

MISSIONARY TALKS

ON SUBJECTS OF

NEW CHURCH DOCTRINE

BY THE

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NEW JERUSALEM

"By asking . . . and by giving and receiving . . . is meant the communication of heavenly things, which are the knowledges of good and truth"—A.C. 9174.

JAMES SPEIRS

36 BLOOMSBURY STREET, LONDON 1889

TO MY FRIENDS
THE
ISOLATED NEW CHURCH PEOPLE
OF THE
UNITED STATES AND CANADA,
WHO, DURING MY
MISSIONARY TRAVELS

HAVE SHOWN ME MANY KINDNESSES, AND HAVE CHEERFULLY AIDED THE DISSEMINATION OF THE TRUTH,
THIS LITTLE VOLUME
IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.

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PREFACE.

The Talks contained in the following pages, are founded upon actual conversations the author has had on all the subjects treated, with persons in many places of the wide field, in the United States and Canada, over which his missionary labours have extended during the past nine years. Some of these articles were published in the New Church Messenger, and some in the Morning Light. And thereby the thought was suggested that they might serve a use by being given to the public in the form of a little volume. It has been the desire and aim of the writer, to lead the reader to an investigation of the Doctrines of the New Church. And, in the case of those who have already a general knowledge of them, to stimulate them to further inquiry into those Spiritual Writings which were given to mankind by the Lord, through the instrumentality of Emanuel Swedenborg.

For in these Writings are revealed the heavenly doctrines of the Word of God, which is the Fountain of Wisdom. These Writings are, as it were, a "Great Light" in the world, which is intended to enlighten more and more the nations of the earth.

That these TALKS, therefore, may be the means of directing attention to the Divine Teachings of the Word of God : that they may be of use in leading to an acknowledgment of the LORD alone, as the Infinite Source of good and truth, the Father of mercies, who shall finally confer upon all His faithful ones the unspeakable joys of eternal life, is the ardent hope of the author.

J.E.B.

TORONTO, CANADA,
November 1st, 1888.

Looking to the Lord

OUR Father, we adore Thee,
We humbly bow before Thee,
Thou glorious Lord of all;
In mercy now draw near us,
In Thy compassion hear us,
As on Thy name we call.
We feel our imperfection,
And ask Thy kind protection,
From error, sin, and harm ;
Of all good gifts the Giver,
Thou canst our souls deliver,
By Thine own mighty arm.
Thy Sun does shine above us,
We know that Thou dost love us,
Thou light of life Divine;
May Thy good Spirit cheer us,
May angels e'er be near us,
May we be wholly Thine.
In daily tribulation,
In trial and temptation,
Our hope is but in Thee;
We do confess, in meekness,
Our strength is only weakness,
Thy truth can make us free.

* These verses were composed during one of my missionary tours, in the year 1884, while making the journey by railway from Port Huron, Michigan, to Almont, in the same State, a distance of thirty-four miles.—J. E. B.

I THE NEW JERUSALEM.

"That a New Church is meant by the New Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven, Rev. xxi., is because Jerusalem was the metropolis in the land of Canaan ; and there was the temple, the altar, there sacrifices were offered, and thus Divine Worship performed; . . . and also because the LORD was in Jerusalem, taught in the temple, and afterwards glorified His Human there."—TCR 782.

INQUIRER.—I presume you are a clergyman. Of what Church, may I ask?

MISSIONARY.—I am a minister of the Church of the New Jerusalem, and am doing missionary work. That is, I am engaged in disseminating the truth of the Gospel as it is revealed to us in the New Dispensation.

I.—The New Jerusalem! What Church is that? I have not heard of it.

M.—It is the new Christian Church which is meant in Revelation, chapter xxi., where John says he "saw a new heaven and a new earth."

I.—And you think that means a new Christian Church?

M.—Yes; for the new heaven and the new earth which John saw has no reference to any change which had taken place, or was to take place, in the constitution of the physical heavens or material earth.

I.—Well, but I do not see what other heavens and earth it can refer to. The heaven of the angels is surely not to pass away; and we know of no other earth than this upon which we live.

M.—John says that "the first heaven and the first earth were passed away, and there was no more sea." But the fact is, that after John had written this declaration, the very same firmament which we understand by the heavens according to natural language, and the very same material globe which we mean by the earth, existed as before.

I.—That is very true. But the Revelation is a prophetic book, and John evidently describes some great changes which are to be miraculously effected in the end of the world, when the last judgment is to be executed.

M.—The Apocalypse is a symbolic as well as a prophetic book. The description of the holy city the New Jerusalem, is in the language of a grand symbolism. It is not intended to be understood literally. Only in the spiritual sense shall we be able to see, that is, rationally comprehend, its true import.

I.—In your way of looking at it, then, you spiritualize the whole matter. I have my doubts about that.

M.—You need not have any doubts about it; and all your doubts will vanish when once you obtain a knowledge of the spiritual interpretation of the Word of God; for it makes all things plain. It enables one to see a beauty and a glory in the Sacred Scriptures which otherwise is quite impossible.

I.—But I do not see the necessity of spiritualizing everything, in order to understand the Bible. Is it not declared that the way is so plain that the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein?

M.—Yes; but we have the warrant in the Scriptures themselves, in favour of the spiritual interpretation. Our LORD says: "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John vi. 63). And the Apostle affirms that spiritual things are to be "spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. ii. 14). By the "spirit," the LORD can surely allude to nothing else than to a spiritual meaning contained in His words. And by the expression "spiritually discerned," the Apostle evidently means, intelligently understood, by the higher faculty of enlightened human reason. But let us not drift away from our subject.

I.—You said something about a New Dispensation. Do I understand you to claim that your Church is a New Dispensation?

M.—Yes; the Church of the New Jerusalem is not a sect. It is a New Dispensation of Divine Truth. It is founded upon the Rock of Ages. Its fundamental doctrine is that of the SUPREME DIVINITY of our LORD and Saviour Jesus Christ. The Church of the New Jerusalem is as different from the First Christian Church as that was from the Jewish. In the spiritual writings of this Church we have a method of interpretation which explains the entire Word of God, so that it

can be rationally understood.

I.—Your claims seem to me most extravagant. How is it, then, about our great denominations? Are these people all in the dark? Have they none of the light of the Gospel? Does your Church alone possess the truth? And are you and your people alone on the right way to lead them into the kingdom of heaven?

M.—The declaration of the Apostle Peter has always been true, when he says: "God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth Him, and doeth righteousness, is accepted with Him" (Acts x.; 34, 35). In every age, all go to heaven who receive from the Word, and live according to heavenly principles. The LORD is the Father of all. He does not withhold His blessings from the many, to dole them out to a favoured few. He is "good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works."

I.—From what you have said, the New Jerusalem must be a very wonderful institution. What astonishes me is that I have never heard of it before. There are none of your people in these parts, are there? For if so, they must keep themselves very quiet.

M.—Yes; our people as a rule are not aggressive. In some cases they are perhaps too quiet. They find but few who manifest any disposition to investigate our system of doctrine; and they are not willing to force their belief upon the notice of others.

I.—Well, but it seems to me that if they are, as you appear to think, the custodians of the doctrines and principles of a New Dispensation, they ought to let the world know all about it, and not keep their light hidden under a bushel.

M.—They are always delighted to communicate the truths which are so precious to them, to others. Indeed, it is to them a cause of sadness that there are nowadays so comparatively few who care for a spiritual and rational interpretation of the Divine Word. The LORD says: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink" (John vii. 37). Thirst signifies desire; and the water of life is spiritual truth which men can drink, that is, receive into their understandings, so that it may be united with heavenly good in their hearts and minds.

I.—It seems to me that if your doctrine were true, there ought not to be a few only who believe in it. Is it not a fact, that many people nowadays are always looking out for something new?

M.—Yes; there are doubtless many who are always looking for some new sensation. People will go in large crowds to hear a sensational preacher; but comparatively few are satisfied with the plain and simple teachings of the everlasting Gospel. A few months ago I saw an illustration of this. In the city where I reside, a noted sensational preacher was holding forth for a few weeks in an extensive rink. I went to hear him one night. Of course the place was full to the doors. But the laughter and clapping of hands, occasioned by the sharp sayings of the speaker, gave me the impression of being rather in a place of amusement, than in a meeting intended for religious instruction.

I.—I presume many would even be benefited by that kind of preaching. Most people have got away from the idea of putting on a long face when they go to church.

M.—That may be. People need not *put on* an appearance of sanctimoniousness in order to be devout worshippers in the LORD'S house. But when the apostles went forth preaching the Gospel, they were in solemn earnest. We have no example in all their evangelistic labours, of their turning a religious meeting into a place of amusement. And such a proceeding is evidently unbecoming in Christians at this day.

I.—As my time is nearly up, I want to go back to a former part of our talk. You said, did you not, that by the New Jerusalem is meant a new Christian Church? Now how do you make good that assertion?

M.—By Jerusalem, in the Old Testament, the Church is represented. There are many sublime passages where Jerusalem is mentioned. Let me give you a few examples: "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; they shall rest that love thee" (Ps. cxxii. 6). Here the Church is evidently meant. And it is written: "Behold, I create a new heaven and a new earth." And immediately after follow these words: "Behold, I create Jerusalem an exultation, and her people a joy; that I may exult in Jerusalem, and joy in my people" (Isa. lxxv. 17, 18). And we read in other places that "the LORD hath redeemed Jerusalem"; that "the word of the LORD shall go forth from Jerusalem"; and that "Jerusalem shall be called the city of truth, the mountain of holiness."

I.—These are certainly very beautiful passages; and it looks as if there was something in what

you say.

M.—The holy city, the New Jerusalem, represents a New Church. And it is the new Christian Church, because in it the LORD JESUS CHRIST, its Divine Founder, alone is worshipped. There are many who have never heard of this Church. But when they do hear of it, and learn what it is, they will find that it is the kingdom of God on earth, the glory of the last days, the tabernacle of God with men.

I.—How do the doctrines of your Church differ from the creeds of other Churches?

M.—There are great differences between the teachings of the New Church and those of the various denominations, respecting all subjects. But I will answer your question, if you please, by showing you the difference of view on an important point. I allude to what is perhaps the most important point in our whole theology, because it is of a fundamental nature.

I.—Very well; I shall be interested to hear it.

M.—The central and most vital doctrine of the Christian religion is that respecting God. Our doctrine is derived from no other source than the Word; it is according to its spiritual sense, and is to be confirmed by its literal sense. The New Church teachings are based upon what is contained in the Sacred Scriptures as a whole, and not merely upon a certain class of passages.

I.—Well, what does your Church teach about God?

M.—The Scriptures everywhere teach that there is one God. "The first of all the commandments is: Hear O Israel, The LORD our God is one Lord;" or, as the Jewish Rabbis translate the passage: "Hear, O Israel, The LORD our God the LORD is one" (Mark xii. 29; Deut. vi. 4).

I.—Do you believe in the Divinity of Christ?

M.—We do not only believe in His Divinity, but in His Supreme Divinity. We do not believe that He is a third part of God only. According to our doctrine, derived from the Holy Word, He is the only Divine and therefore the one God. We worship Him as our Father in the heavens. For He is "God over all, blessed forever."

I.—Then it seems you do not believe in the Divine Trinity?

M.—Most certainly we believe in the Trinity. Let me give you the first article of our creed. It is as follows: "I believe in the LORD JESUS CHRIST, the Creator, Redeemer, and Saviour, the only God of heaven and earth, whose Humanity is Divine, and in whom is the Divine Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in essence and in person one."

I.—I see; you do not believe in the three Divine persons. But does not the Bible teach that there are three persons and one God?

M.—The Bible nowhere speaks of persons, in connection with the subject of the Trinity. God exists in one glorious and adorable Person. The Divine Trinity does not consist of three persons. It is in the one person of the LORD JESUS CHRIST. The Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one in Him, comparatively as the soul, body, and activity are one in man. Man is created in the image and after the likeness of God. In man, therefore, the trinity is finite, while in God it is infinite.

I.—It seems to be very plain to you. But it has always seemed to me that the subject of the Trinity is a great mystery, which no one is able to understand.

M.—But, my friend, the LORD says to His disciples: "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God" (Luke viii. 10). "To know" here means *to understand*. For we cannot *know* anything about a subject, except in so far as we *understand* it. I grant you that it is a mystery, but not an incomprehensible mystery, as you seem to think. We have no more difficulty in forming intelligent ideas respecting the Trinity in God, than as to the trinity in man.

I.—We have been taught, you know, that it is not desirable for us to apply our own fallible reason, to these subjects. They are matters of faith. That is, we are to believe them, though we do not understand them.

M.—From the fact that our Creator has endowed us with the faculty of understanding or reason, I think we may conclude that it is perfectly legitimate for us to make use of that faculty. It is surely allowable for us to reason, in a good sense, that is, to think logically and rationally, concerning spiritual things as well as natural things. It must be well-pleasing to the LORD for us to make a proper use of our mental as well as of our physical powers.

I.—Well, you have another way of looking at these subjects. But tell us more about the Trinity.

M.—With great pleasure. Now if we think logically about the Trinity, we find that the idea of

three persons in the Godhead will not do at all. Because, *three persons are three beings*. Do you see? Three persons, three beings, three gods! This is the analysis of the matter. And you can come to no other conclusion, if you think of the subject at all. As a matter of fact, the dogma of the tripersonality of God is an absurdity, and not a mystery.

I.—Now you are coming to the point. But does not the fact that Jesus prayed to the Father show that there must have been two persons, at least? How can you explain this?

