

Articles on Memorable Relations

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“Memorable Relations” by Rev. Erik Sandstrom

New Church Life, 1964. pp. 398-404.

Memorabilia is a Latin word meaning "memorable things." Most translations of the Writings render it "Memorable Relations." Actually the term first occurs in the singular, and we then have aliquod memorabile-"something memorable." In the sense of a "memorable relation" it so first occurs in Apocalypse Revealed 153. This number may be regarded as introducing a long series of Memorable Relations. We here have the term in its adjectival usage. Yet already in the next following chapter the adjective becomes a noun, as is so frequently the case in the Writings, and we now find hoc memorabile-"this memorable thing." From then on and in the later Writings the term stays a noun without, or in any case almost without, exception. Occasionally memorabilia, the plural, is used as a heading for only one Memorable Relation, as after Apocalypse Revealed, Chapters 12 and 20.

As indicated, the Memorable Relations commenced in the Apocalypse Revealed, namely, after Chapter 2. It may be noted, however, that instead of a Memorable Relation there follows, after Chapter 1, the statement of "The Faith of the New Heaven and the New Church in a Universal Idea."* Now, since the pattern of Apocalypse Revealed is one or more Memorable Relations after each chapter-there is only one other exception, Chapter 18, which has a kind of epilogue appended to it-it may, perhaps, be fairly argued that the Faith of the New Heaven and the New Church is an introduction and an entrance court to the special revelations contained in the Memorable Relations.

* AR 67

The Apocalypse Revealed is the only expository work that contains Memorable Relations, that is to say, under that name. Earlier, the Arcana Coelestia indeed has many portions of a comparable nature. The whole series on the inhabitants of other earths, for example, could be classed as in that category, for there, as in all the Memorable Relations, the revelations are based on what has been heard and seen.

In addition to the Apocalypse Revealed, two other major published works contain Memorable Relations, namely, Conjugal Love and True Christian Religion. Of the smaller published works the Brief Exposition has one, quoted from the Apocalypse Revealed, and Intercourse Between the Soul and the Body has one.

In the posthumous works we find Relations in Five Memorable Relations and in Conversations with Calvin. Altogether there are some 150 Memorable Relations in the Writings, a few of which are quoted from one work in a later one, thus occurring twice.* Of course, all the five volumes of the Spiritual Diary, a posthumous work, might be added to the list, in which case the total number of Relations would be swelled very considerably. Some New Church scholars have, in fact, wished to change the title of the Spiritual Diary to Memorabilia.** Swedenborg, not intending the work for publication, gave it no title. Here, however, it may be sufficient to note that the Spiritual Diary also contains very much material which could not well be classed with the Memorable Relations. But in any case it is clear that the Writings offer a great many "memorable things" from the spiritual world. Those from the major published works alone would, if collected in one volume, form a book of perhaps about 500 pages. More than one-fourth of the True Christian Religion is taken up with this kind of material.

* For a list of Memorabilia see NEW CHURCH LIFE, October 1955, PP. 465-468. EDITOR

** See "Some Little Known Facts Concerning Swedenborg's Memorabilia," by Alfred Acton, NEW CHURCH LIFE, March 1953, pp. 112-130. EDITOR.

Many affirmative readers of the Writings have wished that the Memorable Relations had been left out. Scoffers speak of "figments of the imagination." Even members of the church sometimes give them a reluctant hearing, saying that they are Probably true, yet not very important.

What do the Writings themselves say about them? After the last published Relation we have the following declaration, quoted from the first paragraph of Conjugal Love:

"I foresee that many who read the Memorable Relations that are appended to the chapters of this book will believe them to be figments of the imagination. But I declare in solemn truth that they are not inventions, but were truly seen and heard; not seen and heard in some state of the mind when asleep, but in a state of complete wakefulness. For it has pleased the Lord to manifest Himself to me, and to send me to teach these things which will belong to His New Church, which is meant by the New Jerusalem in the Revelation. For this purpose He has opened the interiors of my mind, that is, of my spirit; and in this way it has been granted to me to be in the spiritual world with angels, and at the same time in the natural world with men, and this now for twenty-seven years."*

* CL 1. Cf. TCR 851

Count von Hapken, once chancellor of the country, or prime minister, and a friend of Swedenborg, took his concern to the latter in person. Later he wrote to another friend concerning his interview as follows:

"I asked him once why he wrote and published those visions and memorable relations, which seemed to throw so much ridicule on his doctrines, otherwise so rational; and whether it would not be best for him to keep them to himself, and not publish them to the world? But he answered that 'he had orders from the Lord to publish them,' and that 'those who might ridicule him on that account would do him an injustice': for, says he, 'why should I, who am a man in years, render myself ridiculous for fantasies and falsehoods?'"*

* Docu. I:66e

Another of Swedenborg's friends, perhaps his closest friend of all, was Gabriel Beyer, a doctor of theology and a member of the Consistory in the diocese of Gothenburg. Beyer became one of the very earliest New Church men in the world, and he worked openly and at great risk to himself for the spread of the doctrines. The Apocalypse Revealed having been published, Swedenborg sent copies to him, and wrote in a letter:

"At the conclusion of every chapter there are memorable relations separated from the text by asterisks which you will please to read first. From these a thorough knowledge may be gathered of the wretched state into which the Reformed churches have been brought by faith alone."*

* Docu. II:p. 239

There is no apology here for these relations! We have, in fact, a first intimation of one of their uses, namely, to expose the true state of the world. Their more general use, however, is suggested in another letter of Swedenborg's:

"Some spirits were not willing that I should say anything of the things revealed to me; but they were told that these things were in the place of miracles."*

* Docu. II:p. 975

Here is the clue-"in the place of miracles." Miracles at the Lord's first advent served to establish His authority. "The works which the Father hath given Me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of Me, that the Father hath sent Me."* The works bore witness to His

teachings. In His first advent, these teachings later formed the letter of the New Testament. It would therefore follow that the Memorable Relations are to the Writings what the miracles are to the New Testament. (The miracles wrought by Moses and the prophets in the Jewish Church similarly reinforced their teachings.)

