discover, what it is which validly separates creature from creator, and so permits their subsequent union, not only without violence to either interest, but with consummate reciprocal advantage and beatitude to both interests.

It is exactly here — in giving us light upon this most momentous and most mysterious inquiry — that what Swedenborg calls "the opening of his spiritual sight," or his discovery of "the spiritual sense of the Scripture," professes to make itself of endless avail. What the literal sense of revelation is, we all know familiarly. We have been too familiar with it, in fact, not to have had our spiritual perceptions somewhat overlaid by it. It represents creation as a work of God achieved and accomplished in space and time, and consequently makes the relation of creator and creature essentially outward and personal. Now "the spiritual sense" of Scripture as reported by Swedenborg is not a new or different literal sense. It is not the least literal, inasmuch as it utterly disowns the obligations of space and time, and claims the exclusive authentication of an infinite love and wisdom. In short, by the spiritual or living sense of revelation, Swedenborg means the truth of God's NATURAL humanity; so that all our natural prepossessions in regard to space and time and person confess themselves purely rudimental and educative, the moment we come to acknowledge in Nature and Man an infinite Divine substance. It is true, no doubt, that Swedenborg's doctrine of creation falls, without constraint, into the literal terms of the orthodox dogma of the Incarnation. But then the letter of revelation bears, as he demonstrates, so inverse a relation to its living spirit, that we can get no help but only hindrance, from any attempt to interpret his statements by the light of dogmatic theology. Dogmatic theology is bound hand and foot by the letter of revelation; and the letter of revelation "is adapted," says Swedenborg, "only to the apprehension of simple or unenlightened men, in order that they may thus be *introduced* to the acquaintance of interior or higher verities." Again he says, "Three things of the literal sense perish, when the spiritual sense of the word is evolving, namely, whatsoever belongs to *space,* to *time,* or to *person";* and still again, "In heaven no attention is paid to person, nor the things of person, but to things abstracted from person; thus angels have no perception of any person whose name is mentioned in the word, but only of his human quality or faculty." Hence he describes those who are in spiritual ideas as never thinking of the Lord from person, "because thought determined to person limits and degrades the truth, while thought undetermined to person gives it infinitude"; and he adds, that the angels are amazed at the stupidity of Church people, "in not suffering themselves to be elevated out of the letter of revelation, and persisting to think carnally, and not spiritually, of the Lord, — as of his flesh and blood, and not of his infinite goodness and truth." *

* Arcana Celestia, 8705, 5253, 9007; and Apocalypse Explained, 30.

It is manifestly idle, then, to attempt coercing the large philosophic scope of Swedenborg's doctrine within the dimensions of our narrow ecclesiastical dogma. There is as real a contrast and oppugnancy between the two to the intellect, as there is to the stomach between a loaf of bread and a paving-stone. For example, it is vital to the dogmatic view of the Incarnation, to regard it as an event completely included in space and time, but brought about by supernatural power, acting in direct contravention of the course of nature. A dogma of this stolid countenance bluffs the intellect off from its wonted activity no less effectually, of course, than a stone taken into the stomach arrests the digestive circulation. With Swedenborg, on the other hand, the Christian facts utterly refute this supernatural conception of the Divine existence and operation, or reduce it to a superstition, by proving Nature herself, in the very crisis of her outward disorder, to have been inwardly alive with all Divine order, peace, and power. According to Swedenborg, the birth, the life, the death, the resurrection of Christ were so remote from supernatural contingencies as to confess themselves the consummate flowering of the creative energy in *universal* nature. No doubt the flower is a very marked phenomenon to the senses, filling the atmosphere with its glory and fragrance. But its total interest to the rational mind turns upon those hidden affinities which, by means of its aspiring stem and its grovelling roots, connect it at once with all that is loftiest and all that is lowliest in universal nature, and so turn the flower itself into a sensuous sign merely or modest emblem of a secret most holy marriage, which is forever transacting in aromal depths of being, between the generic, universal, or merely animate substances of the mind, and its specific, unitary, or human form. So with the Incarnation. The literal facts have no significance to the spiritual understanding, save as a natural ultimate and revelation of the true principles of creative order, the order that binds the universe of existence to its source.