There is no difficulty about it. Jesus Christ was "God manifest in the flesh." He was "the Word made flesh dwelling among us." Jehovah, the Creator, by assuming the Human and coming into the world, became also the Saviour and Redeemer. The Father and Jesus were not two persons. Jesus said: "I and my Father are one" (John x. 30).

I.—But they certainly appeared to be two persons; because Jesus prayed to His Father, and often spoke of Him as of another.

M.—Very true; they appeared to be distinct beings until after Jesus was glorified. This was because there were in the LORD two natures, the Divine and the Human. By the Father is always meant the Divine in the Lord. And the Son, the man Jesus Christ, was the Human which Jehovah assumed, and by means of which He was "Emmanuel—God with us" (Matt. i. 23). The Apostle teaches the true doctrine, when he says: "God was in Christ," etc. (2 Cor. v. 19). The Father was in the Son, the Divine was in the Human, the Word was made flesh. God was in Christ; the infinite Spirit dwelt in Him, performing the work of redemption; comparatively as the Soul or finite spirit is in us.

I.—As you seem to understand this subject, I presume you are able to give us the explanation of the reason why Jesus prayed to the Father.

M.—With regard to the Human which Jehovah assumed, the LORD was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (Isa. liii. 3). He "was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. iv. 15). As to the Divine, Jesus was the God of the universe. But as to the Human, He passed through the most direful temptations. He was assaulted by the infernal spheres of all the powers of darkness combined. Thus He suffered infinitely more than any merely finite human being could ever endure. And in these states of humiliation He prayed to the Father. By the Father, that is, the Divine, the LORD JESUS our Saviour was omnipotent. Thus He was "the mighty God, the Father everlasting, the Prince of Peace" (Isa. ix. 6).

I.—Well, this is to me an entirely new interpretation of this matter. And although it is essentially different from what I have always been taught, I must confess that it seems reasonable.

M.—The New Church interpretation of this subject is as scriptural as it is reasonable. The teaching that Jesus prayed to the Father as a separate person, would lead directly to the idea of one god praying to another god. And this idea is a fantastic notion.

I.—That is putting it in a pretty strong light, but it does seem to be a wrong idea altogether.

M.—Let us consider further, that in no other way than by assuming the human, could Jehovah become the Saviour and Redeemer. He "made bare the arm of His holiness" (Isa. lii. 10). The Human was the arm of His strength. By this He came in contact with the powers of darkness. He overcame the hells, which had begun to threaten universal destruction. He burst the bars of death, triumphed over the tomb, and glorified His Humanity. To glorify means to make Divine. Thus, at the same time that the LORD'S glorification was going on, He performed the Divine work of redemption, and so prepared the way for the salvation of the human race.

I.—Do you believe, then, that all men can be saved?

M.—All shall be saved who come to the LORD, that is, all who believe in Him, acknowledge Him to be the God of heaven and earth, and look to Him and pray to Him for strength and wisdom to do His will. To do His will is to keep His commandments. The LORD invites all to come unto Him. No one is excluded. "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. xxii. 17).

I.—I must admit that it sounds to me like good Bible doctrine. But I am not quite satisfied yet about the Trinity. I would like to know more clearly how you understand the LORD JESUS CHRIST to be the only God.

M.—When the LORD was glorified, the Divine and Human were united. Then Jesus no more prayed to the Father, but He said: "Unto me is given all power, in heaven and in earth." Because

all power is given to Him, it follows that He is "the Almighty," as He is called in the Apocalypse (Rev. i. 8). In the LORD'S reply to Philip, He said: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." "The Father dwelleth in me" (John xiv. 9. 10). In the LORD Jesus Christ the Divine was made manifest, and the invisible God became visible. The LORD declares that the Father dwells in Him: and we read that the Holy Spirit proceeds from Him. "He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Spirit" (John xx. 22). We see from this that the Divine Trinity is in the LORD JESUS CHRIST. In His one glorious Person He is God, and Him alone we ought to worship. The apostles teach this doctrine very plainly. Paul says: "In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. ii. 9). And John declares: "This is the true God, and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols" (1 John v. 20, 21).

I.—I have heard it said that the Swedenborgians deny the evangelical doctrine of the atonement. Now what is your view of the subject? Do you believe that through the sacrifice of Christ the just demands of the Father were satisfied?

M.—We do not believe in the generally received doctrine of the *vicarious* atonement. That is, we do not understand the Scriptures to teach that the LORD Jesus Christ was in any sense a *substitute*. In the person of the LORD Jesus, the Creator Himself became the Saviour and Redeemer of the world. We read in a number of passages in Isaiah, especially in chapters xliii., xliv., and following chapters, that Jehovah God, is the Saviour and Redeemer. He did not require a substitute, for He came Himself to accomplish the Divine work of redemption. We do not, therefore, believe that the LORD Jesus Christ is a second person in the Godhead, who suffered and died in man's stead, and thus satisfied any demand of the Father.

I.—But in what other way could man be redeemed? Was not the atoning sacrifice of Christ the plan decided upon in the just counsels of the triune God, for the salvation of the world? Is not this the scheme of redemption plainly laid down by the apostles in their epistles?

M.—We do not find such a doctrine as the vicarious atonement plainly laid down in any part of the Scriptures. This idea of substitution, to satisfy an imaginary demand of our heavenly Father, is essentially erroneous. The doctrine taught in the Word of God with regard to the atonement is something very different. It would certainly not be just for an innocent person to be required to suffer and die in the place of the guilty.

I.—You surprise me by such assertions. Was not Jesus Christ, by His crucifixion, a sacrifice for the sins of the world? Do you mean to say that the doctrine which has been taught by the Church for more than a thousand years, is wrong, and contrary to the teachings of the Bible? If this is the case, what countless millions of Christians have been in the dark! And it seems high time for you New Jerusalemites to bestir yourselves to enlighten the world. But I fear it will be a long time before you will convert the world to an acceptance of your peculiar ideas. It seems to me that people will be much more apt to cling to "the faith once delivered to the saints."

M.—My dear sir, it is a remarkable fact, that there are at this day many who do not cling to what you call "the faith once delivered to the saints." True, there are those who hold on to the old religious views, and do not trouble themselves to investigate anything else. They are satisfied with what they have, and do not care to look for anything better. But at this moment the world is full of sceptics, that is, doubters. They are to be found among all classes of men throughout the whole Christian world. You will even find them among the members of the popular Churches. The sceptics are not all infidels. On the contrary, many of them believe in a Supreme Being. Sound reason tells them that there must be a Creator and Preserver of the universe. They have a sort of veneration for an unknown Deity. But they discover the manifest fallacy of certain religious views. Then they become doubtful on other points. They reject one thing after another, until the entire system of "orthodox" teaching is gone.

I.—It seems to me that I have switched you off the track. We were talking about the atonement. And I am not ready to drop the subject yet. You have such new and strange ideas, that I must hear more. I will not attempt to discuss the subject with you, but will hear what you have to say. I want to find out whether there is anything in your doctrine.

M.—It is always a pleasure to talk to any one who is willing to listen. But I do not wish to do all the talking. You shall have the opportunity to say whatever you may desire.

I.—I confess my ignorance on these matters. In fact, I know very little about them, although I have been pretty thoroughly drilled in our evangelical doctrines. And sometimes it has almost

seemed to me as if I were half of a sceptic myself. You said that a sceptic was a doubter. And upon my word, doubts will sometimes arise in one's mind in spite of one. A man cannot well help thinking, even if he is not much disposed to reason.

M.—Paul says, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." And in order to prove anything, so as to understand it, we must examine, compare, investigate, and then draw conclusions. We have not time to discuss the matter fully to-day; but the theory of the vicarious atonement is alike contrary to reason and Scripture. As soon as men look into it, they see this and drop it. In fact, many of the preachers themselves have dropped it.

I.—It is very true; somehow the style of preaching seems to have changed considerably, during the past twenty or thirty years. There is not so much "fire and brimstone" about it as there used to be.

M.—The fallacy of the vicarious atonement resulted from a misunderstanding of the sacrifices offered by the children of Israel. "The sacrifices of the Mosaic law do not represent the punishment of sin. They represent the consecration of every affection of the mind to the LORD." "The Jewish sacrifices were intended to represent the worship of the LORD, from the affections and perceptions of a purified heart and mind" (Noble's *Appeal*, p. 431). Christ was indeed a sacrifice for the sins of the world; but *not a vicarious* sacrifice. It is erroneous to think that Jesus Christ suffered in man's stead, in the sense of His assuming the just punishment which sinners bring upon themselves as the result of violations of the laws of Divine order. "*The soul that sinneth it shall die.*" It has been taught that Christ's righteousness is imputed to man, by virtue of his having faith. But one person's righteousness cannot be imputed to another. A man cannot be saved by mere thinking. He must cooperate with the LORD, and be up and doing. "Cease to do evil; learn to do well." The man who does that which is lawful and right, shall save his soul alive. "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die?" A man cannot become good, except in so far as he ceases to do evil. We must do the work of repentance and shun evils as sins against God. Evils are sins against God, because they are contrary to the laws of Divine Order, which are for the government of human society.

I.—Now you are throwing some light on the subject. I see you are making a strong point in favour of personal righteousness. And the LORD does say: "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me" (John xiv. 21).

M.—Yes; the apostles also teach that the only way of salvation is by living according to the Divine commandments: "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God" (1 Cor. vii. 19). And faith without works is a dead, and not a living faith (James ii. 20, 26). I should think a man would be ashamed to want to go to heaven on the merits of another. There is nothing manly about this. Genuine Christian principles will lead a man to be *a true man* in every particular.

I.—I see that your view is quite different from that generally entertained. But you seem to find Scripture to prove your positions. We cannot gainsay what the Book says.

M.—There is another point I would like to speak of in connection with this subject. There never was in God any wrath that required to be appeased. Nor was there ever in Him any offended justice that demanded satisfaction. The Divine Father was never angry toward His children.

"God is love." He is also infinite and immutable. He is, therefore, pure love itself, and this "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." And so we read that "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son," etc. (John iii. 16). This is said with direct reference to the work of redemption. The Divine Love caused God to assume our nature, and thus to come into the world, that He might subdue the powers of darkness, and so make it possible for man to be saved.

I.—That there is in God no wrath, is another of your peculiar ideas. But you surely do not deny that God hates iniquity? Does not the Book say so?

M.—The LORD our heavenly Father is Divine, perfectly just, and infinitely good and loving. He cannot, therefore, do anything of an arbitrary nature. The Scriptures do not teach such a doctrine as the vicarious atonement. "Redemption was a work purely Divine." It was performed from Divine Love, according to Divine Wisdom, and by Divine power. It was accomplished in the fullness of time, at just the right period in the world's history. The LORD came to seek and to save that which was lost. By glorifying His Human, the Lord acquired a Divine Natural

Humanity. By this He can succour all those who are willing to come unto Him that they may have eternal life. The everlasting arms can reach down to man, yes, even beneath him, and lift Him up to ever higher states of life. By the Divine influences, even the lowest of the lowly may gradually be regenerated, and become new creatures, and finally enter into the unspeakable felicities of heaven.

I.—I am very glad to have heard your explanations, and do not know that I can object to any of them.

M.—I have been able to say very little, and that little has been very imperfectly expressed. These are grand themes for us to consider, and it requires time to do so properly. True religion, genuine Christianity, is nothing less than a Divine Science. The principles of this Science are revealed to us by the Lord Himself, and it ought to be our supreme delight to study them.

I.—Yes; I feel that many of us are altogether too indifferent about these subjects. Most men, and women too, are absorbed in the things of this world. The things of time and sense take up all their attention. But when we stop to think about it, we see that we cannot stay here very long. And while we do stay, we ought to be doing something to prepare for a better state of existence.

M.—Very true; it is of the greatest importance. For what we become while in this world, as to our essential life and character, we shall be in the eternal world. Death is but the continuation of our life. As to the spirit we are immortal, and we our very selves shall live for ever.

II. DEATH THE CONTINUATION OF LIFE.

"When the body is no longer capable of discharging its functions in the natural world, corresponding to the thoughts and affections of its spirit, which are derived from the spiritual world, the man is said to die. . . . Yet the man does not die, but is only separated from the corporeal frame which was of use to him in the world: the man himself lives."—H. H. 445.

I.—I have for some time been wishing for an opportunity to have a talk with you on religious subjects. I presume we shall not agree altogether. But by comparing views we may possibly obtain more light. There is always room for us to grow in the knowledge of the truth.

M.—Yes; it always gives me great pleasure to meet with any one who is willing to talk about spiritual things. One does not very often meet with such people, in these days. Most folks are so absorbed by the things of this world that they have no time for anything else. They do not feel disposed to consider anything except what ministers to their merely natural life. In fact, many think it a waste of time to give any attention whatever to spiritual subjects.

I.—Or, probably it is sufficient for them to go to church on Sundays and hear the preaching. As you suggest—some people do not require much spiritual pabulum.

M.—Yes; people go to church. Many, doubtless, go from force of habit. It is fashionable and respectable to attend some popular church. I do not wish to say anything harsh, but must speak as I think. And here are some things which lead one to think that there are those who imagine that if they serve God by going to church on Sunday, they can serve the world, the flesh, and the devil, the remaining six days of the week.

I.—If you will allow me to change the subject, I should like to say that I have been personally acquainted with some of your New Church people, and have found them to be of more than ordinary intelligence. The Swedenborgians I have known were kind and good neighbours — respectable people. A friend of mine once expressed the opinion that the Swedenborgians were not Christians. I happened to be posted a little on this point, and corrected him. I told him there was no reason why they should not be looked upon as Christians, because they believe in Christ. Indeed, they go further than others. They go so far as to say that the LORD JESUS CHRIST is the only God, and that all the Divinity is in Him. This is your doctrine, is it not?