* John 5:36

The Writings are a revelation of the spiritual sense of the Word. That spiritual sense makes one with the Word in heaven. In it are contained all the arcana of the spiritual world, that is to say, the world of the spirit of man. Deeper still, there are also in it the secrets of the Lord's own mind. Now, how can we really understand, really receive, the spiritual sense without the spiritual world? Must we not be brought, in thought, to the world where there is no space and no time, in order to comprehend the workings of the affections and thoughts within our own minds, above and beyond the space-time limitations of the world of the five bodily senses?

Must we not, in thought, be brought to the true kingdom of the Lord in order really to see and understand the King of the kingdom? Nor are we shown only the kingdom itself in the Writings, but the opposite also, and the intermediate region between the two opposites-but all in order that the kingdom may be the more fully revealed; for everything is known by comparison with opposites and with things commingled in between the opposites. It is as if the Writings were saying: "See the beauty of life when men live by the order and law of the Lord; and see its misery when there is a departure from order."

Of course, inherent in the argument is the observation that the spiritual world is nothing but the world of the human mind. Man, in his mind, is a citizen of that world from birth, and openly so after death. Consequently all things that are true of the mind are also true of the spiritual world, and vice versa. We ought not to think that the panoramic scenery with its trees and flowers, animals and birds, mountains and valleys, is the spiritual world itself. The spiritual world is not just a finer material world. The panoramic scenery is nothing but a complete and absolute correspondence of the states of those who dwell in it. That is why it is so utterly and deeply real. Hence it is that even the descriptions of the things that stand forth to external view in the other world are descriptions of the mind.

Accordingly it may be said that the Memorable Relations are like illustrations in a book. They tell us of what goes on in heaven, in the world of spirits-the intermediate region-and in hell, in order that the interior state of the angels or spirits might be revealed.

As for revealing the Lord Himself, this is done through the wonderful things that exist in His kingdom. It is also done adversely by means of the horrible things that come to view among those who date and oppose their Maker. The Writings tell us of heaven and of hell; giving a general description in the work of that name, and recounting particular experiences in the Memorable Relations.

Referring specifically to the states of angels and spirits, as these are revealed through the Memorable Relations, we should reflect that there could be no more powerful means of leading to an awareness of our own state. A man is not different before death from what he is after death, that is, within himself. True, he must be divested of many concepts and habits before he can enter heaven, but this is only in order that his interior self may be laid bare and may come into its own. That self was there already. It was formed in the world, for good if his destination is heaven, for evil otherwise.

Many think that spirits in the Memorable Relations sound silly, and that the angels themselves occasionally appear like pious simpletons! But do we not at times, within ourselves, think silly thoughts? The point is that in the spiritual world we speak them too! In this world simulation is possible, for we can cover over the things of our spirit with things observed and memorized from the world of the senses. Talking "facts" will frequently be regarded as talking wisdom. But what is our actual interior idea concerning these facts-their uses, their relation to life, their relation to one another? Perhaps that idea is foolish. If so, the folly would stand forth in

the other world. There no one is able to speak differently from his real thought or idea: in the first state after death he is, but that is a transient state, and not the true state of his spirit. That is why a spirit who had an interior image of three Divine persons in his mind on earth openly speaks of three Divine persons after death.

In the world most people speak differently, because it sounds silly to say there are three persons and one God. Yet at the same time many of them pray to the Father "for the sake of the Son," and quite obviously the "Holy Ghost" is someone or something apart from either Father or Son. What matters, obviously, is the interior idea a man has of his God, and that idea, whatever its nature, is what he professes in the other life. This should be taken to heart, for the Writings reveal that a man is judged according to his idea of God. Hence the necessity of having a really true, if only general, understanding of the Lord; a correct, if simple, internal image of Him; and an accurate knowledge of His qualities and His laws, if but the most universal of these. Not that the idea separate from love and life judges, but that our actual concept of God is that from which we form our love and life.

Every man is created into the image of God, spiritually into his own image of God! That is why the Writings tell us that whatever we love the most is our god, and that, of course, does not necessarily mean the true God; or conversely, the real god of our hearts is whatever we love the most, or He whom we love the most.* Our unregenerate love forms its own image of God, and it is a false one; while the regenerate love, having first been built by a life spent in the following of the Lord, responds by forming for itself an interior view of its Lord. It is in agreement with this that the Lord does not appear the same to all persons, nor to all angels, but in each case according to the person's or the angel's own state.** Yet although He appears variously, it is one and the same Lord who so appears; and, clearly, His universal appearance, and also the universal concept and love of His qualities, will be the same with all angels.

* AE 950:3

** On this point see HH 55 and 121

If we should ever think that an angel sounds simple in a Memorable Relation, let us stop to reflect that everything true and wise can be reduced to a simple statement. For instance, if an angel husband says of his wife, "She is my heart, and I am her lungs,"* then he is not expressing a pious, poetic idea such as might be received on earth with a benevolent smile. He is saying that her whole being, with her wonderful love of what is beautiful and true, enters into him as the universal impulse of his whole life; and that he in his turn, by his whole bearing and usefulness, and through everything he says, breathes the truths of wisdom-the truths of life-into her longing and receptive heart. To earthly ears his words may sound "simple," but what he is actually saying is full of exquisite wisdom.