What are these principles? They are all summed up in the truth of the essential Divine *humanity*. According to Swedenborg, God is essential Man; so that creation, instead of being primarily a sensible product of Divine power, or a work accomplished in space and time, turns out first of all a spiritual achievement of the Divine love and wisdom in all the forms of human nature, and only subordinately to that a thing of physical dimensions. Swedenborg enforces this truth very copiously in the way of illustration, but never in that of ratiocination. His reason for this abstention is very instructive. Swedenborg distinguishes as no person has ever done between two orders of truth; — truth of being, ontological truth, truths of conscience in short; and truth of seeming, phenomenal truth, truths of science in short. The distinction between these two orders of truth is, that the former is not *probable,* that is to say, admits of no sensuous proof; while the latter is essentially probable, i.e. capable of being proved by sensuous reasoning. The French proverb says, *the true is not always the probable*. Now with Swedenborg, the true — the supremely true — is *never* the probable, that is, finds no countenance in outward likelihood, but derives all its support from the inward sanction of the heart. Facts — which are matter of outward observation or science — may be reasoned about to any extent, and legitimately established by reasoning. But truth — which is matter of inward experience or conscience — owns no such dependence, and invites no homage but that of a modest, unostentatious Yea, yea! Nay, nay! The philosophic ground of this state of things is obvious. For if the case were otherwise, if truth, truths of life, could be reasoned into us, or be made ours by force of persuasion, then belief would no longer be free; that is to say, it would no longer reflect the love of the heart, but control or coerce it. In other words, the truth believed would no longer be the truth we inwardly love and crave, but only that which has most outward prestige or authority to back it. In that event, of course, our affections, which ally us with infinitude or God, would be at the mercy of our intelligence, which allies us with nature or the finite. And life consequently, instead of being the spontaneous indissoluble marriage of heart and head which it really is, would confess itself at most their voluntary or chance concubinage.

We have no pretension, of course, to decide dogmatically for the reader whether what Swedenborg calls the Divine Natural Humanity be the commanding truth he supposes it to be, or whether it be a mere otiose hypothesis. But we are bound to assist the reader, so far as we are able, to decide these questions for himself; and we cannot do this more effectually than by fixing his attention for a while upon what is involved in the middle term of Swedenborg's proposition, since we are apt to cherish very faulty conceptions of what Nature logically comprises. Swedenborg's doctrine summarily stated is, that what we call Nature, and suppose to be exactly what it seems, is in truth a thing of strictly human and strictly Divine dimensions both, as being at one and the same moment a just exponent of the creature's essential want or finiteness, and of the Creator's essential fulness or infinitude. In other words, where people whose understanding is still controlled by sense, see Nature absolute or unqualified by spirit, Swedenborg, professing to be spiritually enlightened, does not see Nature at all, but only the Lord, or God-Man, carnally hidden indeed, degraded, humiliated, crucified under all manner of devout pride and self-seeking, but at the same time spiritually exalted or glorified by a love untainted with selfishness, and a wisdom undimmed by prudence. Manifestly then, in order to do justice to Swedenborg's doctrine, we must rid ourselves first of all of certain sensuous prejudices we cherish in regard to Nature; and to this aim we shall now for a moment address ourselves.

Nature is all that our senses embrace; thus it is whatsoever *appears* to be. Now the two universals of this phenomenal or apparitional world are space and time; for whatsoever sensibly exists, exists in space and time, or implies extension and duration. Space and time have thus a fixed or absolute status to our senses, so furnishing our spiritual understanding with that firm though dusty earth of fact or knowledge, upon which it may forever ascend into the serene expansive heaven of truth or belief. But now observe: just because space and time, which make up our notion of Nature, are thus absolute to our senses, we are led in the infancy of science, or while the senses still dominate the intellect, to confer upon Nature a logical absoluteness or reality which in truth is wholly fallacious. We habitually ascribe a rational or supersensuous reality to her, as well as a sensible; or regard the universe of space and time, not only as the needful implication of our subjective or conscious existence, but as an ample *explication* also of our objective or unconscious being. And every such conception of the part Nature plays in creation is puerile, and therefore misleading or fatal to a spiritual apprehension of truth.