M.—It is. And it is the doctrine of the Word. In the first chapter of the Revelation the LORD JESUS CHRIST is called the Almighty; and beside Him there is no God.

I.—That is plain enough. But I should like to hear your views about the resurrection. I understand that you deny the resurrection of the body. You say that when the body is once put in the grave, it will never come forth again? This is an interesting subject upon which I am anxious for more light. If it is not too much trouble to you, I should like to hear your explanation.

M.—It is no trouble to me at all. On the contrary, it is a peculiar delight to me to explain these things so far as I am able. But you wish me to say something about the resurrection. Well, in the first place, we do not believe in the resurrection of the body, that is, the material body, because the Scriptures do not teach such an idea. The doctrine of the Scriptures is that man is an immortal being by virtue of his spirit. The body is mortal, and is put off at death, never to be resumed. It is laid aside like a worn-out garment, for which we have no further use. Death is the continuation of life as to man's spirit. Indeed, according to the Divine teaching, man does not die at all. The LORD says: "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die" (John xi. 25, 26).

I.—It is a new idea that man does not die at all; but in the passage you have just quoted, the LORD plainly says so.

M.—Death is only a short, sweet sleep. There is suffering from disease, which is sometimes very severe. But dying itself is just like going to sleep. Death is a brief, unconscious state, lasting in ordinary cases, till the second or third day. The LORD, who is life itself, and imparts life to all finite beings, then by means of angels or ministering spirits, awakens a person out of the sleep of death. He finds himself actually, consciously, bodily, that is, as to his spiritual body, in the eternal world. He has left nothing behind except his material body. He has "shuffled off

the mortal coil." All that constitutes him a human being, remains. He has the use of all his faculties. His senses are more active than during his earth-life. He has his thoughts, affections, desires, aspirations, and delights. The man himself has entered into an immortal state of existence. He has left the natural world and has become an inhabitant of the spiritual world, in which he is to dwell to eternity.

I.—Your doctrine seems to be quite definite; but I *must* ask you a question. How do you know that a person is raised up into the life of the other world on the second or third day after death?

M.—The doctrines of the New Church can all of them be confirmed by the letter of the Word. And as to the point referred to in your question, we read: "After two days will He revive us; in the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight" (Hosea vi. 2). And the LORD'S resurrection also took place on the third day.

I.—Yes; this seems to make the matter plain enough. And I begin to see that if your doctrine is true, the idea of the resurrection of the body cannot be true. But I should like to hear more proof from the Scriptures.

M.—It is to the Scriptures we go for the confirmations of our doctrine. And the Scriptures, according to a rational interpretation, plainly show that the idea of the resurrection of the physical body is one of the greatest of absurdities. We read: "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it" (Eccles. xii. 7). Moses appeared on the mount at the transfiguration of our LORD, and was seen as a *man*. But his material body had been dissolved fifteen centuries before (Luke ix. 28-36). The rich man and Lazarus are described as having bodies immediately after death. The former had *eyes* and a *tongue*; and the latter had a *finger* (Luke xvi. 19-24). After they died, and their material bodies were buried, they existed in their spiritual bodies. In the other world their conditions were reversed, because the one was a good man and the other an evil man.

I.—You are bringing out some things I never thought of before.

M.—Let me give you only one or two more passages. The great multitude of the redeemed, who had been gathered home to the heavenly world from all parts of the habitable earth, whom John saw, had bodies. They were there in their spiritual and immortal bodies. They *stood* before the throne. They were *clothed* in white robes. They had palms in their *hands*.

I.—I must say you are bringing some strong evidence. The subject is now beginning to become plainer to my mind than ever before. And I begin to see the point as to the resurrection of the body. Since good people after death go to heaven, and exist there in the spirit form, or in a spiritual body, they never will require the natural body any more. In this way of looking at it, it would be a queer thing for all the countless myriads of blest spirits who have for thousands and thousands of ages been before the throne praising and glorifying God, to be obliged to come back to this earth some time and be reunited to the body they once had while living here.

M.—That is stating the *reductio ad absurdum* of the matter pretty well. It seems that the proofs cited have helped you to understand the subject better; and I am glad you see it so clearly. But I have given you very little of the Scripture proof. The Bible is full of it. And the facts of all true science and philosophy come to our aid in confirmation of the doctrine. Every rational consideration goes to show that man is essentially a spiritual being; that the spirit is in the human form; that it is in his spirit that man is raised up and continues to live in the spiritual world.

I.—How, do you suppose, did men ever get into the notion of the resurrection of the natural body?

M.—From a natural idea they imagined heaven to be a place located somewhere in the material universe. People sing about "our homes beyond the stars," and "our mansions in the skies." One erroneous idea begets another. If heaven be thought of as a place or region in the material universe, it follows that if people are ever going to dwell there, they will require a body. Many suppose that heaven is to be established here on earth, and that the souls of men have no form, or actual, or conscious existence, until the general resurrection day, when all the dead bodies of all who have ever lived on the planet shall come forth from their graves. But I need say no more; you know the rest of it.

I.—Yes; I have heard a great deal of imaginary nonsense, and am glad to get hold of something substantial on the subject at last. How I do wish I could have become acquainted with these

views years ago! But how do you understand the Apostle Paul in the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians?

M.—Paul teaches the true philosophy of the resurrection and future life of man. He declares that "there is sown a natural body, and there is raised a spiritual body" (verse 44). This is equal to saying that man, as an organized being, has a spiritual body which is clothed, as it were, with a natural body, by means of which he can live and perform uses during his probationary state in the material world. And the language of the Apostle is also equal to saying that when the natural body has served its purpose, it is put off to return to its native dust, while man, the immortal being, is raised up and continues to live in his spiritual body. This is the logic of the Scriptures throughout.

I.—I feel convinced that such is the case. I want to know more, and must know more, about these things.

M.—Those who *thirst*, may go to the Fountain of the Water of Life, and drink to the delight and refreshment of their souls.

I.—I have read through the little book, *Heaven and Hell*, that you gave me. It contains a great deal of definite information. But, I must confess, there are some things in it that seem strange. Do you believe it is all true?

M.—I do not doubt the truth of any part of it, any more than the fact of my own existence. I do not believe it because Swedenborg wrote it; but because I can plainly see that it is the teaching of God's Word. Seeing rationally is believing truly. To see, means to understand. And the understanding of genuine truth brings to the mind a rational conviction. Our doubts vanish.

I.—There is much in the little book I do not yet fully understand. But I presume no one can grasp it all at once.

M.—It is by degrees that we acquire knowledge. And it is as impossible to comprehend all the truths of a sublime theme with a single effort of the mind, as it is to see the beauties of universal nature at a single glance.

I.—According to this doctrine heaven does not seem to be located far off in some region of the physical universe. We used to sing about "our homes beyond the stars," and "our mansions in the skies." But how could heaven be beyond the stars? Is not the immensity of space boundless, so far as the finite mind can form an idea of it? And it seems to me that heavenly mansions must exist in a heavenly world, and not in the skies of physical space. What I like about it is that Swedenborg describes the spiritual world as no less real than this. But give us some of your ideas about heaven.

M.—Heaven is a regenerate state of the human mind. A mind formed by a life in accordance with heavenly principles, is a *micro uranos*, or little heaven, that is, a heaven in the least form. Heaven is also a *place*, corresponding to the heavenly state. But it is not a place according to a natural idea. That is, it is not a place located in, and occupying space in, the material universe.

I.—What interested me so much is that instead of vague ideas, and visionary notions, Swedenborg gives us definite information on the subject. There is something substantial about it that the mind can lay hold of and rest upon.

M.—That heaven is primarily, a good state of the human mind, the LORD teaches when He says: "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke xvii. 20, 21). The kingdom of God is within us in so far as we receive the Divine love and truth, and these become the ruling principles of our lives.

I.—That is equal to saying that heaven will be wherever there are heavenly-minded people. And I presume it is because the kingdom of God is to be established by the reception of love and truth, that we are taught to pray: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so also upon the earth" (Matt. vi. 10). But where is heaven as a place?

M.—The spiritual world is in immediate connection with the natural. The connection is of cause and effect. The natural world consists of effects. And the causes which produce them, operate through the spiritual world from God, who is the first cause, or the fountain of all being.

I.—You are now stating a philosophy which many of our theologians have not yet dreamed of.

M.—But it is the philosophy of the Scriptures, nevertheless. And it is rationally explained in the writings of the New Church. But I must answer your question as to where heaven is as a place.

The spiritual world consists of three grand divisions, the heavens, the hells, and the intermediate state or world of spirits. We speak of the heavens above, or of the bright and beautiful world on high; and good people are called the children of the Highest, because the idea of what is elevated is a correspondence of what is interior, exalted, or Divine, with respect to state. The hells, on the other hand, are called the lower regions.

I.—There is something grand about this principle of correspondence in the sense in which you use the term. It seems to give one a comprehensive idea of things. But I do not wish to interrupt you.

M.—When a person enters into the other life (as is the case with every one at the close of this life), he finds himself at first in the intermediate state or world of spirits. This is the place of preparation for the final abode, either in heaven or in hell, according to the internal character. Above the world of spirits are the heavens, and beneath are the hells. And the Lord is called the Highest because He is exalted in majesty and glory above the heavens. Our doctrine teaches that He appears before the face of the angels as a sun. And this is according to the Word; for David says: "The LORD our God is a sun and shield" (Ps. lxxxiv. 11).

I.—Your explanation is more satisfactory than the notion of heaven being located beyond the stars, or our mansions being in the skies. This is too much like "building castles in the air," to suit me. Let us have something that we can believe intelligently.

M.—Man after death exists in the human form, in his immortal body, and thus lives in the spiritual world. In that world all things are composed of spiritual substances, in like manner as in this world all things are made of material substances. The things of heaven are substantial and stupendous realities. The glories of the heavenly world cannot be adequately described in natural language. The spirit of man is so constituted that it is a suitable world for him to dwell in to eternity. The souls of men are not formless essences, flitting about in the universe, a sort of spectres which are something and yet nothing. The human soul is the human form, manifested in a spiritual body. The spirit of a man is the man himself, divested of the material body, by virtue of which he lived in this natural world.

I.—Your explanation is clear; but how about the passage to the other world? I presume, since it is not necessary for the spirit to travel to a place located beyond the stars, it will not require very long for a person to arrive there?

M.—No; it is just as easy for any one to go to the other world as it is to fall asleep and wake again. The sleep of death lasts only a few hours, or at the longest, until the second or third day; and as soon as a person awakes, he finds himself actually in the spiritual world.

I.—This is very different from the notion that the spirit sleeps in the grave till the day of judgment, when the body that had been buried perhaps some thousands of years before, is supposed to be raised again. But how do you prove your view of the nearness of the other world to this, from the Scriptures?

M.—One of the striking passages is that in 2 Kings vi. 15-17. It was with his ordinary bodily sight that the prophet's servant saw the army of the Syrians. And the account goes on to state that in answer to the prayer of Elisha, "the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." This was a vision in the spiritual world, which he saw with the eyes of his spirit. And he did not need to go away from the place where he was, to see the vision. The veil of the physical conditions which ordinarily exist, was for the moment drawn aside, and he saw.

I.—This was certainly a remarkable circumstance, and I see that it plainly proves the point. I suppose you have no trouble to find more passages of the same kind?

M.—There are many similar things in the Scriptures. Read, for example, the announcement of the birth of the Saviour in the second chapter of Luke. It is most sublime and beautiful. "There were in the country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night." And after several particulars are related, it is said: "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men" (Luke ii. 8, 13, 14). The spiritual sense of hearing, as well as of sight, was opened in the shepherds at the time. And heaven, with its bright and beautiful angels—its messengers of peace and joy and good will to men—was not far away from them. When their natural sight returned, the angels seemed to them to go away from them into heaven,

as is stated (verse 15).

I.—I must thank you most heartily for the explanations you have given. And now I should like you to answer a few questions in the same line of thought. My friend here is becoming interested in these things, and I ask for the sake of his information, as well as my own. And the first question is: Do the inhabitants of the other world, that is, angels and spirits, live in houses, in a similar manner as the people in this world?

M.—I shall with the greatest pleasure reply to your questions according to the best light I have from the New Church writings, which are, in my view, the LORD'S *plain* teachings of what the Scriptures contain on the subject. In these writings the LORD no more speaks "in parables," saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like unto" this or that. According to the LORD'S promise to His disciples, in John xvi. 25, He now "shows plainly" the real truth, on this and other momentous themes. The constitution of the spiritual world is described, not only as to its general features, but as to all necessary particulars. The stupendous things of heaven are revealed in language that every one can understand. They that seek for knowledge as to man's state of life in the eternal world, shall surely find it by reading the Writings.

I.—That is so. The beauty of it is, that what is taught in the works of Swedenborg about the future state, so far as I can learn, is in harmony with the Scriptures, with sound reason, and at the same time with all true science and philosophy.

M.—With regard to your question, for example. We can now understand what our LORD means when He says: "In my Father's house are many mansions" (John xiv. 2). By the "Father's house," heaven is evidently meant. There are *mansions* there. And for what other purpose could the mansions be except for the angels to dwell in? Heaven is arranged by the Lord into innumerable angelic societies, each and all according to Divine order.

I.—So the angels are not altogether, in one vast amphitheatre-like place? It has been taught that they are continually standing in the presence of God, and engaged in nothing else but devotional exercises. According to this notion, heaven has been described as a place

"Where congregations ne'er break up, And Sabbaths have no end."