* CL 75

In True Christian Religion 111 there is a striking illustration of the principle that in the spiritual world no one can speak differently from his thought. It was found that certain spirits were utterly unable to say, "one God"; nor could they pronounce the name "Jesus" or "Divine Human." Over and over again they tried, and they twisted their lips, but to no avail. On the other hand, they could say "Christ" and "God the Father." It is explained that the reason for this was that the latter names, which are capable of standing for the traditional concept of the Messiah-"Christ" in Greek-and for the universal idea that there is some Supreme Being, were compatible with the interior ideas they had held in the world concerning Christ as one person and God the Father as another. But "Jesus" means "Jehovah saves." It is a name which interiorly not only identifies the Lord with the infinite God of eternity but also stands for His infinite love of saving the human race from its sins. That concept was utterly alien to the real thoughts of those spirits; hence their inability to say "Jesus." "Divine Human" is the most wonderful combination of two names in all human language: Divine, that is, in itself infinite and eternal, and at the same time Human, namely, capable of showing itself and communicating with men and angels. Nor, therefore, can

anyone interiorly say "Divine Human" save he who turns to the Lord as He reveals Himself, thus to the visible God, and follows Him. As for the idea of one God, it is self-evident that no one can interiorly and truly say it unless he actually thinks it.

In all this the Memorable Relations, and particularly the one just referred to, reveal the interior law within the Lord's words: "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."*

* Matthew 12:37

Seeing, then, that the law of the spiritual world is such that everything whatever that comes to external view is an accurate and full representation of what is interiorly in the angel or in the spirit, it follows that the whole doctrine concerning that world is a doctrine of psychology. If we so view the revelations concerning the other world we shall see something of their real purpose, and discover the echo or reflection of that world within ourselves.

It was said that we cannot possibly understand the spiritual sense without the spiritual world. Possibly it may now be confirmed that the expositions of the literal sense of the Word, as we find these in the Writings, and the revelations concerning the other world have one and the same purpose; and that the expositions and revelations how together in order to open up the secrets of the human mind, and at the same time to set forth in its glory and power the Human mind of the Lord God the Savior Jesus Christ Himself. It is thus that the Lord presents Himself to view in His second coming, in the Writings, in order that men may again, as in ancient times, become His images after His likeness.

Finally two points. First about the speech of angels and spirits as quoted in the Memorable Relations. Do the Writings quote verbatim? Did the angels and spirits speak Latin-the very Latin words the Writings give? Of course not! No angel or spirit can utter a single word of earthly language. But Swedenborg, in his unique state, was able to comprehend accurately and fully the ideas that angels or spirits expressed in their spiritual language, and it is these ideas that are quoted in the Writings through the analogous Latin phrases and words.

Second about the placing of the Memorable Relations at the end of an expository chapter, in the Apocalypse Revealed, or of a doctrinal chapter, in Conjugal Love and the True Christian Religion. An analysis of these Relations proves that they have a distinct bearing on the respective chapters to which they are appended, and chapter and Relation should be read, or reviewed, together. This close bearing is never more obvious than in the case of Revelation 11 and its Relation.*

* Apocalypse Revealed 485-530, and 531, respectively.

It may to some extent appear from all of this that the Memorable Relations are absolutely indispensable to a true understanding of the revelation which the Lord now gives to save the world; thus why Swedenborg, according to von Hapken's testimony, "had orders from the Lord to publish them."

"Why Should I Read the Memorable Relations?" By Rev. Derek Elphick ***New Church Life*, 1999. pp. 244-249.**

In the winter of 1759, a Swedish nobleman named Anders Van Hopken struck up an acquaintance with Emanuel Swedenborg. Count Hopken, as he was known, was one of the founders of the Royal Academy of Sciences, and once held the highest public office in Sweden, equivalent to that of Prime Minister. His acquaintance with Swedenborg began when it was first publicly known in Stockholm that this man was the author of the Heavenly Doctrines. Count Hopken would later commend Swedenborg for the lucid, rational doctrines contained in his theological works. He clearly recognized the revolutionary ideas contained in them, and we have little reason to doubt that Count Hopken became a convert to the faith of the New Church as a result.

There was, however, one feature to this new revelation that the Count questioned, wondering if it was necessary to include the Memorable Relations in the published works. In writing to a friend he said, "I asked [Swedenborg] once why he wrote and published those visions and memorable relations which seem to throw so much ridicule on his doctrines, otherwise so rational; and whether it would not be best for him to keep them to himself, and not publish them to the world. But he answered that he had orders from the Lord to publish them . . ." (Documents Vol. I: p. 66, II: p. 416).

Swedenborg later wrote back to Count Hopken saying: "Do not suppose that without such a positive order I should have thought of publishing things that I well knew many would regard as false, and which would bring ridicule upon myself. If I assure them that I have received this command, and they are unwilling to believe me, the satisfaction will remain to me of having obeyed the orders of my God" (Ibid.).

As Swedenborg anticipated, the objection to including the memorable relations in the Heavenly Doctrines did not go away.

In another letter addressed to him from a publisher named John Cuno, Swedenborg was told: "Most people despise your memorable relations, which are indeed wonderful but not proved, and they ridicule them as the mere outbirth of your imagination. Others again are delighted with them, as with fairy tales, but nevertheless make sport of them" (Documents Vol. II:p. 468).