This may be seen at a glance. For if you consent to make Nature absolute as well as contingent, — that is, if you make it be irrespectively of our intelligence, which you do whenever you reflectively exalt space and time from sensible into rational quantities, — then, of course, you disjoin infinite and finite, God and man, Creator and creature, not only phenomenally but really; not only *ab intra* or *in se,* but also and much more *ab extra,* or by all the literal breadth of Nature's extension, and all the literal length of her duration: so

swamping spiritual thought in the bottomless mire of materialism. For obviously if you thus operate a real or spiritual disjunction between God and man, you can never hope to bring about that actual or literal conjunction between them which Swedenborg affirms in his doctrine of the Divine Natural Humanity, save by hypostatizing some preposterous mediator as big as the universe and as ancient as the world. In short, you will be driven in this state of things spiritually to reconcile God and man, or put them at-one, only by inventing a style of personality so egregiously finite or material as consciously to embody in itself all Nature's indefinite spaces, and all her indeterminate times.

Thus, according to Swedenborg, sensuous conceptions of truth — the habit we have of estimating appearances as realities — are the grand intellectual hindrance we experience to the acknowledgment of a creation in which Creator and creature are spiritually united. Evidently, then, our only mode of exit from the embarrassments which sense entails upon the intellect, is to spurn her authority and renounce her guidance. Now the lustiest affirmation sense makes is to the unconditional validity of space and time, or their existence *in se;* and this means inferentially the integrity of Nature, or the dogma of a physical creation. The great service, accordingly, which Swedenborg does the intellect is, that he refutes this sensuous dogmatizing by establishing the pure relativity of space and time; so vindicating the exclusive truth of the spiritual creation. We defy any fair-minded person to read Swedenborg, and still preserve a shred of respect for the dogma of a physical creation. He utterly explodes the assumed basis of the dogma, by demonstrating that space and time are contingencies of a finite or sensibly organized intelligence; hence that Nature, being all made up of space and time, has no rational, but only a sensible objectivity. He demonstrates, in fact, and on the contrary, that Nature rationally regarded is the realm of pure subjectivity, having no other pertinency to the spiritual or objective world than the bodily viscera have to the body, than the shadow has to the substance which projects it, than darkness has to light, or death to life, — that is, a strictly *reflective* pertinency. The true sphere of creation being thus spiritual or inward, it follows, according to Swedenborg, that any doctrine of Nature which proceeds upon the assumption of her finality, or does not construe her as a mere constitutional means to a superior creative end, — as a mere outward echo or reverberation of the true creative activity in inward realms of being, — is simply delirious.

Swedenborg's doctrine then of the Divine Natural Humanity becomes readily intelligible, if, disowning the empire of sense, we consent to conceive of Nature after a spiritual manner, that is, by reducing her from a principal to a purely accessory part in creation, from a magisterial to a strictly ministerial function. There is not the least reason why I individually should be out of harmony with infinite goodness and truth, except the limitation imposed upon me by nature, in identifying me with my bodily organization, and so individualizing or differencing me from my kind. Make this limitation then the purely subjective appearance which it truly is, in place of the objective reality which it truly is not, — make it a fact of my natural constitution, and not of my spiritual creation, a fact of my phenomenal consciousness merely, and not of the absolute and infinite being I have in God, — and you at once bring me individually into harmony with God's perfection. Our discordance was never internal or spiritual, was never at best anything but phenomenal, outward, moral, owing to my ignorance of the laws of creation, or my sensible inexperience of the spiritual world, of which nevertheless I am all the while a virtual denizen. Take away then this fallacious semblance of the truth operated by sense, and we relieve ourselves of the sole impediment which exists to the intellectual approximation and equalization of creator and creature, of infinite and finite, and so are prepared to discern their essential and inviolable unity.