But it seems to me that the countless myriads of good people, including all the innocent little ones, who have during the past ages gone to heaven, would make rather a large congregation to be in one place.

M.—As soon as any one obtains an intelligent idea of how heaven is constituted, these erroneous notions will vanish. The immensity of heaven is beyond the conception of the finite mind. When we try to form an idea of the area required to furnish standing room for those who have gone to heaven during some thousands of years, we can easily see the absurdity of the notion that they are all standing and worshipping God before a throne. The heavens consist of angelic societies innumerable, those who are in similar spiritual states dwelling together. The angels have mansions or houses, in which they live. The angels are human beings that once lived in this natural world. By leading a good life they were purified of evils; and after death they were raised up as to their spiritual bodies, and are now in a blessed state in the heavenly world.

I.—How and by whom are the mansions of the angels of heaven built?

M.—The LORD, our Father in the heavens, creates all things for the angels. And all things—the mansions, their contents, their surroundings, and even the garments in which the angels are clothed—are perfectly suitable to, and in correspondence with, their heavenly state of life. They are all that their inmost hearts could desire.

I.—There is something delightful about these definite ideas. But tell us how and by whom they were communicated to men in this world.

M.—In ancient times men talked with the angels face to face, and they had correct knowledges concerning man's future state. But in the processes of the ages, men became natural-minded, and lost sight of the fact of the existence of the spiritual world. In order to restore to the men of the Church this knowledge, the LORD required a human instrument, through whom to reveal it. Thus, as we believe, He raised up Emanuel Swedenborg, prepared him, and then let him into the spiritual world, that *from actual observation* he might give a description of that world. Permit me to read you a passage or two from one of his works. In speaking of the homes of the angels, he says:

"As often as I have spoken with the angels face to face, so often have I been with them in their habitations. Their habitations are quite like the habitations on earth called houses, but more beautiful; in them are parlours, rooms, and bed-chambers, in great numbers; there are also courts, and round about are gardens, shrubberies, and fields. "Palaces of heaven have been seen, which were so magnificent that they could not be described: above they shone as if they were of pure gold, and below as if they were of precious stones, some being more splendid than others. Within it was the same; the rooms were adorned with such decorations as neither language nor science can adequately describe. On the side which looked to the south, there were paradises, where all things shone in such a way, in some places the leaves as of silver, and the fruits as of gold; and the flowers in their beds presented, by their colours, the appearance of rainbows" (H. H. 184, 185).

I.—The description is very beautiful; and he also says that he saw these things in full wakefulness, that is, consciously, when his interior sight was opened. But since the angels live in mansions, do they also have furniture, such as chairs, tables, writing-desks, and book-cases? *M.*—Yes; it is not likely that the angels would care to stand all the time, any more than people in this world. And so we may reasonably believe that they have chairs to sit upon. Not only are the habitations of the angels provided with furniture, but they are also adorned with most magnificent objects of various kinds, which are correspondences of beautiful ideas, and are the means of giving them interior delight.

I.—It is wonderful to think that it should be so; but I do not see why we should doubt the truth of it; because the spiritual world is real and substantial. It takes an infinite variety of objects to make a world.

M.—We are informed that in the other world there are all things that exist on earth; but the things there are composed of spiritual substance, and are immensely more perfect in form than they are here. This idea is even expressed by Milton, who makes Raphael say:

"What if earth Be but the shadow of heaven, and things therein Each to other like, more than on earth is thought."

The prophets Ezekiel and Daniel saw temples in heaven, besides a great many other things. And all things described in the Revelation were seen and heard by John in the spiritual world. For he was "in the spirit," when the LORD appeared to him, and commanded him to "write in a book" the things that he saw (Rev. i. 10, 11, 19).

I.—Do you suppose the angels have in their mansions such things as pianos and other musical instruments, upon which they can perform?

M.—There is no doubt of it. For all things that exist in this world have their origin in the spiritual world. That is the world of causes, and this of effects. In heaven they have both vocal and instrumental music; and that they have it there in greater perfection than here, we may well believe. In the work on *Conjugal Love*, No. 17, you will find a description of "concerts of music and singing" in heaven. There are mentioned "wind and stringed instruments of various tones, both high and low, loud and soft," besides other particulars. And what cultured person can doubt that music is of a heavenly origin! A mansion on earth is not considered to be completely furnished unless it has an instrument or instruments of music. How, then, can we doubt that the angels have them in their mansions? We read of praising the LORD with the sound of the trumpet, with the psaltery and harp, with the timbrel and cymbals, with stringed instruments and organs (Ps. cl. 3-5). John heard the voice of harpers playing upon their harps in heaven (Rev. xiv. 2). And he also describes, in most sublime language, several glorifications of the LORD, who is the God of heaven. The angels sang these glorifications (Rev. vii. 10-12, xv. 2-4).

I.—It seems to be true, then, that "the earth is but the shadow of heaven."

M.—All things good, useful, and beautiful on the earth, are correspondences of things that exist in heaven. The angels have beautiful homes, surrounded with scenes of magnificence and splendour, because they have permitted themselves to be regenerated, and thus by a life of use have attained beauty of human character. The good are always beautiful. The angels are also clothed in fine garments and robes, corresponding to their internal beauty of heavenly and angelic character. The LORD gives them all things *gratis*, while they, under Divine guidance, perform uses which conduce to the happiness of the inhabitants of the universal heavens. The habitations and paradises of the angels are illuminated with the glorious light that proceeds from the sun of heaven. In the effulgence and warmth of that Divine sun, they live in a blessed state

which is to endure to all eternity. And to all the faithful sons and daughters of earth—to all who believe in God and do His will— is addressed the bright prophetic promise: "The LORD shall be to thee for a light of eternity, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended" (Isa. lx. 20).

I.—How good our heavenly Father is! How great His kindness, to reveal to the children of men such knowledges respecting the spiritual world and eternal life! And how grateful should we be to Him for thus furnishing the means for our enlightenment, our encouragement, and consolation!

III. THE SECOND ADVENT OF THE LORD.

"The Second Coming of the LORD is effected by means of a Man, before whom He has manifested Himself in Person, and whom He has filled with His Spirit, to teach the Doctrines of the New Church through the Word from Him."—T.C.R. 779.

INQUIRER.—As you are a preacher of the doctrines of the New Jerusalem, we should like to hear from you an explanation of your views respecting the Second Coming of Christ.

MISSIONARY.—I shall with great pleasure give you an explanation of the subject, so far as we shall be able to consider it in the brief space of time that we can devote to it on this occasion.

I.—I regret that our time is so limited; but for the present, at least, we shall have to be content with the information you can give us.

M.—The theme you have suggested is a very grand one. It is, indeed, a subject which every believer in the doctrines of Christianity ought to thoroughly understand. Comparatively few do understand it, because they have no doctrine to enlighten them concerning it; nor do they desire any. And many even assert that it is impossible for any one to understand such subjects, which is, doubtless, because they have no interest in spiritual things.

I.—It is quite probable that such is the case. But I can assure you that my desire is very great to understand it better than I have ever been able to do thus far.

M.—They that ask shall receive. They that seek for light will surely find it, in due time; for the Lord does not leave His followers to walk in darkness, but gives them the light of life.

I.—Yes; light is what we want,—what we need, and must have. It is terribly uncertain to travel in the dark spiritually as well as naturally. I have been for some time longing for light on several dark problems. At least to me they are dark; and it would be a real delight to have these things made intelligible.

M.—The light is given, and it will come to you as fast as you can receive it. The LORD is the Light of the World. He has effected His Second Coming spiritually, and thus the Sun of Righteousness has arisen anew. There was a long night of falsity and ignorance respecting things heavenly and Divine; and this period of the world's history is called "the Dark Ages." It was described many centuries before, in these words: "Behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the people" (Isa. lx. 2).

I.—And you understand these words of the prophet to mean a state of falsity and ignorance as to spiritual things?

M.—Yes; a person who has no knowledge of spiritual truth cannot have an enlightened mind, but must be in a dark spiritual state. And if evil be joined with falsity, it is a state of "thick darkness."

I.—The *Dark Ages* were terrible, indeed. It makes one shudder to think of the religious persecutions, and the diabolical deeds that were done in those days: when, for example, they so cruelly tortured people, and killed their bodies in order that they might, as they imagined, save their souls.

M.—The Lord alluded to those persecutions, when He said: "Then shall be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Matt. xxiv. 21). But it pleased the LORD, in His mercy, to provide that those days might be "shortened." It was not in the order of the Divine Providence to permit the powers of darkness to triumph, and to continue the reign of relentless cruelty for ever. The LORD knew that He would effect His Second Coming spiritually, and this He foretold in the sublime words: "And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see together; for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken" (Isa. xl. 5).

I.—My friend here is an Adventist, and we cannot agree on this subject of the Second Advent of Christ at all; because he takes all the Scriptures literally, and affirms his belief in the personal coming of Christ into this natural world. To me such an idea seems absurd, because the LORD Jesus Christ is God, consequently He is the Divine Being; and how could He come personally into this natural world?

M.—The Scriptures apparently teach the idea of the personal coming of the LORD in a few passages, but in reality they do not teach this. To be consistent, in our method of the

interpretation of the Scriptures on this subject, we must take all the passages referring to it together, and thus learn the spirit of their teaching as a whole. For us to construct theories which are based on one class of passages merely, is neither wise nor useful, because it cannot lead to a rational understanding of the subject.

I.—That is just what I have often told my literalistic friends. The theory of the personal coming of the LORD is based on certain passages, and then we find many other passages which flatly contradict them, and evidently teach an entirely different doctrine. And this thing is confusing. There is no light, but only darkness in it. And it seems to me that, in order to understand the subject intelligently, there ought to be a method of interpretation which harmonizes all these contradictions.

M.—Your remarks are quite correct. And allow me to assure you that the doctrine of the New Church does harmonize the contradictions found in the letter of the Divine Word. These contradictions are merely apparent, not real. The Scriptures teach Divine Truth throughout. The Word of God contains an inner sense. In fact, we are taught that the Word has a natural sense, a spiritual sense, and a celestial sense; and that in each sense it is Divine.

I.—Paul says: "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life" (2 Cor. iii. 6). Does he mean that the natural sense alone is insufficient to enable one to understand a subject?

M.—He evidently had some idea of the true method of Scripture interpretation. The LORD also says: "It is the Spirit that quickeneth; . . . the words that I speak unto you are spirit, and are life" (John vi. 63). By the "spirit" is meant the spiritual sense, in which are to be seen the living, beautiful, clear, and rational ideas contained in the literal sense. In the Writings of the New Church, given through the instrumentality of Emanuel Swedenborg, the LORD revealed the spiritual sense of the Word. In these spiritual Writings we have the Divine doctrine which enables us to understand the Scriptures rationally. They throw a flood of light upon all subjects. The darkness of falsity and ignorance is dissipated. A new and glorious spiritual day has dawned. We are living at the beginning of a New Era. Men who can receive the Divine Truth in rational forms may now become enlightened Christians; may have all their doubts and difficulties removed; and may rejoice in the precious light of the New Jerusalem.

I.—What you say is most cheering and encouraging to one who is in search of light and knowledge concerning spiritual things.

M.—The genuine truth is exceedingly gratifying to one who can receive it, and one who has a sincere desire for it. Genuine truth is satisfying in its nature, but apparent truth is not. For example, it is an apparent truth—in the mere letter of the Word—that the LORD Jesus Christ rose from the tomb in His material body. And, accordingly, theologians have for ages taught that the Saviour ascended into heaven in a material body, because they have had no true doctrine to teach them as to the nature of our LORD'S Body after the Resurrection. From the mere letter they did not learn that the LORD glorified His Human, *i.e.* made it Divine, and did not, therefore, have a material body after His resurrection, nor was ever seen with bodily eyes or with natural sight after that event. This is the genuine truth of the matter, as can be very plainly shown from the Scriptures, when we take the time and the pains to investigate them.

I.—I should like to ask the theologians these questions: If Christ ascended in a physical body, where did He go? Did He then begin a journey through the immensity of space, to go to a region called heaven, somewhere in the material universe? And if so, how long would it require to make the journey? But in order to pass through space in a physical body, would it not be necessary first to entirely change the constitution of the natural universe? What answer, think you, would they give to these questions?

M.—I do not know, except it be that "with God all things are possible." But the questions you have proposed are as legitimate as they are pointed. They cannot be satisfactorily answered from the standpoint of the old theology. And it requires a great deal of explanation to answer them fully, according to the New Theology.

I.—It is not to be expected that any one should explain so great a subject in a few words. But I will not interrupt you.

M.—It is generally taken for granted that the LORD rose from the tomb and ascended into heaven in a natural body. But this is merely an appearance of the truth, according to some of the circumstances mentioned in the literal sense of the Scripture. It is a perfect fallacy. Enlightened

reason sees the absurdity of it at a glance. It is a case in point of how "the letter killeth." For the clinging to the literal circumstances alone, in which there is mere apparent truth, destroys all possibility of rationally understanding the genuine truth on the subject.

I.—The genuine truth is what I want to learn, and that as fast as I can.

M.—The material substance of which the LORD'S natural body was composed could not be transmuted into the Divine Substance which constitutes His Glorified Human. The material substances of the LORD'S body were put off, and returned to nature, when the Human was made Divine. How the Human was made Divine, neither angels nor men can fully comprehend. The process was miraculous and inscrutable. The finite mind cannot grasp all the ways of the Infinite God. It is a Divine Truth that the LORD glorified His Human, though we do not know much about *how* He did so. But this is no cause for objection to the doctrine revealed to us; for we do not fully understand the formation of the buds and blossoms, the leaves and fruits, upon the trees. The process of growth is miraculous and inscrutable. And there are many of the most familiar operations of nature that we know very little about.