And so began a debate as to the use and purpose of the memorable relations that has continued off and on up to the present day (although it should be pointed out that many people do not view them as problematic and enjoy reading them). The complaints have not always been vocal or public, which is part of the problem. The accounts are quietly dismissed by their readers as unimportant or irrelevant.

As readers of the Heavenly Doctrines we need to understand why this debate began. We need to understand what the objections were, and why they were made. We also need to see why Emanuel Swedenborg was so emphatic in defending the memorable relations.

The memorable relations are the inter-chapter material found in *The Apocalypse Revealed*, *Conjugal Love*, *Brief Exposition*, and *The True Christian Religion*, among others. There are 150 of them, enough to form a book of about 500 pages. More than one third of *The True Christian Religion* is made up of this material.

The term "memorable relation" is better translated "narrative account," for that is what they are. They are accounts describing Swedenborg's notable experiences in the spiritual world. They are like illustrations in a book, telling us in great detail what goes on in heaven, in the world of spirits, and in hell. They include intense discussions and debates among angels and spirits on a variety of subjects, such as the nature of God, the secrets of a true and happy marriage, the origin of evil, creation, and free will, to name a few. These accounts uncover many of the age-old mysteries and misconceptions that people have had about the afterlife.

In reading these accounts, we witness on the plane of spiritual life the inevitable consequences of people's choices.

Some of the material is frightening because there are people who choose to be violent, corrupt, self-centered, and greedy. But much of the material contains breathtaking scenes from heaven showing people there who choose life over death and in doing so discover the exquisite joy and beauty in serving others in a life of use.

So why would people object to the narrative accounts? First of all, they are long. Some of the accounts go on page after page. Who hasn't been tempted to skip over them for that very reason? They also appear to be unconnected to the chapters they precede and follow, although upon closer examination it is found that they are very much related. Another objection people make is that the spirits described in these accounts often appear foolish and silly, and the angels sometimes come across as being overly pious and simple. In other words, the reader complains that he cannot "identify" with the inhabitants of this world.

An additional objection to the narrative accounts is that they appear to be dreamlike and surreal, which makes the reader wonder if the characters and events portrayed are fictitious. As a result, some people have said that these accounts are not descriptions of actual events at all, and that in preparing them Swedenborg was most likely writing allegories-fable-like stories carefully composed to express doctrinal ideas (see *New Church Life*, 1972, p. 382).

This is a damaging conclusion to draw, for these accounts are as real as any historic event recorded in this world. It is on the issue of their authenticity that Swedenborg vigorously defends the narrative accounts. We see a dramatic example of this defense in the opening words of the book *Conjugal Love*.

I anticipate that many who read the following descriptions and the accounts at the ends of the succeeding chapters will believe they are figments of my imagination. I swear in truth, however, that they are not inventions but actual occurrences to which I was a witness. Nor were they seen in any condition of unconsciousness but in a state of full wakefulness.

For it has pleased the Lord to manifest Himself to me and send me to teach the doctrines that will be doctrines of the New Church To this end He has opened the inner faculties of my mind and spirit. As a result it has been made possible for me to be in the spiritual world with angels and at the same time in the natural world with people, and this now for twenty-five years (CL 1).

Not one of these accounts is made up or composed for some kind of literary style or effect. Each one describes an actual event witnessed in the spiritual world (sometimes presented in a way that is alarmingly matter-of-fact) in a state of full wakefulness, and is presented to the public for no other reason than to illustrate a fundamental point of doctrine.

In a letter to Dr. Beyer, one of Swedenborg's closest friends and one of the first converts to the New Church, another use of the narrative accounts is given. In sending Dr. Beyer new copies of *The Apocalypse Revealed*, Swedenborg attached a note that said: "At the conclusion of every chapter there are memorable relations separated from the text by asterisks that you will please read first. From these a thorough knowledge may be gathered of the wretched state into which the Reformed churches have been brought by faith alone" (*Documents Vol. II:p. 239*).

Here we have another compelling use of the narrative accounts. This material has been included in the *Heavenly Doctrines* to expose the true state of the church on earth, and this through eyewitness accounts (rather than the more familiar method of rational argument).

There is one final use of the narrative accounts (and a very intriguing one). Our attention is drawn to a passage in which some spirits were apparently questioning Swedenborg about why he needed to make his experiences of the afterlife public knowledge. While the reference does not refer directly to the narrative accounts, it is obviously connected. We read: "Some spirits

were not willing that I should say anything about the things revealed to me: but they were told that these things were in the place of miracles, and that without them people would not know the quality of the book, they would not buy it, nor read it, nor understand it, nor be affected by it, nor believe it.

In short, they would ignore it" (SE 4123; cf. Documents Vol. II:p. 975).

The things revealed to me "were in place of miracles." That is a dramatic statement. It is also an incredible claim. What did Swedenborg mean by it?

It seems quite clear that the Lord used miracles at His first advent to establish His authority. In speaking to His critics, He said, "I have a greater witness than John's; for . . . the very works that I do bear witness to Me" (John 5:36). The works that the Lord performed (in the form of miracles) bore witness or gave authority to His teachings, just as the miracles performed by Moses and the prophets reinforced their teachings. It has been suggested that the same rule applies to the narrative accounts. They were published to bear witness and give authority to the rational statements of doctrine found elsewhere in the Heavenly Doctrines (see New Church Life, 1964, p. 399).

Think about it. How much authority would the teachings on heaven and hell have if we weren't shown what those places are like and how the people there treat each other? How much of an impression would the teachings on conjugal love have on us if we weren't shown married couples in heaven who experience its delight and happiness every day? How much motivation for living a life of true charity would people have if they weren't shown inspirational examples in heaven? There isn't a more powerful means at the Lord's disposal of leading people to an awareness of their habits and attitudes than actually showing them the world of the spirit, the "place" in which their minds live, breathe, and act right now!