Thus the supreme obligation we owe to Philosophy is to drop Nature out of sight as a real or rational quantity intervening between creator and creature, and hiding them from each other's regard, and to conceive of her only as an actuality to sense, operating a *quasi* separation between them, with a view exclusively to propitiate and emphasize their real unity. In a word, we are bound no longer to conceive of Nature as she appears to sense, i.e. as utterly independent or unqualified by subjection to Man; but only as she discloses herself to the reason, that is, as rigidly relative to the human soul, and altogether qualified or characterized by the uses she promotes to our spiritual evolution.

Certainly we have no right after this to attribute to Swedenborg an obscure or mystical conception of Nature. Nature bears the same servile relation to the spiritual creation as a man's body bears to his soul, as the material of a house bears to the house itself, or as the substance of a statue bears to its form, namely, a merely quantifying, by no means a qualifying, relation. It fills out the spiritual creation, substantiates it, gives it subjective anchorage, fixity, or identification, incorporates it, in a word, just as the marble incorporates the statue. For the statue is primarily an ideal form, affiliating itself to the artist's genius exclusively, and is only derivatively thence a material existence. So I primarily am a spiritual form, that is to say, a form of affection and thought, directly affiliated to the creative love and wisdom; and what my body does is merely to fill out this form, substantiate it, define it to itself, give it

consciousness, allow it to say *me, mine, thee, thine.* What my body then does for my spirit specifically, Nature does for the universe of the human mind, or the entire spiritual world; namely, it incorporates it, defines it to itself, gives it phenomenal projection from the creator, and so qualifies it to appreciate and cultivate an absolute conjunction with him. My body reveals my soul — i.e. reveals the spiritual being I have in God — to my own rude and blunt intelligence; and the marble of the statue is an outward revelation of the beauty which exists ideally to the artist's brain. So Nature reveals the spiritual universe to itself, mirrors it to its own feeble and struggling intelligence, invests it with outward or sensible lineaments, and, by thus finiting or imprisoning it within the bonds of space and time, stimulates it to react towards its proper freedom or its essential infinitude in God.

We cannot too urgently point the reader's attention to this masterly vindication of Nature, and the part it plays in creation. Creation, as Swedenborg conceives it, is the marriage in unitary form of creator and creature. For the Divine love and wisdom, as he reports, "CANNOT BUT BE AND EXIST in other beings or existences created from itself"; and Nature is the necessary ground of such existences, as furnishing them conscious projection from the infinite. But let us throw together a few passages illustrative of his general scheme of thought.

"It is essential to love not to love itself, but others, and to be lovingly united with them; it is also essential to it to be beloved by others, since union is thus effected. The essence of all love consists in union; yea, the life of it, or all that it contains of enjoyment, pleasantness, delight, sweetness, beatitude, happiness, felicity. Love consists in my willing what is my own to be another's, and feeling his delight as my own; this it is to love. But for a man to enjoy his own delight in another, in place of the other's delight in him, this is not to love; for in this case he loves himself, while in the other he loves his neighbor. These two loves are diametrically opposed; they both indeed are capable of producing union, though the union which self-love produces is only an apparent or outward union, while really or inwardly it is disunion. For in proportion as any one loves another for selfish ends, he afterwards comes to hate him. How can any man of understanding help perceiving this? What sort of love is it for a man to love himself only, and not another than himself, by whom he is beloved again? Clearly no union, but only disunion, results from such love; for union in love supposes reciprocation, and reciprocation does not exist in self alone. Now when this is true of all love, it cannot but be infinitely true of the creative love; so that we may conclude that the Divine love cannot help being and existing in others whom it loves and by whom it is beloved. It is not possible, of course, that God can love and be beloved by others who are themselves infinite or divine; because then he would love himself, for the infinite or divine is one. If this infinitude or divinity inhered in others, it would be itself, and God would consequently be self-love, whereof not the least is practicable to him, because it is totally contrary to his essence." * "In the created universe nothing lives but God-Man alone, or the Lord; and nothing moves but by life from him; and nothing exists but by the sun from him: thus it is a truth that in God we live and move and have our being." # "Creation means, *what is Divine from inmost to outmost, or from beginning to end.* For everything which is from the Divine begins from himself, and proceeds in an orderly manner even to the ultimate end, thus through the heavens *into the world, and there rests as in its ultimate,* for the ultimate of Divine order is cosmical nature." $

* Divine Love and Wisdom, 47-49.
# Ibid., 301.
$ Arcana Celestia, 10,634.