I.—Very true, indeed. The existence of the sun, for instance, is a most stupendous miracle. And what shall we say of the tremendous force which is exerted by means of the sun to perpetually keep so many ponderous planets in motion? Is not the law of motion, as well as the process of growth, miraculous? Do we not behold wonders amazing, and phenomena inscrutable, everywhere throughout the physical universe? I consider your illustration a good one. And I can plainly see that it is not wise to reject a revealed truth, because we do not fully comprehend it at the outset.

M.—No; we must first understand general principles, and then we may enter more and more into particulars. But let us return to the subject. And here I wish to say that our literalistic friends, who affirm the notion of the personal coming, imagine that the LORD actually ascended into heaven in a natural body. Such questions as you asked a few minutes ago do not, perhaps, arise in their minds. And to confirm their view they employ one apparent truth to prove another; and the result cannot be otherwise than fallacious. They quote from the account of the LORD'S ascension these words: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven" (Acts i. 11).

I.—And this is one of the very passages I want to have explained.

M.—Well, in the first place, only the eleven apostles were present at the LORD'S ascension (Mark xvi. 14-20; Acts i. 1-14). And, in the second place, they did not then see Him with their ordinary natural sight. The fact is that the ascension of our LORD was *a spiritual vision*, and was beheld with the spiritual eyes of the apostles. We read that after His resurrection they did not know Him until "their eyes were opened,"—their spiritual eyes, of course. (See Luke xxiv. 31.) The LORD manifested Himself to them in such a form that they could see Him and know Him. With the bodily eye no man can see a spiritual being; and much less could he in that manner see the Divine Being.

I.—I never heard such an explanation of these subjects before. It is wonderful, and yet scriptural and reasonable.

M.—We can see, then, that the LORD'S ascension was in all respects spiritual. And so will His Second Coming, "in like manner," be effected spiritually; and not by a personal appearance in the natural world. Those who expect to see Him coming in the clouds and descend to the earth, establish a throne, and reign with His saints literally for a period of a thousand years, are as much in error as were the Jews who thought that when Messiah should make His appearance, it would be to release them from the galling yoke of their subjection to the Romans, make of them the greatest of the nations, and reign over them as a mighty and glorious king. But the Messiah came in a very different manner from that in which they had expected. He afterwards said: "My kingdom is not of this world" (John xviii. 36). It was not of this world in the sense in which they thought.

ADVENTIST.—But we read: "They shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory" (Matt. xxiv. 30). What do you make of this declaration? Does it not mean what it says?

M.—It does not mean what it says literally; but these words must be understood as to their

spiritual sense. Thus, to "see" means to understand. The "Son of Man" is the LORD, with respect to the Divine Truth. "Coming" signifies revelation from the LORD and concerning Him. Now, observe that He is to come "in the clouds of *heaven*." But what we call clouds are the clouds of the *earth*. They belong to the earth, and are composed of earthy substances, *i.e.* vapour, or simply water in the form of vapour. The "clouds of heaven" mean the literal sense of the Word of God. And the "power and great glory" mean the inner and spiritual sense.

I.—I for my part do not see any reason for objecting to the interpretation of the passage.

A.—And I cannot say that I am prepared to accept it.

M.—Well, let us proceed a little further. We can plainly see that a personal coming of the LORD would necessarily be a local coming, *i.e.* a coming in some particular locality of the earth.

I.—According to the "in like manner" theory, regarded literally, He would require to come down at Bethany (Luke xxiv. 50). And then we read: "Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him "(Rev. i. 7). But how all the myriads on myriads of human beings could get near enough to Bethany, so as literally to see Him with their bodily eyes, is one of those things that is quite incomprehensible. To my mind the notion of a personal coming appears more absurd the longer we continue the investigation.

M.—In the twenty-fourth of Matthew, where the LORD speaks of His Second Coming, He plainly teaches that it is not personal or local, but universal (chap. xxiv. 23-27). You see that the LORD actually warns His followers against being deceived by literalistic notions and fallacies, respecting the momentous subject of the Second Advent (vers. 4, 5). The Light of the Divine Truth, which the LORD has revealed concerning His Divine nature, personality, character, and attributes, in that He has made His Second Advent spiritually, may now illuminate men's minds, and protect them from the deceptions of the fallacies which have been concocted by the busy imaginations of certain persons, from their mere self-derived intelligence.

I.—The light of Divine Truth! What a beautiful expression it is! And how much the truth can do for us, if we can but obtain it, and heartily and intelligently appreciate it! And what transcendent glories must it reveal to our delighted spiritual vision, when in the LORD'S own Divine Light we shall see light! In fact, the mere glimpse of it that I have obtained to-day gives me an inward feeling of unspeakable joy.

A.—I haven't got far enough on to go into such ecstasies over your Swedenborgian explanation of the subject.

I.—But you have heard enough to set you a-thinking. And you will not reflect on these things many days, I venture to say, until some of your old ideas about the literal and personal coming will drop out of your mind. At least you ought to drop them at once, and accept a more intelligible view, such as we have just listened to.

A.—It is, of course, possible that I may change my views about these matters by and by, but I cannot see the need of doing so just yet.

M.—The LORD effected His Second Coming, spiritually, by revealing the spiritual sense of the Divine Word; by giving spiritual knowledges on all subjects that come within the scope of human investigation, reception, and experience; thus, by making an Immediate Revelation out of the Word, which is the crown of all Divine Revelations ever made to mankind. This Revelation we have in the Writings of the New Church, given to the world by the LORD, through the instrumentality of His servant, Emanuel Swedenborg. And this Revelation was made according to the LORD'S own intimation to His disciples, saying: "I have yet many things to tell you, but ye cannot bear them now." And also according to His promise: "The hour cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in parables, but when I shall show you plainly from the Father" (John xvi. 12, 25).

I.—You seem at no loss to find appropriate and convincing Scripture proof, to bear out what you affirm.

A.—Any one can quote Scripture, no matter what may be the nature of his doctrine.

M.—The objects for which the LORD made His Second Coming are most grand, beneficent, imperative, glorious, and momentous. Thus, the LORD performed the Divine work of Redemption anew, and again prepared the way for the salvation of the human race. By the wonderful unfoldments of the Divine Truth, and the merciful impartations of the Divine Love, the LORD continues to come into the hearts and minds of His people. He comes to establish His

New Church, signified by the New Jerusalem, which is to be the crowning glory of the latter days. And of this Church it is prophetically written: There was given to the Son of Man, who came with the clouds of heaven, dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed (Daniel vii. 13, 14).

I.—And there is also a parallel passage which reads: "The kingdoms of this world are become of our LORD and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev. xi. 15). I always like to read these sublime ascriptions to the LORD, who is the God of heaven and earth, because there seems to be something elevating about them.

M.—It is always elevating to the mind for us to acknowledge the LORD as All in all, and to humbly feel that we are but finite recipients from Him, the Infinite Giver of every perfect gift.

I.—The maxim of the ancient philosophers that "we are also God's offspring" is more clearly rendered by the apostle: "In Him we live, and move, and have our being." This involves far greater wisdom than is manifested by some of our modern philosophers, who believe in matter only, and reject the idea of the existence of spirit; who doubt and even deny the grand truth of a personal Creator and Preserver of the universe.

M.—In His Second Advent, the LORD has restored the means, in all fullness and abundance, for men to acquire rational knowledges respecting all things earthly and heavenly, all things spiritual and Divine. Now is being fulfilled the prophecy enunciated by Him who, sitting upon the throne, said: "Behold, I make all things new" (Rev. xxi. 5). They that learn to understand the Divine Truth, now revealed by the LORD in the heavenly doctrines of the New Jerusalem, and thus become intelligent and wise in the spiritual sense of the Word, by means of the literal sense, "See the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory."

I.—I must thank you most sincerely for your explanations; and I trust it will not be long before we meet again, because there are several other leading subjects that I should be delighted to converse about. One can read, of course, and get information; but it is not like a good talk with a person who is familiar with these things.

M.—I am very pleased to have met you, and to have had the opportunity of this conversation with you. It is always gratifying to meet with those who have an interest in spiritual things, and can appreciate the Divine Truth which the LORD has revealed to us in His Second Advent.

IV. THE END OF THE WORLD.

"Neither the visible heaven nor the habitable earth will perish, but both will remain for ever."—
L.J. 1.

INQUIRER.—That is the way you New Churchmen shock people, who are not familiar with your views.

MISSIONARY.—I do not see why it should shock any one to say that the earth will never be destroyed.

I.—We have always been taught, you know, that there is to be a day of judgment, and that then the world will come to an end.

M.—True, it has been generally taught and believed that a judgment will some day take place here in the natural world. But this clashes with the teaching of the Scriptures. The Apostle Paul says: "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after that the judgment" (Heb. ix. 27).

According to this statement, the judgment will be after death; consequently in the spiritual world, and not in the natural. This is taught all through the Bible.

I.—But is it not stated in several passages in the Bible, that the world will actually come to an end?

M.—The expression "the end of the world" occurs five times in Matthew; but it is in each case an erroneous translation. It ought to read, "the consummation of the age." This is the marginal reading in the revised version, as you will see in the following places: xiii. 39, 40, 49, xxiv. 3, xxviii. 20.

I.—I was not aware of that.

M.—In the mere letter the Bible contradicts itself. In some passages it appears to teach that the earth and the universe will finally be destroyed. On the other hand, it also declares that the earth shall endure for ever, as in Ecclesiastes i. 4, and in Psalm civ. 5.

I.—How then do you explain it?

M.—We will come to the explanation very soon; permit me to say here that the true method of the interpretation of the Bible harmonizes all its contradictions. The Word contains a spiritual sense. The Lord speaks in parables. Natural things convey spiritual ideas. Material objects are used to teach heavenly principles. Thus the real meaning is in the spiritual sense of the Scriptures. "The words that I speak unto you, are spirit, and are life," says the Divine Teacher.

I.—You seem to mean much the same by a "spiritual sense" as we do by "figurative expressions."

M.—The Word contains a spiritual sense in every part. And in the Epistles, when Peter, for example, appears to be describing a universal conflagration, he is certainly making use of figurative language. For, taken literally, he would be contradicting David and Solomon.

I.—Yes, I see.

M.—When John had written the words in Revelation xxi. 1,—"I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the former heaven and the former earth had passed away,"—the very same physical heavens and earth existed as before. These had not passed away; nor will they ever pass away in the sense of being burned up or destroyed. In fact, the material heavens and earth are not meant at all, any more than our Lord means natural salt when He says to the disciples, "Ye are the salt of the earth" (Matt. v. 13).

I.—What do you understand by the new heavens and the new earth?

M.—The new heavens and the new earth are new states and conditions on the part of the people who constitute the Lord's Church. There are new states and conditions because the Lord has effected His Second Coming, by making a revelation of the spiritual sense of the Word, and by giving genuine spiritual knowledges on all subjects. And in this, His Second Advent, the Lord is at this day establishing a New Church, meant by the New Jerusalem in the Book of Revelation.

I.—I now begin to get some new ideas.

M.—Well, then, let me try to give you another new idea. God can no more destroy the universe, or the earth, than He can destroy the immutability of His character.

I.—Are not all things possible with God?

M.—Let us consider my assertion logically and rationally; for whatever is not capable of

demonstration, according to genuine logic and sound reason, cannot be true. Now I say emphatically, that *it is absolutely impossible for God ever to destroy His universe*. God is the Creator, the Upholder, the Preserver, of the stupendous fabric of creation. This grand truth is revealed to us in the Scriptures. The immutability of the Divine character is also plainly taught. God is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Does it not, therefore, follow as a logical conclusion, that since God is the Creator and Preserver of the world, and is also immutable, He will remain for ever the same? How can He at any time entirely change His essential Divine nature, and from a beneficent Creator, become a ruthless Destroyer of His own works? Is not such an idea in the highest degree irrational and absurd?

I.—I admit that there is a great deal of force in your method of reasoning on the subject. But since the natural body of man perishes, why not the natural earth also?

M.—Your question is perfectly legitimate. I will try to answer it, though I confess it is somewhat difficult. In the first place, however, I would say that it is not strictly true that the natural body of man does perish. It is only apparently so. The natural body has no life or sensation of itself. All the life and sensations that are manifested in the body are by virtue of the spirit that dwells within the body. The spirit is in the human form, is composed of spiritual substance, and is the man himself that survives the dissolution of the body. The body is said to perish, or to die; but the truth is, that when the spirit is separated from it, as man enters into the eternal world, then the material substances of which the body was composed, are dissolved, and thus return to the earth from which they were taken. But the material substance of which the body was formed is not destroyed nor annihilated. The form has been changed, but every particle of substance still exists. Matter is indestructible. You understand me thus far?

I.—I think so; proceed, please.

M.—Well, in the second place, I would say, that there is no correct analogy, or logical comparison, between the dissolution of man's natural body and the destruction or annihilation of the material world. Matter of itself, in the absolute sense, is nothing, and cannot exist. The natural earth exists because there is a spiritual world. And the natural earth is the outbirth from the spiritual world; and can no more exist separate from it than the body of man can exist separate from the soul or spirit. The two worlds are indeed distinct as to the nature of the substances of which they are respectively composed. This earth is formed of material substances, while the other world is made of spiritual substances. And they are, nevertheless, very intimately related to each other; are in connection with each other, comparatively like soul and body. The Divine power of God flows in through the spiritual world, and keeps all things of the physical universe in being. Nature cannot create itself and exist of itself any more than a watch can make itself, and keep time without being wound up.