So why should we read the narrative accounts?

The most obvious answer is because Emanuel Swedenborg had orders from the Lord to publish them. These eyewitness accounts of things "heard and seen" in the spiritual world are clearly intended to be a part of the Lord's new revelation.

They help us see the life of the spirit in a totally unique way. They reinforce the rational statements of doctrine we already know, giving this knowledge a new authority in our lives. Skipping over the narrative accounts would be like picking up a coffee-table book and reading the text but ignoring all the large, glossy photo

The narrative accounts should also be read for their humor. Humor (at least the good kind) comes from seeing opposites, from seeing the sharp contrast, indeed the clash, between good and evil. Certain spirits (usually bad ones) are often depicted holding forth on insane and ludicrous arguments which are put forward to justify their inappropriate behavior. We find ourselves laughing, not at the people themselves (because their lot is very sad), but at the collection of nonsense that is used to support their point of view and lifestyle (for example see CL 477; TCR 134, 185; DP Supplement; New Church Life, 1977, pp. 84-85). Seeing contrasts as sharp as these helps us to grow in our resolve to do only what is right before the Lord.

The narrative accounts are a special part of the Lord's new revelation. They may not be polished or written in a literary style that grabs our attention, but then nothing in the Word is written for that purpose (see AC 8971, 9086:3, 9280:3; SS 1). The narrative accounts have been given to us so that many new details about the afterlife may be known. They have also been given to the world to uncover some of the age-old mysteries and misconceptions people have had about the afterlife. These are the reasons why Emanuel Swedenborg felt compelled to write the following statement:

It has been given me by the Lord to see wonderful things that are in the heavens and below the heavens. I must from command relate what has been seen (AR 962; cf. BE 120; TCR 188).

Lessons: CL 532, 533

“The Necessity of Swedenborg’s Introduction into the Spiritual World” by Rev. Frank Rose (Delivered at the Thirty-Ninth British Assembly, Colchester, August 4, 1952.)

***New Church Life*, 1953. pp.61-70.**

When the Lord was on earth, He told a parable of a certain rich man, whose disregard for the poor destined him to a place in Hades. This rich man, on discovering that the spiritual world was a very real place, pleaded with Abraham to send Lazarus to his father's house so that the five brothers of the rich man might be forewarned. In reply Abraham said: "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them." The rich man responded: "Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent." And to this Abraham merely remarked; "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead" (portions of Luke 16:19-31).

People have not changed very much in the centuries since the Lord told this parable. Swedenborg was well aware of the fact that people would not be persuaded by his repeated testimony that he had come back from the dead. And so he writes: "I know that few will believe that any one can see things that exist in the other life, and bring therefrom any report respecting the state of souls after death, for few believe in the resurrection, and fewer of the learned do so than of the simple some go so far as to say openly that if any one were to rise from the dead and they were to see, hear, and touch him, then they would believe. But if this were done, it would have to be done for each individual, and still no such person as denies in heart would be persuaded by it the Sadducees openly denied the resurrection, but did better than those at the present day who say they do not deny it because it is according to the doctrine of faith and yet do deny in heart; so that they say what is contrary to what they believe, and believe what is contrary to what they say. But lest they should confirm themselves further in this false opinion, of the Lord's Divine mercy I have been permitted, while still in the body in this world, to be in the spirit in the other life and to speak there with souls who had risen not long after death as very many say that they will believe if any one comes to them from the other life, it will now be seen whether they will be persuaded against the hardness of their hearts" (AC preface to Genesis 16).

It is clear that Swedenborg had no illusions about how the Writings would be received. He wrote from command and not from caprice.

He included the descriptions of the spiritual world from a sense of duty, not merely because he thought that they would attract people to the New Church. That this is so is indicated in Count Hopken's Testimony concerning Swedenborg as recorded in Tafel's DOCUMENTS: "I know that Swedenborg has related his memorable relations in good faith. I asked him once why he wrote and published these memorable relations which seemed to throw so much ridicule on his doctrines, otherwise so rational; and whether it would not be best for him to keep them to himself, and not to publish them to the world? But he answered that he had orders from the Lord to publish them, and that those who might ridicule him on that account would do him injustice, for, said he, why should I, who am a man in years, render myself ridiculous for phantasies and falsehoods?" (Docu. II, p. 416; cf. Docu I, p. 66).

The direct command to make known the various things seen and heard in the spiritual world (TCR 771) was but an echo of the words of Genesis: "Let there be light" (Genesis 1:3). The Lord wills that men should understand, and not, as some believe, that they should be in ignorance of the truth. And it is in order that the man of the New Church may not wander about in shade that he has been given the means of understanding the spiritual world (TCR 771).

Man was born to live in heaven, and it is supremely important that he be given the opportunity of preparing himself for this eternal home (AC 1775; cf. AE 1094:1). In all things the Lord looks to the salvation of men. This is, of course, true of revelation. The basic reason, then,

why the spiritual world has been revealed, is that a knowledge of that world is necessary to man's salvation. We are asked in the Writings: "How can one who never thinks about heaven, hell and the life after death, shun evils as sins? Such a man does not know what sin is" (AE 936:2).

If this point were obvious, the question as to why it was necessary for the spiritual world to be revealed would not arise. But, people say, "Could not a man refrain from stealing without knowing about the spiritual world? couldn't he love his neighbor without believing that there is a heaven and a hell!" The Ten Commandments are the Ten Commandments whether there is a spiritual world or not, it is proposed.