Thus in all true creation the creator is bound, by the fact of his giving absolute being to the creature, to communicate himself— make himself over — without stint to the creature; and the creature, in his turn, because he gives phenomenal form or manifestation to the creative power, is bound to absorb the creator in himself, to *appropriate* him as it were to himself, to reproduce his infinite or stainless love in all manner of finite egotistic form; — so that the more truly the creator alone *is,* the more truly the creature alone *appears.* Now in this inevitable immersion which creation implies of creative being in created form, we have, according to Swedenborg, the origin of Nature. It grows necessarily out of the obligation the creature is under by creation to *appropriate* the creator, or reproduce him in his own finite lineaments. It overtly consecrates the covert marriage of infinite and finite, creator and creature. By the hypothesis of creation the creator gives sole and absolute being to the creature; and unless therefore the creature reverberate the communication, or react towards the creator, the latter will inevitably swallow him up, or extinguish the faintest possibility of self-consciousness in him. And the only logical reverberation of being is form or appearance. Being is extensive; form is intensive. Being expropriates itself to whatsoever is not itself; form impropriates whatsoever is not itself to itself. Thus in the hierarchical marriage of creator and creature which we call creation, the creator yields the creature the primary place by spontaneously assuming himself a secondary or servile one; gives him absolute or objective being, in fact, only by stooping himself to the limitations of the created form. Reciprocity is the very essence of marriage. Action and reaction must be equal between the factors, or the marriage unity is of its own nature void. If, accordingly, the creator contribute the element of pure being—the absolute or objective element — to creation, the creature must needs contribute the element

of pure form or appearance, its phenomenal or subjective element; for being and form are indissolubly one.

It is a necessary implication, then, of the truth of the Divine Natural Humanity, that while the creator gives invisible spiritual being to the creature, the creature in his turn gives natural form — gives visible existence — to the creator; or, more briefly, while the creator gives reality to the creature, the creature gives phenomenality to the creator. In other words still, we may say, that while the creator supplies the essential or properly creative element in creation, the creature supplies its existential or properly constitutive element, — that element of hold-back or resistance without which it could never put on manifestation. Nature is the attestation of this ceaseless give-and-take between creator and creature; the nuptial ring that confirms and consecrates the deathless espousals of infinite and finite. In spite, therefore, of its fertile and domineering actuality to sense, it is as void of all reality to reason as the shadow of one's person in a glass. It is, in fact, only the outward image or shadow of itself which is cast by the inward or spiritual world upon the mirror of our rudimentary intelligence. And inasmuch as the shadow or subjective image of itself which any object projects of necessity reproduces the object in inverse form, so Nature, being the subjective image or shadow of God's objective and spiritual creation, turns out a sheer inversion of spiritual order; exhibits the creator's fulness veiled by the creature's want, the creator's perfection obscured, and so alone revealed, by the creature's imperfection. Spiritual or creative order affirms the essential unity of every creature with every other, and of all with the creator. Natural or created order must consequently exhibit the contingent or phenomenal oppugnancy of every creature with every other, and of all with the creator; or else furnish no adequate foothold or flooring to the spiritual world.