I.—I should like to hear a little more about the reasons why it is impossible, as you affirm, for God to destroy the universe. It has seemed to me that with God all things are possible. He is the Almighty.

M.—God is an infinitely perfect Being. He is Divine order itself. "Order is heaven's first law." Without laws of order the universe could not exist for an instant. Not all things are possible with God. It is not possible for Him to do anything that is disorderly. He cannot violate the laws of Divine order which He has ordained for the government of His universe. Such an idea is inadmissible and unthinkable when we think rationally.

I.—You New Churchmen have quite a new way of looking at things.

M.—Yes, we try to get along with as little nonsense as possible on these great questions. We need not launch into wild speculations; because in the New Church doctrines rational knowledges have been given us on all these subjects.

I.—Have you anything more to tell me about the matter we have been discussing?

M.—Yes; before we drop the subject, I should like to make a few more remarks. God created the universe according to His own Divine order. Since He is the Creator, and is immutable, He certainly cannot change into a Destroyer. He created the world to the beneficent end that He might form angelic heavens from the human race. This life, with all its experiences, is intended as a preparation for eternal life. We have no good ground to imagine that this beautiful earth of ours will ever be dissipated into gases, and thus return into a chaotic condition. We cannot reasonably suppose that it will be consumed by fire; that all the oceans, rocks, and mountains,

and the solid globe itself, will ever be burned up and clean dissolved. The spiritual world is the medium through which the Creator sustains the natural earth. The spiritual world will never be removed from the natural world, as the spirit is removed from the body at the time man is said to die. The material world will not, therefore, be subject to dissolution in like manner as the material body of man. The spirit world and the natural are related to each other like cause and effect. As there can be no effect without a cause, so there cannot be a natural world without a spiritual. The physical earth is gradually and constantly undergoing changes. It is not two hours precisely the same. These changes are analogous to those that take place in the human body. The earth is destined to become more beautiful, more desirable, as a temporary home for man throughout the ages of the future. As regards its continued existence, I believe the earth to be as enduring as the heavens. It seems to me to accord well with enlightened human reason to think that the entire glorious universe will be perpetuated, to subserve those wise and benevolent uses for the sake of which it was brought into existence. So that it is literally a grand philosophic truth, that "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh; but the earth abideth for ever" (Eccles. i. 4).

I.—These explanations, I must say, are very interesting to me; and it seems as though your doctrines ought to do much in the course of time to enlighten the world on many difficult problems.

V. THE INSPIRATION OF THE WORD.

"The LORD giveth the Word: great is the host of them that bear . the tidings."—PSALM lxvii. 11.

INQUIRER.—Do you believe in the Divine Inspiration of the Scriptures?

MISSIONARY.—We do, indeed; as you will see by the second article of our Creed, which reads as follows: "I believe in the Sacred Scripture, which is the Word of God, Holy and Divine in the letter and in the spirit, and the Source of all wisdom to angels and to men."

I.—"The Source of all wisdom to angels and to men." How do you understand this statement?

M.—It simply means that there is no other Source of knowledge, respecting things spiritual, heavenly, and Divine, than the Sacred Scripture, and that which is derived therefrom. The Sacred Scripture is a Divine Revelation of spiritual and heavenly things; and those knowledges which transcend the scientific and natural plane of thought, can be communicated to man, and received intelligently by man, in no other way than by means of Revelation, that is, by means of truths revealed to us.

I.—I never thought of the subject in that light before. It is to me a new idea.

M.—If you will reflect upon the subject, you will soon see that it is so. The mere substances and forms of nature do not teach you anything spiritual. A man may become a very learned scientist, a most profound natural philosopher; he may use the microscope and discover untold wonders, marvellous beauties, in the structure of forms that are totally invisible to the naked eye; or, he may use the telescope, and behold the stupendous grandeur of the great universe; may learn that it consists of a grand aggregation of countless numbers of universes; may see that all things are governed by immutable laws; that everywhere there *is* order, harmony, development, and thus perpetual creation going on: but if he rejects the Scripture as a Divine Revelation, he will not believe in the existence of God, the Infinite Creator and Upholder of the universe. Faith in God will seem to him puerile.

I.—This would no doubt be true of some of the learned, but not of all. I think there are some men who reject the Bible as a Divinely inspired Book, who nevertheless believe in the existence of a God.

M.—I have no doubt of that. There are some among the learned that reject the Scriptures, on account of the absurd notions and irrational dogmas which have been ascribed to them, by the literalistic interpretations of a false theology.

I.—It is not to be wondered at, that men of even ordinary intelligence reject the Scriptures, on that ground. But, of course, there is a vast amount of nonsense that passes for good "orthodox" doctrine, which in fact is not taught in the Bible at all. There are many things that I have never been able to reconcile with common sense, not to speak of sound logic, the use of which is surely legitimate.

M.—I wish here to affirm the correctness of the position, that natural things, in themselves, do not teach man a single idea respecting anything spiritual. The Apostle truly says: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. ii. 14).

I.—Yes; Paul puts it in a pointed way, that is, spiritual things are to be spiritually understood: is that the idea?

M.—That is evidently the meaning he wishes to convey. And if a man will receive enlightenment from the Word, by means of doctrine derived from the Word; if his mind is formed by genuine truths of Revelation, concerning the existence and nature of God, concerning man and his relations to God, and concerning many other important subjects; then he can illustrate and confirm spiritual things by means of natural. Then he will be enabled to elevate his thoughts to the devout contemplation of things heavenly and eternal. Spiritual verities will no more be foolishness to him. He will be prepared to believe in the existence of *spirit as an actuality*, as well as of matter: will no more doubt that there is a spiritual world of most glorious and stupendous realities, than that there is a material world, the existence of which is itself a perpetual miracle. And he will be a devout believer, both in the Divinity of the LORD and in the Inspiration of the Word.

I.—Provided, always, allow me to add, that the Word is taken for what it really is. It seems to

me that the Bible must be a spiritual and Divine book; and that it must therefore be spiritually understood, according to a Divine method of interpretation; if there is such a thing.

M.—The LORD, who gave the Word, by inspiration, has not left mankind in the dark as regards its true import. He has also provided a Divine method for its interpretation; and they that accept and use this, need not search the Scriptures in vain. There is a flood of light thrown upon all the "dark sayings of old"; and all subjects may now be more thoroughly investigated, and more clearly comprehended. "Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined" (Ps. l. 2); that is, He has made a revelation of the spiritual sense of the Word; and this "to give light to them that sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace" (Luke i. 79).

I.—I want to learn about this revelation of the spiritual sense, of which you speak. But in the first place I want to ask about an expression in your Creed. It says, I think, that the Word of God is "the Source of all wisdom to angels and to men." Does your Church teach, then, that the Word also exists in heaven, and that the angels there have it as a written Revelation?

M.—Yes; we read: "For ever, O LORD, Thy Word is settled in the heavens" (Ps. cxix. 89). It is also declared that "God is the Word" (John i. 1), —according to the original. The LORD is the God of heaven; *and* it is the Divine Sphere of the LORD that constitutes heaven. The Word also exists in the heavens; and the angels are in intelligence and wisdom, from the LORD, by means of the Word. This is what the Writings of the New Church teach us; and they contain an immense amount of definite information concerning the subject. You see, in the New Church we need not bring forth ideas from our own imaginations; because we have an abundance of ideas and truths and principles revealed to us from the LORD respecting things spiritual, heavenly, and Divine.

I.—Wonderful! The things you are telling me are, in fact, nothing less than a revelation to me. May I ask, what sort of a language is it in which the angels have the Word?

M.—The angels are spiritual beings, dwelling in the heavens in the spiritual world. They are "the spirits of just men made perfect" (Heb. xii. 23). They are "ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation" (Heb. i. 14). They are the proclaimers of "Good tidings of great joy" to a benighted and sin-stricken world (Luke ii. 10-14). They are the LORD'S hosts, "that excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening to the voice of His word" (Ps. ciii. 20). They are the LORD'S redeemed ones, gathered home to heaven, from all parts of the habitable globe (Rev. vii. 9-17). The angels of the universal heavens were once men, or human beings, in a natural world. But they are now spiritual beings, inhabiting the glorious and peaceful abodes of the heavenly world. They are nevertheless finite beings, endowed with the faculties of finite minds; and therefore require Divine instruction. And this they receive from the LORD, the God of heaven, by means of the Word.

I.—Your remarks are very acceptable, because exceedingly instructive; but you have not yet answered my question.

M.—I was just on the point of doing so. The doctrines of the New Church inform us that the Word in heaven is written in a spiritual style, which differs entirely from the natural style. The angels, therefore, have the Word and read it in a language suitable to their state, thus in a spiritual or heavenly language. We have in the Writings the following beautiful statement: "In the spiritual world, the Word, in the inmost recesses of the temples there, shines before the eyes of the angels like a great star, and sometimes like the sun; and also from the bright radiance around it, there appear, as it were, most beautiful rainbows" (T.C.R. 209).

I.—The mention of the sun, in this passage, reminds me of the account of our LORD'S transfiguration, where it is said, "His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light" (Matt. xvii. 2). Now, was not Jesus Christ "the Word made flesh, dwelling among us," that men might behold His glory? (John i. 14). And was it not because of the LORD being the Word, that His face shone as the sun, and His garments were white as the light?

M.—Yes; the transfiguration of the LORD was a most sublime circumstance, being in all particulars representative. The essential attributes of the LORD are Divine Love and Divine Wisdom. The very names of the LORD, in the Humanity, *Jesus Christ*, signify the Divine Good and the Divine Truth. When it is said, in the account of the transfiguration, that the LORD'S face shone as the sun, it has reference to His Divine Love, or Good; and when it is said that His

garments were white as the light, it has reference to His Divine Wisdom, or Truth.

I.—Somewhere in the Scriptures the LORD is called a sun, also; I do not remember where the passage is.

M.—Yes; it is said: "The LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD will give grace and glory" (Ps. lxxxiv. 11). The sun is the most glorious object in nature, and the most perfect representative of the LORD. The LORD, in His Divine Humanity, is exalted in glory and majesty above the heavens, as the Sun of the spiritual universe. When the LORD manifested Himself to John, in a transcendently glorious Personal Form, "His face was as the sun shineth in his strength" (Rev. i. 16). The Divine Love and the Divine Wisdom of the LORD proceed from Him, and thus are manifested, in the elements of heat and light. By means of the heat and light the whole universe was created; and by the continual operation of these elements its existence is perpetuated. The heat and light of the sun of nature are what we call correspondences of love and wisdom. Love is warm, genial, glowing; and wisdom enlightens and brightens and elevates the mind. Love is heavenly fire; and truth is spiritual light.

I.—These things are exceedingly beautiful; but I should now like to go back to your Creed once more. I should like to hear an explanation of the words: "Holy and Divine, in the letter and in the spirit." For this will, I presume, bring forward something relating to the spiritual sense.

M.—The Word in reality contains three senses, called the natural, the spiritual, and the celestial; and in each sense it is Holy and Divine. The reason why there is in the Word a threefold sense, is, because the LORD is the Word; and there is in the LORD a Divine Trinity. There are three senses and one Divine Word, as there are three essential attributes and one Divine Being, who is the LORD our Father in the heavens.

I.—This idea of the Scripture containing a threefold sense is quite new to me; but it looks reasonable.

M.—It is so in the very nature of things. The Word is a Divine Revelation to man. In and by means of it the LORD manifests Himself to His rational creatures; and teaches them concerning things spiritual and eternal. The Word, therefore, as to its style and form of composition—as to the truths and ideas involved in its Divine Language—must be adapted to man's spiritual nature and mental constitution. And it is so adapted; and that by Infinite Wisdom. For we are taught that the human mind consists of three planes or degrees, called the natural, the spiritual, and the celestial. There is, therefore, a trinity in man; because he was created in the image and after the likeness of God.

I.—So the Book says. Can you give any other reasons for believing that there is a threefold sense in the Word?

M.—Another reason is, because there are three heavens.

I.—Three heavens! That is another new idea. I have always thought there was but one heaven.

M.—There are three heavens, which constitute the one universal heaven. As there are three degrees in the human mind, so there are three degrees of regeneration, which are effected by the reception of the truths of faith from the Word, and by a life according to them. People go to the heaven, and to that particular society in that heaven, for which they are fitted, according to the degree of regeneration that is effected in them. In the Father's House are "many mansions;" and the LORD, in His Divine mercy, prepares an eternal, beautiful, delightful home for everyone that will permit himself to be regenerated, and so be led, finally, into His heavenly kingdom.

I.—After the explanation you have given, I am sure there is nothing objectionable, about the idea of three heavens.

M.—That there are three heavens, is very plainly taught in the Scriptures. The Apostle Paul speaks of one that was "caught up to the *third heaven*" where he "heard unspeakable words" (2 Cor. xii. 2-4). We are taught—according to the original—to say: "Our Father who art in the *heavens*" (Matt. vi. 9; Luke xi. 2). And it is written: "Sing, O *ye heavens*, -and be joyful, O earth" (Isa. xlix. 13). "The *heavens* are telling the glory of God" (Ps. xix. 1). These passages, in the true sense, do not allude to the physical expanse above us, but to the angelic heavens. The angelic beings, who are redeemed from the earth; who have come "out of great tribulation;" these can sing, and rejoice, and give glory to the God of the heavens, for His infinite mercy and loving-kindness toward His children.

I.—Your point is well proved. In fact, when one comes to think of it, the trinal principle is very

general.