This question seems to bother a great many people when they first learn about the New Church. The whole subject of the spiritual world seems too vague or too complicated to discuss. And on top of this it seems to be quite impractical and theoretical in nature.

The difficulty begins with a misunderstanding of the nature of evil. Evil may be defined as a perversion of order. In itself it is not a substance; it is not a thing; it is not a bad habit; it is not even the sum total of all that is annoying to us. Evil is much more subtle than that.

It follows us around in careful disguise for it appears in men as an attitude of mind. It is an attitude that seeks to destroy the order which the Lord has placed in the universe.

According to certain physicists, the universe of itself tends to slip into chaos and confusion. The sun tends to cool elf, things tend to decay and to settle into meaningless masses. Hereditary evil may be compared to this in that it is a natural tendency to enjoy disorder. Take the case of the poor housekeeper who must constantly struggle with the tendency to leave the house in a mess and enjoy it that way. Her problem is to come to know what order is, and from a sense of duty to impress that order on the house whether she likes it or not. And this, of course, means that there must be some standard, and some means of distinguishing between what is of order, and what is of evil.

This makes the problem of regeneration sound simple, but it is complicated by the fact that there are many different degrees in creation. There can be no order that does not account for these several degrees. Ideally, the Lord must be at the head, the heavens below, and the world under the feet. When man places the natural world above the spiritual world, or when he places his own will above the Divine will, he perverts order, and as it were creates evil. The great struggle of life is to effect a proper balance and subordination among the various degrees of life. In order that this struggle may be carried out intelligently and freely, the Lord has seen fit to reveal things about Himself, about the spiritual world and about an orderly life in the natural world.

Consider the confusion that has arisen among Christians because of a misunderstanding of what evil is. All the stress was laid upon a correct external without any regard for the necessary ordering and arrangement of the degrees of life. And so baptism was mistaken for salvation, drinking for intemperance, and misconduct for evil. With a great mass of people religion became a ritual. The church prescribed the narrow external path which her members must follow, and regeneration was measured by the ability of the individual to follow that path without wavering to the right or left.

But now the Lord has shattered the fable that the church can prescribe what her members shall do, and has given back to the individual the responsibility of ordering his steps according to his own conscience. This responsibility would be meaningless unless the Lord had presented the doctrines of true order in a rational form. Now men can study the teachings about the spiritual world and can attempt to effect a balance in their own lives between mind and body.

The answer to our question, then, is this: The spiritual world has been revealed in order that men might shun evils as sins.

We note in this answer that the purpose is not a new one. And as a matter of fact, the Lord wills from eternity that man should not only know and understand the spiritual world, but as Spiritual Diary 2542 words it: "should reach his (full) age, be ignorant that he lived in the body, and so, his body being thrown off, immediately remove into heaven." For man was created so that even while living on earth he might at the same time live among the angels in heaven (AC 1880: 4; cf. SD 2541). This being the case, our thoughts turn to the question, not as to why the spiritual world has been revealed, but why it was hidden from men for so long a time.

In the beginning, men enjoyed some intercourse with the spiritual world. However, when evil increased, the dangers of this intercourse increased. Finally the door between the two worlds was closed, with only an occasional messenger to remind the one of the other's existence.

The Writings give us the general requirement for intercourse with spirits when they teach: "Man in his spirit is able to see things that are in the spiritual world if he can be withdrawn from the sensual things which are from the body and be elevated into the light of heaven by the Lord" (AE 543:5; cf. AC 4622). This suggests that sensuality is what prevents communication between the two worlds. In appearance, the Lord blinded the eyes of men. But evil is what blinds men to the truth, and it was the increase of evil in the world that closed the communication with heaven

(AC 5964). Men became sensual. They became so enthralled with the natural world and its delights that they turned their minds away from the spiritual world. They were reluctant to admit that the natural world which they loved so much could be taken away from them. For this reason they could not have accepted a spiritual world that was anything but a more perfect natural world. So it is that we find the Mohammedan heaven differing from the natural world only in that the black eyed women are more numerous and less rebellious than their earthly counterparts. Men who reached heaven enjoyed feasting and drinking, and reclined on soft couches for the remainder of their days.* This was not a spiritual world, but just another idealized sensual world.

* The Koran, Sura LV.

Had men been taught more about the spiritual world in revelation they would have seen it in this same light, and so would have taken all that is spiritual out of it. But the Lord's hands are not shortened that they cannot save. As soon as men had become so immersed in evil that they would not acknowledge a spiritual world, the Lord began a gentle leading that would one day bring them out of this their darkness into light. The letter of the Word became almost silent about the after life, disclosing only enough to preserve the innocent in the hope of immortality.

This was what made it possible for there to be two camps among Jewish scholars the one believing in a life after death and the other firmly denying it.

When the Lord came on earth He gave comfort to those who would not give up the hope of eternal blessedness. But the teachings were not explicit and they left the Christian world with little more than wishful thinking about what the spiritual world might contain. Indeed, the Lord had many things to tell them that they could not as yet bear. Eventually ignorance turned into denial, until, at the time of Swedenborg a belief in the spiritual world had almost entirely disappeared.

Conditions today are not much better. J. Paterson Smyth describes contemporary belief in these words. "The Lord is risen, but the people do not know it. There is no death, but the people do not believe it men pass into the Unseen as stupidly as the caterpillar on the cabbage-leaf, without curiosity or joy or wonder or excitement at the boundless career ahead. . . . instead of the thrill of adventure we have the dull grey monotony of aged lives drawing near the close, and the loneliness of parting is intensified in the hearts of the bereaved as the beloved one crosses the barrier . . . what is the matter with us, Christian people! Do we not know? Or have we lost

our beliefs? Or has imagination grown dulled by too frequent repetition of God's good news?" (J. Paterson Smyth: Foreword to The Gospel of the Hereafter).