Nature is thus, according to Swedenborg, an inevitable implication of the spiritual world, just as substance is inevitably implied in form, i.e. as serving to give it selfhood or identity. This is her sole function, to confer consciousness upon existence, or give it fixity, by denying it individuality or affirming its community with all other existence. Nature identifies existence or gives it finiteness, while spirit alone individualizes it or gives it infinitude. In truth, nature is a pure spiritual apparition, having no reality to the soul, but only to the senses. It exists only to a sensibly organized and therefore limited intelligence; and hence, however absolute it appears, it is really all the while nothing whatever but a ratio or mean between a finite and an infinite mind. We as creatures, that is, as finite by constitution, can have, of course, no intuitive, but only a rational, discernment of infinite or uncreated things. We cannot know Divine goodness and truth in a direct or presentative way, but only in an indirect or representative one, that is, only in so far as they abase themselves to our natural level, or accommodate themselves to our nascent sensuous understanding. And Nature is the proper theatre of this stupendous Divine abasement and obscuration,—of this needful revelation, or *veiling-over,* of the Divine splendor, in order to adapt it to our gross carnal vision. Throughout her total length and breadth, accordingly, she is a mere correspondence or imagery of what is going on in living or spiritual realms; but a correspondence or imagery which is vital nevertheless to our apprehension of creative order. For the very fact of our creatureship insures that we should have remained forever incognizant of the creator, and antipathetic to his perfection, unless he, by condescending to our limitations, or reproducing himself within the intelligible compass of our own nature and history, had gradually emancipated our intelligence, and educated us into living sympathy with his name.

Such, concisely stated, are the leading axioms of Swedenborg's ontology. Creation, spiritually regarded, is the living equation of creator and creature. But in order to the latter's attaining to the vital fellowship of the former, he must put on conscious or phenomenal form, must become clearly *self*-pronounced, that so being made aware, on the one hand, of his own essential and inveterate limitations, he may become qualified, on the other, to react spiritually towards the creator's infinitude. In other words, creation implies a strictly subordinate or incidental realm, a realm of preliminary *formation,* as we may say, in which the creature comes to self-consciousness, or the conception of himself as a being essentially distinct from, and antagonistic to, his creator. The logic of the case is inexorable. If creation at its culmination be an exact practical equation of creator and creature, the *minus* of the latter being rigidly equivalent to the *plus* of the former, then it incorporates as its needful basis a sphere of experience on the creature's part, in which he may feel himself utterly remote from the creator, and abandoned to his own resources; an empirical sphere of existence, in fine, which may unmistakably identify him with all lower things, and so alienate him from (i.e. make him consciously *another than)* his creator. Thus creation with Swedenborg, being at its apogee a rigid equation of the creator's perfection and the creature's imperfection, necessitates *a natural history,* or provisional plane of projection upon which the equation may be wrought out to its most definite issues. Creator and creature are terms of an inseparable correlation, so that we can no more imagine a creation to which the one does not furnish its causative element, the other its constitutive element, than we can imagine a child in which father and mother are not coequal factors, the one conferring life or soul, the other existence or body. No doubt their relation is a strictly conjugal one, proceeding upon a hierarchical distribution of the factors; one being head, the other hand; one being object, the other subject; one ruling, the other obeying. But their unity is all the more and none the

less assured on this account; for notoriously the truest objective harmony is that which reconciles the intensest subjective diversity.

To sum up all that has been said, creation, with Swedenborg, challenges a subject earth, no less than an all-encompassing heaven; a natural constitution or body, no less than a spiritual cause or soul; an experimental or educative sphere for the creature, no less than an absolute one for the creator; a realm of phenomenal freedom or finite reaction on the part of the former, no less than one of real force or infinite action on the part of the latter. In a word, creation means, to Swedenborg, the creature's spiritual *evolution* in complete harmony with his creator's perfection; but if this be true, and certainly Philosophy tolerates no lower conception, then obviously creation demands for its own actuality the natural *involution* of the creator, or his complete unresisting immersion in finite conditions. Which is only saying in other words, that creation — being a spiritual achievement of creative power within the limits of the created consciousness — involves to the creature's experience a rigidly natural generation and growth, with root and stem and flower all complete.