M.—It is universal. As there is a Trinity in God, the Creator, there is a trinal principle in all things of creation. There are three kingdoms in nature, the mineral, vegetable, and animal. And all of these together are the product of the combined operation of the heat and light of the sun.

I. — Even a common thing like a brick is characterised by the dimensions of length, breadth, and thickness. And the trinal properties of substance, form, and essence, are attributable to all physical objects. But as we have not very much time to devote to philosophizing, I would now like to hear more about the spiritual sense of the Scriptures. Indeed, as you have given me such plain proof that there is a threefold sense in the Word, I should be greatly pleased to receive some definition of the whole subject; because, the ideas which your doctrines seem to teach concerning it, are certainly wonderfully interesting.

M.—Yes; they are interesting to those who can receive and appreciate them. And what is more perfectly plain and reasonable, than the truth that the Word contains a spiritual sense? The Divine Being, the LORD our God, could not reveal Himself to man in any other manner, than by inspiration, that is, by filling an angel with His Spirit, and by means of the angel enunciating the Word. God could manifestly not reveal Himself in any other than a Divine language; and this is the language that was spoken by the LORD, through the Angel while filled with the Divine Spirit, to Moses and the Prophets, and by them was written down, precisely as the LORD, in His infinite Wisdom, desired it to be written, and afterwards preserved as a permanent Revelation.

I.—What seems surprising to me, now that we are considering these matters, is that any one professing to be a Christian, should be ignorant as to the spiritual sense.

M.—Very few have any knowledge of it; and men generally, at this day, care not to use their under-handing, or reason, to look into such things. There is, however, such a thing as the *legitimate* use of reason. And in the proper use of this faculty, it is our privilege to repudiate ideas that are manifestly absurd and unscriptural, and to seek after rational interpretations of the Word, and to continue to do so until we find the same. The LORD is the Light of the World; and if we go to Him in the Revelations He has made, and thus learn from Him alone, we shall not abide in the darkness of ignorance concerning spiritual and Divine things. Our pathway of life will be illuminated with the light of truth revealed from heaven. And so we shall learn, by happy experience, in the faithful performance of our daily duties, what it is to "walk in the light of the LORD" (Isa. ii. 5).

I.—I have several times been much impressed with the idea, that perhaps there was, or would be given, by some means, in some providential manner, a true and reasonable explanation of that most mysterious of all books, the Bible. An expression you have just made use of, causes me to speak of this. You mentioned something about going to the LORD in the Revelations He has made. What am I to understand by this?

M.—I mean by this, that the LORD, who gave the letter of the Word, has also made a Revelation of the spirit, or internal meaning, of the Word. This the LORD has done through the instrumentality of His Servant, Emanuel Swedenborg. The Theological Writings of Swedenborg are the LORD'S Revelations for His New Church, signified by the New Jerusalem in the Apocalypse. In them the Divine Word is opened as to its internal sense; and thus the glory of the LORD is revealed, as it was prophetically declared it should be. So you see that the idea with which your mind has been impressed, had a foundation in fact. For it is a fact, that a rational interpretation of the Bible has been given to the world, by the Divine Teacher Himself.

I.—The desire to read Swedenborg's writings has several times arisen in my mind. But I heard such strange things said about Swedenborg and the belief of the Swedenborgians, that my mind was somewhat affected with prejudice; and I concluded that perhaps it was of no use after all. I took the word of those who seemed to know; but now it is dawning upon my mind that men sometimes say things without an intelligent idea of what they are talking about. The longer one lives, the more one finds out that human nature is a queer thing. It is not right to judge motives; but it is certain, it seems to me, that some people say things from selfish motives, with an intention to arouse prejudice in others.

M.—Yes; it is true that many have, by their prejudices, been prevented from looking into the New Church books, and learning about the nature of the letter and the spirit of the Word of God. As long as a man is satisfied with what he has of religious ideas, be they ever so erroneous; or,

so long as a man's prejudices are stronger than his love of the truth, and prevent him from investigating for himself, he is not in a teachable state, and cannot acquire genuine wisdom. The LORD says: "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink." *Thirst*, signifies desire for truth and good. To *come* to the LORD, is to acknowledge Him as the Source of all truth and good. And to *drink*, is to receive into the understanding, and thence into the will and the life, the principles of rational truth and heavenly good.

I.—I am resolved, from this hour henceforth to investigate for myself—I mean, Swedenborg's writings. In fact, I have been diligently searching for some time, but have failed to find anything that I could confidently rest upon. The reading of the Scriptures has been beneficial, but it has not removed my doubts, or explained my difficulties, or answered my questionings. There are many things that seem so strange and incomprehensible. The contradictions I meet with, perplex me. And it is absolutely appalling, to think of the characteristics which in some portions of the Scriptures appear to be ascribed to God. He appears to be a Being of anger, wrath, revenge, and cruelty. He is so represented in some passages; and yet my reason tells me that it cannot be literally true. In fact, you have in our present conversation spoken of God as our heavenly Father. There can surely be no wrath in Him. For, if He from a feeling of anger did actually punish His disobedient children, as many have imagined, He would be even worse than a good human father; because a good earthly parent will not correct his child with a feeling of anger, although it may appear so to the child.

M.—Very true; it is a mere appearance that God is angry. It seems so to the wicked, who are disobedient to the laws of Divine Order. "God is Love," and is also immutable, and is, therefore, infinite Love Itself. "His mercy endureth for ever."

I.—Will you now allow me to change the subject by asking another question?

M.—Certainly; with the greatest of willingness. Questions are always in order when you are talking with a New Churchman. Not that we are able to give satisfactory answers to all the questions that it is possible for people to ask. But some of us take a peculiar delight in the consideration of questions which greatly puzzle even the philosophers and theologians of the day. We like to investigate them, as far as possible.

I.—The question I was wanting some light upon, relates to the Books of the Bible: Do you regard all of them as inspired?

M.—The Word of God, alone, is Divinely inspired, in the true and full sense of that word. The Books which constitute the Word of God, are those which contain the spiritual sense, or inner meaning. These are the five books of Moses; the books of Joshua and Judges; the two books of Samuel; the two books of Kings; the Psalms of David; the Lamentations; and all the Prophecies, in the Old Testament: and the Four Gospels and the Revelation, in the New Testament.

I.—How do you regard the rest of the Books? Do you reject them?

M.—No; we do not reject any of them. We accept all of them as good and useful books for the Church. They contain much wholesome teaching; and they are in harmony with the Word. Those books are also written by inspiration; but not the same kind of inspiration as that by which the Word was written. The Proverbs of Solomon, for example, contain much wisdom; but they are not the Word of God. They do not claim to be. The Epistles of the Apostles are good and very useful books; but they are not the Word of God. They do not claim to be. You do not find a single "Thus saith the LORD," in the Proverbs of Solomon, or in the Epistles of the Apostles. But in the Word of the Old Testament this expression is constantly used; and also the words: "The LORD spake—to Moses," to Joshua, to Samuel, and to the Prophets. In olden times, before the Incarnation of the LORD, He spoke by means of an angel, because He could not, as to the Divine, appear immediately to finite men and speak to them. And in the Word of the New Testament, the LORD, having assumed the Human Nature and come into the world, and thus become "God with us" (Matt. i. 23), spoke in such a manner that "the people were astonished at His Doctrine; for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Matt. vii. 28, 29). And therefore it was truly said: "Never man spake like this man" (John vii. 46).

I.—I believe all that you have said is perfectly true. No reasonable person can fail, it seems to me, to recognise the distinctions you have pointed out. And yet there are people who would be surprised, if not shocked, at your saying that the Epistles of the Apostles are not a part of the Word of God.

M.—Yes; but where do the Apostles say that they wrote under Divine inspiration? Nowhere. Paul says: "I speak as a man" (Romans iii. 5; Gal. iii. 15). The Epistles of the Apostles are good doctrinal teachings, which were given to the various branches of the Apostolic or Primitive Church. They have been of great use to Christians, throughout the centuries; and they are yet. But the WORD is infinitely superior; because it contains the spiritual sense, and as to every verse and syllable, is Holy and Divine.

I.—You seem to have a more exalted idea of the Scriptures, than any other people. I understand, of course, that you are speaking according to the Doctrines of your Church.

M.—The Writings of the New Church teach us most wonderful things respecting the Word. Let me give you a few sentences from these Writings, as follows: "The Word is as a Divine Man; the literal sense is as its body, and the internal sense is as its soul" (A.C. 8943). "In the literal sense of the Word, Divine Truth is in its fullness, in its holiness, and in its power" (S.S. 37). "There is, in the Word, a spiritual sense, in which Divine Truth is in the light" (T.C.R. 85). "Such as heaven is, such also is the Word of the LORD: in its ultimate sense it is natural, in its interior sense it is spiritual, and in its inmost sense it is celestial, and in every part Divine; wherefore it is accommodated to the angels of the three heavens, and also to men" (T.C.R. 195).

I.—These are, truly, wonderful statements; and they indicate a profound reverence for the Scriptures, as being Divinely Inspired. The word inspired, would simply mean *inbreathed*, would it not?

M.—Yes; that is the literal definition of the term. And the reason why the LORD breathed on His disciples (John xx. 22), was that breathing on was an outward representative sign of Divine inspiration (T.C.R. 140).

I.—I wish to begin at once to read, and not only to read, but to *study*, some of your books. What can you let me have, to begin with?

M.—That is the proper thing to do—to read and to study. Here is the little work entitled: *The Doctrine of the New Jerusalem respecting the Sacred Scripture*. It will give you some information as to the nature of the Divine Word. I presume this is the subject you prefer to look into first. I have been able to give you merely a few general ideas. You will get particulars by a study of the Doctrines. The LORD will open the eyes of your understanding, and enable you to behold wondrous things out of His law of Divine Revelation. It is a good deal for me to say, but you will find, as you proceed in your investigation of these things, that a new world will be revealed to your delighted mental and spiritual vision. That is, you will gradually learn to look at all things in and of the world from a new point of view: with other eyes, so to speak. You will obtain new ideas with regard to the very objects of the creation of the universe. The clouds will doubtless come, occasionally, but I feel convinced that your pathway in life will be made more cheerful and bright, when illuminated with the pure light of the genuine truth of the Word. And you will presently feel like the Psalmist, when he exclaimed: "O LORD, our LORD, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth; who hast set Thy glory above the heavens!" (Ps. viii. 1).

I.—I must express to you my profound gratitude, for your kindness and helpfulness, and for your words of comfort and encouragement. To all you have said, I can now only say, with all my heart, Amen! And I must add, that it seems to me you have a better appreciation of the spiritual needs of a poor soul that is struggling to find his way out of the darkness into the light, than any one I have ever met with. The remembrance of this hour will always be to me a peculiar pleasure.

M.—All honour, praise, and thanksgiving, for aught that we can do, is to be ascribed to the LORD, to whom alone it is due. He is the bountiful Giver of every good and perfect gift. Though we do our whole duty, so far as wisdom and strength are granted to us, we are nevertheless "unprofitable servants." Call again, as soon as you find it convenient, and we will have a talk about the Science of Correspondences, which is the Key that opens the wonderful treasures of spiritual knowledge contained in the Divine Word, the Fountain of all wisdom to angels and to men,

VI. THE SCIENCE OF CORRESPONDENCES.

"The invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made." ROMANS i. 20.

INQUIRER.—At the close of our conversation a few weeks ago, you spoke of our considering, at a future time, the subject of Correspondences. And I am very desirous to learn what you understand by Correspondences in the theological sense of the term.

MISSIONARY.—I am very pleased to hear that you are disposed to continue the investigation of the subject. How did you get on with the perusal of the little book?

I.—I like it very much, indeed; and have read most of it several times over. There certainly is a great deal of instruction given in a small space. I have received some light on one of the grandest of themes; and shall not cease investigating, until my mind is perfectly satisfied.

M.—When we undertake to study any natural science, in order to make progress in a knowledge of the same, it becomes necessary for us to devote much time to it. The faculties and powers of the mind must be earnestly applied. Diligence and perseverance alone will be rewarded by the acquirement of the knowledges which are sought.

I.—Very true. If I do not exercise my arm and hand, they will soon become weak and emaciated. And if the mind be not employed in the examination of spiritual things, a person cannot surely expect to know anything about them.

M.—The Science of Correspondences is the Science of all sciences. It is, and always will be, the grandest of all studies to those who are in the effort to attain to a state of genuine intelligence and wisdom. In fact, genuine intelligence and wisdom are not attainable without the aid of the teachings of this Divine Science.

I.—It is evident that there is no other way to arrive at an understanding of things spiritual and heavenly, except according to the principles of what you call a Divine Science. It is to me a new idea that there is such a Science, which can be applied in the interpretation of the Scriptures; but there must be, because spiritual things are to be spiritually discerned."

M.—The Divine Word, as to its spiritual sense, consists of correspondences. It is written in a Divine style. All the natural objects mentioned therein have a spiritual signification, that is, they have a specific spiritual meaning. Thus, when we learn the spiritual principles to which the natural objects mentioned in the Word correspond, we can understand the particular ideas that are involved; and these ideas constitute the spiritual sense. They are the "spirit and life," which the Lord declares His words to be.

I.—The method of interpretation that enables us to rationally understand the essential meaning of the Scriptures, is indeed worthy of being called the Science of all sciences: I can see that. But tell us, if you please, more about correspondences.

M.—Correspondences are the actual relations existing between natural things and spiritual—between earthly things and heavenly—between the temporal and the eternal. The whole natural universe consists of effects. All effects are produced by causes; there cannot be effects without causes. And all causes are essentially of a spiritual nature, and originate in the spiritual world. The natural world is an outbirth from the spiritual. The natural world consists, we may say, of types and shadows of spiritual principles. And the spiritual world is a realm of most stupendous, substantial, and glorious realities.