This denial even in the face of the Lord's teachings was again the result of sensuality. The evil loves that place the body above the spirit will not admit that the spirit is immortal and that the body must perish. And so, in order to shape doctrine to suit themselves, men have either denied the life after death, or have suggested that when the body dies men wander about in the air longing for the material body. The great and wonderful day of the Lord will come when men can once again be joined with the flesh and can live in the kingdom of God on earth to eternity. Many religious sects dangle in front of their people the tempting thought that only members of their baptism will be privileged to come back into their physical bodies when the graves are reopened.

The reason why the spiritual world remains concealed, then, is that men are in evils that close their understanding. It is of the Lord's mercy that men have remained ignorant of the spiritual world, because these same evils would have led them to profane the truth had they known it.

The world is not regenerate today any more than it was when the door between heaven and earth was first closed. And so it is a change in regard to the possibility of profanation that makes it possible for the spiritual world to be presented to men once more. As a matter of fact, it is because men are more deeply immersed in evil that it is now possible to reveal that world without danger of profanation.

Profanation comes when a thing is first accepted and later denied. As long as men had some love, even that called natural good, they could have received the truth interiorly and so could have profaned. But at the present day, the Writings assure us, there is scarcely any faith because there is not any charity (AC 3398:4).

The turning point came at the time of the last judgment. To quote: "The Divine truths that lie interiorly stored up in the Word could not be made manifest until after the Last Judgment had been accomplished; and for the reason that before that judgment the hells had prevailed, while since that judgment the heavens prevail; and man is placed in the middle between the hells and the heavens; consequently so long as the hells prevail the truth of the Word is either perverted or despised or rejected; but the reverse takes place when the heavens prevail. From all this it can be seen why Divine truths are now first disclosed and the spiritual sense of the Word revealed" (AE 957:2; see also AE 1094).

The predominance spoken of, we assume, is the predominance of either good or evil in the world of spirits. As long as hell ruled there, men would have been led to profane by the sheer pressure of influx from that world. With heaven now prevailing, the world of spirits tends to withdraw man from such profanation. In this whole history we see evidence of the fact that the Lord from eternity wills that man shall understand the spiritual world. Even when men had closed heaven to themselves, the Lord preserved some hope of an after life with simple people all over the globe. At His first coming, He made the first bold statements that gave authority to the persistent belief that man would live forever. And now, with the state of the world so consummated as to make profanation unlikely, if not impossible, and with order established in the world of spirits, the Lord presents His teachings about the other world once again.

But note, the Lord in the Writings speaks to the intellect of man. He pictures the spiritual world in doctrinal terms. He does not invite men to experience the spiritual world as Swedenborg did. For men through evil have rendered themselves incapable of complete communication with that world, and they must work and study to understand it in a rational way and prepare themselves for it.

Having presented what we consider to be the primary reason for the revelation of the spiritual world, we can turn to a few of the lesser reasons. There are a great many that might be mentioned, but we will confine our discussion to four: 1) to prevent denial; 2) to restore

communication between heaven and earth; 3) to provide a confirmation of truth in the light of heaven; and 4) to supply man with truths delightful to his mind.

The world, as we have said, plunged itself into darkness. It necessarily followed that even men who would have welcomed the truth found it inaccessible to them, and therefore they had to wait in hope or sink into agnosticism and atheism. The Christian Church has failed to hold intellectual people within its ranks. The answers which the questioning mind seeks have not been found. As a result, men have been slipping away from a dependence upon revelation, and are turning to the productions of their own intelligence to satisfy their desire to know, understand, and enjoy life. These men, like those bound in the pit, have been at the mercy of the hells. The Lord conquered the hells in order that such men might be freed from their bondage, and might be led away from a denial of the truth.

To effect this liberation the Lord has presented Himself in a rational form. He has supplied men with evidence of the spiritual world, and has given the philosophic principles upon which an understanding of that world must be based. Having these teachings before him, man can accept or reject the truth on its own merits. An important use in the revelation of the spiritual world, then, is its use to prevent denial. As is said in the work on Influx: "Lest, therefore, from ignorance of that world, and the uncertain faith concerning heaven and hell resulting from it, man should be infatuated to such a degree as to become an atheistic naturalist, it has pleased the Lord to open the sight of my spirit" (Infl 3).

As to the second reason. Man was created with a soul and a body. He has his own spiritual and his own natural world. Without these two he would not be a man but either a beast or a breath of wind. His whole life depends upon the interrelation of these two. This is even more significant in the grand man. The spiritual world and the natural world are interdependent. One cannot exist without the other (LJ 9).

Now the effect of evil is to block the influx from the spiritual world, the drastic results of which may be concluded from this passage: "Without communication by means of spirits with the world of spirits and by means of angels with heaven, and thus through heaven with the Lord, man could not live at all; his life entirely depends on this conjunction, so that if the spirits and angels were to withdraw, he would instantly perish" (AC 50). The conjunction, between the two worlds is by means of the Word, for the Word is the general receptacle of spiritual and celestial things (AC 1775, 9378: 2). With the revelation of the spiritual world and the spiritual sense of the Word, a communication of men with angels has been provided, and thus a conjunction of the two worlds effected (Inv. 43-44).