And now, having done ample justice to the theoretic principles involved in creation, we should like, if we had room, to pursue them into the sphere of their practical operation, as figuratively exhibited in the history of the church, which culminates on its literal side in the person of Christ, and thence reissues a spiritual form. For the church, according to Swedenborg, is the true theatre of the spiritual creation, though she has never had the least consciousness of her real dignity. But then the church has two aspects, one literal or phenomenal, the other spiritual or real; and these are in inveterate subjective opposition, though they both promote the same objective ends. Thus Swedenborg maintains that the church, under all her corrupt disguises in the letter, has been a strictly providential institution in the earth, promoting the same vital uses to the spiritual economy of mankind that the heart promotes to its physical economy; only as the heart has first a death-bearing office to enact, and then a life-giving one, so the church, as a literal institution, lays hold on hell, while on its spiritual side it allies man with Divinity. As the heart attracts to itself the vitiated blood of the body, gross, lifeless, blackened with all the foul humors discharged into it through its long circuit, so exactly the church, as the spiritual heart of mankind, attracts to itself by its eminent dignities the most selfish, the most despotic, the most worldly tempers among men. And as the heart, having thus gathered this fluid abomination to its living and generous embrace, makes haste to hand it over to the lungs to be defecated, washed, and renewed for use by contact with the outward, air, so also the church, by welcoming and harnessing every ungodly lust of men's bosoms to the car of its own advancement, manages, in spite of itself, to bring our most hidden iniquities to the surface, uncovers to the broad light of day the abysses of human depravity, and so gradually ventilates them by the purifying breath of the secular conscience, — gradually renovates, in fact, and restores to sanity, the corrupt public sentiment of the world, by the healing contact of men's unperverted *common* sense. The entire history of the church indeed, on its literal side, amounts to this, neither less nor more, — namely, such an utter abasement of the Divine name to the lowest level of men's carnal pride and concupiscence as begets in the gentile conscience an instinctive contempt and aversion towards all consecrated authority, and leads the common mind continually to associate God's honor and worship only with the reverence of every individual man, however conventionally degraded.

This, we repeat, would be an interesting study to pursue, but our space forbids us doing justice to it here, and we must content ourselves with having illustrated, however feebly, the essential principles which underlie a true ontology. In doing this we have not sought to justify Swedenborg, but rather to have him understood, that so the reader may no longer misconceive his proper intellectual significance, nor attribute to him the altogether odious pretension of being a missionary to the human conscience, or an authority in matters of faith. As a dialectician, his merits are inconsiderable; and it is only as a seer that he prefers the least philosophic claim to our regard. Now the peculiarity of the seer is, that he tells us only what he himself has "seen and heard"; and what consequently puts no manner of constraint upon our intelligence, but, on the contrary, authenticates its freest and most critical activity. It is solely in this aspect that Swedenborg presents himself to his reader in all his books. No pretension could be more utterly repugnant to the modest genius of the man, than that of defining the limits of human belief. No line nor word of all his writings can be adduced to prove that he was ever, for a moment, so infatuated by self-conceit as to fancy himself commissioned to found a new church, any more than Columbus was commissioned to found a new earth. He talks very freely, to be sure, of a new church, which is to be the crown and consummation of all past churches just as the flower of a plant is the crown and consummation of its leaf and stalk and roots. But this is no visible, but only a living or spiritual church, wholly unrecognized of those who are without it, and known only of those who inwardly belong to it. It is, in fact, according to Swedenborg, that new and everlasting church which alone was founded by Christ and his apostles, but which got itself subsequently overlaid and lost sight of through the dense carnality of its disciples. And the doctrine which he alleges as alone consonant with this church is one which makes charity of sole account before God, and faith comparatively of none; which frees life of its past bondage to routine, or restores good to the supremacy hitherto usurped by truth; which resuscitates,

in short, the long-slain but righteous Abel of the heart, and reduces the domineering Cain of the intellect to his cheerful subservience.