This is not the time to discuss the nature of the communication between the two worlds. Suffice it to say that the man of the New Church can come into an understanding of spiritual things, and can come into thoughts that correspond to the thoughts of spirits and angels. It is by means of such an understanding of spiritual truth that the communication is effected, and therefore it is not necessary for all men to see and converse with the departed to this end. As our perception of the real meaning of the Writings and what they disclose about the spiritual world becomes clearer, this communication will become more powerful. And so the effectiveness of the Writings to restore this communication depends at least in part on the quality of the men who are of the New Church (AC 10287). [As to the statements in the Writings with regard to this renewed communication see: AC 1880: 3, 931, 4545: 7, 8972: 2; SD 2390.]

A third important effect of Swedenborg's introduction into the spiritual world was that he was enabled thereby to confirm what was revealed to him in the light of heaven. Indeed, it is clear that the spiritual sense of the Word could not have been opened except by means of a person who could be present in both worlds at the same time. As is said in the Arcana Coelestia number 67: "It has been granted me to know the internal sense of the Word and the most arcane things contained therein which never before came to the knowledge of any one, nor can they come unless they know how things are in the other life, for very many things which are in

the internal sense of the Word regard, mention, and involve them, therefore it has been conceded to open those things which for many years I have heard and seen" (AC 67; cf. LJ 42; SD 200).

Swedenborg often acknowledges his indebtedness to his spiritual experiences in unlocking for him the correspondences of the Word. To cite but one example, he writes: Bears "are those who read the Word and do not understand it . . . that these are signified by 'bears' was clear to me from the bears seen in the spiritual world, and from some there who were clothed in bear skins, who had all read the Word, but had not seen any doctrinal truth therein" (AR 573; cf. AE 781: 19; SD MIN 4772). The reason for this is fairly obvious. All appearances in the spiritual world are correspondences of the states of spirits and angels. Since the Word is written according to correspondences it is, in one sense, comparable to a description of the spiritual and not of the natural world. A man with a sound knowledge of both worlds would be able to understand the meaning of the Word in a way not possible to a person acquainted only with one of them.

In addition to this, there were other things to be learned in the spiritual world that are inaccessible to men. For example, we read: "That conjugal love was the love of love with the most ancients and the ancients . . . cannot be known from history because their writings are not extant. . . therefore it has pleased the Lord to open those ages by leading me to the heavens where are their homes that I might derive from them orally what marriages were with them when they lived in their times" (CL 73).

The man of the New Church can benefit a great deal by the countless illustrations available to us in the descriptions of the spiritual world. We even find Swedenborg confessing that philosophic reasoning was not proof enough when he says: "That man lives a man after death and that then the male is male and the female is a female . . . I have hitherto sought to confirm by such things as are of the understanding . . . but because from infancy man has acquired the faith from parents and masters, afterwards from the learned and the clergy, that he will not live a man after death until the day of the last judgment . . . it was necessary that these same things be confirmed by documents of self experience" (CL 39).

In other places we find the assertion that a thing is true because it has been made known by living experience. And throughout the work True Christian Religion we find illustrations drawn from incidents occurring in the spiritual world. These relations, appealing as they do to the imagination, give added weight to the doctrines. The theologians remind us that it is impossible for us to judge the spiritual state of another, but we still persist in making unconscious judgments on the people around us. However, our confidence in this ability to analyse others cannot help being shaken when we learn how Swedenborg discovered some of his most respected friends in hell. Then too, we wink at some of our own misdeeds and petty hatreds, not realizing how serious they are. A brief study of the vastations inflicted as a result of these evils can remind us to fight the temptation now while it is still relatively simple. We could multiply illustrations, but the salient point remains that the Writings contain a great mass of material that appeals to the imagination as well as to the rational mind.

The fourth reason for the revelation of the spiritual world is that man may have truths that delight his mind. The whole of the Lord's kingdom looks to use. Aside from the preparatory use of regeneration, the Lord's operation looks to the increased happiness of angels through conjunction with Him.

So it is that the Lord supplies all uses with their delights. He gives our food a variety of flavors so that it may delight as well as nourish us. With the truths revealed in His Word He brings the mind refreshment. The almost insatiable curiosity of human beings is permitted by the Lord. To satisfy this curiosity the Lord allows His creatures to explore the natural world, to philosophize about those things which are unexplorable, and to dream about those which are beyond the realms of philosophy.

With the Writings the Lord has opened to man some of the long lost mysteries of the spiritual world. He has given him descriptions of that world from things seen and heard.

He has provided the basic truths with which to explore further into the secrets of that existence. Now man can share with his Creator another aspect of this marvelous universe. He can once again enter into thought about a realm that, although hidden for a time, is now revealed. For the Lord does not will that His subjects be in ignorance. He desires for man an ever more perfect knowledge of creation, and so, when it is possible and useful, He opens to him hidden treasures. With the truths thus revealed, man can help himself along the road of regeneration, and in them he can find unending delight.

What we have said concerning the necessity of Swedenborg's introduction into the spiritual world does not begin to cover the subject, but perhaps this treatment has supported the statement that: "The manifestation of the Lord in person, and the introduction by the Lord into the spiritual world, both as to sight and as to hearing and speech, surpasses all miracles" (Inv. 43; cf. AC 1880: 3; see also Coro Miracles iv).

We now stand at the threshold of a new day. We uncertainly finger the pages of a marvelous revelation. Our task is to come to understand that revelation so that we may use it for what it was intended. We must seek to know what is evil and what is good so that we may shun evils as sins against the Lord. We must accept this our responsibility, willingly and intelligently, to the glory of the Almighty God who made both the heavens and the earth.