Thus the new church to Swedenborg's eyes is not any new and more arrogant ecclesiasticism, but that unitary spirit of love — love at once Divine and human — which has all along lain entombed under the old rituality, but is now at last, by the providential decline of such rituality in men's respect, or its descent into mere historic rubbish, frankly casting off its grave-clothes, and arraying itself in the living lineaments of a beatified brotherhood, fellowship, society of universal man. And his invariable influence upon his reader — whenever the reader himself is capable of spiritually discerning the church, or intellectually disavowing every *personal* claim upon the Divine regard — is to render him insensible to all possible doctrinal divergences among men, by teaching him that the fiercest zeal of truth is apt, nay, sure, to be associated with the utmost practical indifference to good. Indeed, the cornerstone of his intellectual polity is, that our beliefs are invariably bred in the long run of our affections, and wear their exclusive livery; so that no exactness of intellectual indoctrination affords the least pledge of our vital or spiritual sanity.

We cannot conclude without recommending again to attention Mr. White's excellent biography. We differ with him utterly in many of his specific judgments about Swedenborg, notably in what he says of the inferential injustice done by Swedenborg to woman; and it is clear that his private animosity to the Swedenborgians — who, though they be simple enough publicly to advertise themselves as the New Jerusalem, are yet much too sensible in private ever to deem themselves the finished work of God in human nature so long foreshadowed under that mystic name — cannot absolve him of his obligations to his author's spotless fame before the world: but his book is still by far the best Life of Swedenborg.

We take pleasure, also, in commending to public favor Mr. Lippincott's new and beautiful edition of Swedenborg's writings. The old translations were full of laxities, both of rendering and interpretation; and these, as we understand, have been carefully amended in the new edition. The paper and presswork of the volumes are strikingly handsome.

We owe a word, moreover, to a work which we have received since we began this article, and whose title we give below.* It is an affectionate, nay, an enthusiastic tribute to Swedenborg's unrecognized merits as a philosopher and man of science, made up of the various eulogistic notices his life and writings have attracted from men of letters. No doubt the world owes it to the memory of its distinguished men to preserve an honest record of its obligations to them; but Swedenborg would willingly have forgiven it the debt in his own case. We suspect that he would blush crimson if he could once get a sight of Mr. Tafel's book, and discover himself to have become the object of so much cheap personal laudation on the part of people who apparently are quite indifferent to the only claim he himself preferred to men's attention, that, namely, of a spiritual seer. Whatever his scientific and philosophic worth may have been to his own eyes, and we may be very sure that it was never very large, nothing can be more certain than that it became utterly obliterated there by the chance which subsequently befell him of an open intercourse with the world of spirits. He at once deserted his scientific pursuits after this event, and never once recurred to their published memorials as offering the least interest to rational curiosity; while he affirmed, on the contrary, that the facts of personal experience which he was then undergoing possessed the very highest philosophic and scientific interest, as alone shedding a fixed light upon every conceivable problem of man's origin and destiny. In looking somewhat attentively through Mr. Tafel's pages, we see no evidence that any of the writers he cites had the least regard for Swedenborg from Swedenborg's own point of view; while we see abounding evidence of their being disposed to yield him an extravagant personal homage, than which, we are persuaded, nothing could be more offensive to his own wishes. This petty partisan zeal is carried so far as to beget a very revolting note in one place (page 60), in which two men who honestly thought Swedenborg insane, are reported to have subsequently gone mad themselves with such hilarious satisfaction as leaves no doubt on the reader's mind that the reporter really supposed the Divine honor vindicated by that shabby catastrophe. If a suspicion of Swedenborg's sanity were an offence to the gods actually punishable by loss of reason, we know of no hospital large enough to house the victims which would ensue from that judgment within the limits even of our own scant acquaintance. Nothing, indeed, in our opinion can be more logical and salutary for certain minds than a suspicion of Swedenborg's sanity. And certainly nothing could be more ludicrously inapposite to the needs of those who appreciate his *real,* though incidental, services to science and philosophy, than a certificate to his merit in those respects would be from the hand of all the technical experts on the planet.

* Emanuel Swedenborg as a Philosopher and Man of Science. By Rudolph Leonard Tafel. Chicago: Myers and Chandler. 1867.