I.—These are very different views from those generally entertained, even by the theologians of the day.

M.—They are not notions originating in any man's imagination. They are views taught in the spiritual Revelations which are given in the Writings of the New Church, and are for the enlightenment of the minds of those who are willing and able to receive them. Thus, from what is revealed to us, we learn that it is a universal law, perpetually operative, that spiritual principles are in the endeavour to ultimate themselves. The LORD, the God of Heaven, the Omnipotent Creator, is All in all. The Divine Proceeding is momentarily operative, and is continually producing manifestations of the LORD'S mercy, which endureth for ever. The principles of heaven are always in the effort to find ultimate expression, in the things of even the physical world. Hence we may behold manifestations of the LORD'S infinite goodness, in all the

innumerable forms of use and of beauty, which are the adornment of the realm of Nature. And how significant, therefore, is the sublime ascription: "Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD OF HOSTS; His glory is the fullness of all the earth!" (Isa. vi. 3).

I.—A new and most grand philosophical idea the New Church does certainly convey to the mind, according to your exposition of the Doctrine.

M.—Very true; it is a new philosophical idea, as regards its intelligible reception among men. But the principles of genuine philosophy are co-existent with the creation of the universe. Now, with reference to the principle of Correspondences, the spiritual philosophy contained in the Writings teaches us, for example, that all the substances, forms, elements, animals, birds,—all material things, whatever they may be,—have specific spiritual significations, and this according to the nature, use, quality, or function, of the particular things. Thus, from the manner in which, and from the connections in which, the objective things of the world are mentioned in the Word, we may know something of the meaning they are intended to convey to our minds; that is, we may learn the spiritual sense.

I.—It strikes me that you are stating the general principles of a most wonderful method of scriptural interpretation.

M.—I am merely stating what the Writings of the New Church teach on the subject. The LORD, the Divine Teacher, spake in parables. And we are told that "without a parable spake He not unto them." And this is the same as saying that the LORD'S words, which "are spirit and life," were spoken in the Divine language of Correspondences. In this manner the LORD taught the Divine Truth. There is a spiritual sense in every part of the Word; there are not merely figurative expressions occurring here and there; but all the LORD'S words "are spirit and life." By means of natural objects He teaches His followers concerning things heavenly and Divine. The natural language, being that of Correspondences, contains, in the inner sense, an infinite fullness of spiritual ideas. Thus the Word is an inexhaustible Fountain.

I.—It seems, then, that the more we study the Scriptures, and the better we learn to understand their true import, the greater the beauty, and the more perfect the divinity, that we shall be enabled to see in them.

M.—Precisely so. Your remark reminds me of the beautiful expression: "In Thy light shall we see light" (Ps. xxxvi. 9). This means, that by the acknowledgement of the LORD, who is the Light of the World, and by the reception of the Divine truth from Him, we shall grow wise. And to become wise, in the true sense of the word, is, to learn to understand the character, attributes, and personality of the LORD, our Father in the heavens, and our relations to Him as recipients of life and love and wisdom, and all things from Him.

I.—I should like to hear still more about correspondences; for I must say that the subject is wonderfully interesting to me: nothing could be more so that I know of.

M.—Well, I will try to give you a few more thoughts; for it is exceedingly pleasant to converse with one who can appreciate these things. I must endeavour to give you a few illustrations, in the line of thought that we have been pursuing, to show what is the essential nature of Correspondences. The method of the interpretation of the Word, which is in accordance with this Divine science, is absolutely free of everything of an arbitrary or inconsistent nature.

I.—That is a very decided way of putting it; but I do not doubt the truth of the claim. I am delighted to learn that there actually is such a method of interpretation given to mankind. Is it not inconceivable, that the prejudices of men will prevent them from accepting it, and enjoying the means of acquiring spiritual and heavenly wisdom? Is it not just what theologians require, to enable them to teach the doctrines of Christianity in a rational manner? And does not the progressive thought of the day—the steady advance of natural intelligence among men—demand a new and more comprehensive system for the interpretation of those profound spiritual things which are contained in the Sacred Scriptures? Have not the old dogmas, the antiquated notions, the illogical methods of preaching, become powerless to satisfy the minds of men who will make use of their privilege to think for themselves as regards matters of faith? And is it not high time that there should be promulgated a system of spiritual interpretation which shall arrest the progress of infidelity and atheism in our land?

M.—Your questions are very forcible, and must be answered in the affirmative. The LORD mercifully provides that men may be brought to a knowledge of the truth as soon and as fast as

possible, in view of the mental conditions and spiritual states in which they are. The development of the human mind is like the growth of a tree: man is in the Word compared to a tree. This is because all things as to the growth of a tree are correspondences of the spiritual unfolding of the faculties and qualities of the human mind. You can promote the growth of a tree, but you cannot hasten it. It cannot grow any faster than the law of growth and the physical conditions make it possible. In like manner you can promote the development of the human mind, but you cannot hasten it; it must have its time. The LORD has given a grand system of Divine doctrine, in the Revelations He has made for His New Church; but He cannot hasten its reception on the part of mankind. The LORD, according to His Divine order, can lead men gradually to become spiritually minded; but He cannot compel them. One person cannot be compelled to love another: nor can any one be forced to love the LORD, that is, to do His will, and have his mind formed, by the reception of truth and good, in the image and after the likeness of the Divine.

I.—I can see very plainly that there is no use in being impatient. Your illustration has given me some new ideas with regard to an important matter—the reception of the truth, and the upbuilding of the Church, among men on earth. And what you said about man being like a tree, reminded me that you intimated that you would give me some illustrations to show the nature of Correspondences.

M.—I was just on the point of suggesting that we should return to the subject, and am glad you have done so.

I.—There are many things mentioned in the Scriptures, that I should like to know the correspondence of, because I want to understand them. And I notice that when one learns the correspondence of anything in the Word, he obtains an intelligent idea of the sense involved. This is correct, is it not?

M.—Yes; the LORD has opened the Word, by revealing a knowledge of the Science of Correspondences, which had been lost for some thousands of years. For, in the process of time, men became so natural-minded, that they ceased to know that the Word contains a spiritual sense: and to-day there are not a few who, not only know nothing about a spiritual sense in the Word, but positively deny that there is such a thing. Many persons have said to me that they "prefer to take the Bible *just as it reads*, without spiritualising its contents." But we are living in a materialistic age; and materialism and literalism are affinities.

I.—People often do not realize the absurdity of their positions. And they evidently do not appreciate the philosophy of the Apostle Paul, when he declares that "the letter killeth; but the spirit giveth life" (2 Cor. iii. 6).

M.—It is a very emphatic and significant statement of the truth. If a man will undertake to formulate a theory on any subject, from the literal sense of Scripture alone, it will prove to be a mere heresy, and not a rational doctrine. Paul is perfectly correct. The notions of men which are based on the letter alone, when critically examined, are seen to be altogether false. Thus the rational understanding of any subject is destroyed, or killed, by the perversion of the truth. You can confirm the most monstrous ideas from the letter of the Scriptures. And then you can find another class of passages to confirm the very opposite.

I.—Such a method of interpretation is simply puerile. And is it any wonder that many intelligent people of these days reject it? In one place, for example, we read that "the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (2 Peter iii. 10). Peter seems to describe a universal conflagration, which is to take place sooner or later. And then in another part of the Bible we read that the generations pass away by dying, and others come into the world by being born; but that "the earth abideth for ever" (Eccles. i. 4).

M.—The true method for the interpretation of the Word, which the LORD has revealed in the Writings of His New Church, harmonises all contradictions. The LORD alone could reveal the Divine doctrine, contained in the Word. And when we obtain a knowledge of the genuine Doctrine, which is given to mankind by the Revelation of the spiritual sense, respecting any subject whatever, then we find that it can be confirmed by very numerous passages from the letter of the Scriptures.

I.—I remember a statement in the little book on the *Sacred Scripture*, which says: "The doctrine of the Church is to be drawn from the literal sense of the Word, and to be confirmed thereby;"

and your explanation makes the matter plainer. Since we have the Doctrine of Divine Truth revealed from the LORD Himself in the Writings of the New Church, we need no longer depend upon the notions of men, for information on spiritual subjects. This is to my mind satisfactory. For, after all, one man's opinion is about as good as another's. What we want is Divine teaching from the LORD: He is "the true Light, that lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John i. 9).

M.—What you say has the ring of the true metal. It seems you have caught something of the spirit of the New Gospel, by the perusal of the work on the *Sacred Scripture*, And the more you read these spiritual Writings, the more thoroughly will your mind be satisfied with knowledges concerning heavenly things. As a matter of fact, those who have become, or are becoming, receptive of the genuine truth of the Word, can never be satisfied with anything else. They will always be seeking, until, in the good Providence of the Lord, they are made happy by finding the inestimable treasures of spiritual wisdom, which are at this day revealed.

I.—Inestimable they certainly are. It is an inexpressible delight to study religious subjects, when one is not only permitted, but admonished and encouraged, to exercise his faculties in the doing of it. Just now the recollection comes to me that you said the knowledge of Correspondences had been lost for some thousands of years. Am I to infer from this that the people of ancient times understood the Science of Correspondences?

M.—Yes; the people of the Most Ancient Church were celestial; and it was perfectly natural and easy for them to understand spiritual things. They were in a state of perception, and had no occasion to stop to reason about a thing, in order to decide as to its nature or quality. They understood the correspondences of all the objects of nature, just as soon as they looked at them. "Man in a state of integrity was master of all the sciences," says Swedenborg. The people of the Most Ancient Church, who are meant by Adam, or Man, in Genesis, were in a state of integrity. They were interior, as to both their thoughts and affections. They could read the Book of Nature in a far more comprehensive manner, than we can read the Book of Revelation. To them the mountains and hills and valleys, the oceans and lakes and rivers, the trees and shrubs and flowers, the sun and moon and stars, the birds and beasts and insects,—in a word, all things of the material world,—had a most sublime and beautiful spiritual significance. The Divine Attributes of God, and the human qualities of man, were to them visibly represented in the wonderful and magnificent things of Creation.

I.—According to your idea, then, the Ancients were, in the true sense of the word, scientists and philosophers.

M.—Yes, they were; and, indeed, from a spiritual principle. But when man fell from a state of integrity, the knowledge of Correspondences was gradually lost. The more that men degenerated—the more external and natural they became—the more they ceased to understand this Divine science, until, in the process of time, all knowledge of it was lost.

I.—And the restoration of the same is certainly a most interesting circumstance.

M.—It is, indeed; and the more one learns respecting the matter, the more interesting it becomes. The LORD, our Father in the heavens, always provides, most fully and abundantly, for the moral, intellectual, and spiritual needs of His children. As a matter of fact, it would have been quite impossible for anyone ever to understand rationally, the first chapter of Genesis, the Apocalypse or Revelation, or, for that matter any portion of the Divine Word, if the LORD had not revealed the spiritual sense, and thereby restored a knowledge of the Science of Correspondences.

I.—From the very little that I have already learned, I can see that it must be even so. For it is evident, to my mind, that without such a system of interpretation, it is totally impossible to understand rationally what is meant, in the second chapter of Genesis, by the creation of the woman out of the rib taken from the man (Gen. ii. 21-23). Certainly no rational man can imagine the circumstances there mentioned are meant to describe something that took place literally. And the first portions of Genesis are full of just such statements, as, in the mere literal sense, are destitute of any sense. Take, as examples, the following: The vegetable kingdom being created on the day before the sun came into existence (Gen. i. 11-13); the serpent holding a conversation with the woman, and persuading her to eat fruit from a tree called "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (Gen. ii. 17, and iii. 1-5); Eve being called "the mother of all

living," and yet Cain, after killing Abel, going out from the presence of God, dwelling in the land of Nod, marrying a wife in that country, their raising children and building a city (Gen. iii. 20, and Gen. iv. 16-18); and many other strange things, as we find in the story of Noah's Ark and the Flood (Gen. vi. 14-22, and vii. 1 to the end, and viii. 1-19); the building of, the Tower of Babel (Gen. xi. 4-9), and the like.

M.—A knowledge of Correspondences makes all these things perfectly plain. They can be rationally understood. They contain an infinite fullness of spiritual and Divine truths. There are interior and beautiful ideas, in connected series, in all the expressions of the sublime portions of the Scripture which you have quoted from; although according to the mere letter those things are altogether inexplicable. As you have just said, in the mere literal sense they are destitute of any sense; and this is because the early chapters of Genesis consist of purely symbolic language. They were never intended to be regarded as describing things which took place literally.

I.—I should like very much to hear from you an explanation of all the points I have quoted; but it is impossible to learn everything at once. I shall therefore have to be content to learn the meaning of these strange things in Genesis, by degrees.

M.—You have a wide and grand field of study before you. In the *Arcana Coelestia* the first chapters of Genesis are definitely explained as to the spiritual sense, according to Correspondences. The problems have been solved, which have perplexed the devout students of bygone ages. And men who earnestly seek for enlightenment respecting spiritual verities, will surely find that which will satisfy them. For, over the gate of the magnificent Temple, wherein beams the Divine Glory representing the Opened Word, is the legend written: *Nunc licet*, signifying, "now it is allowable to enter intellectually into the mysteries of faith!" (T.C.R. 508).

I.—I must read the *Arcana*; but perhaps you can give me a general idea of the meaning of some of the passages I have quoted, before we close our present talk.

M.—I will with great pleasure try to do so. In the first place, then, permit me to repeat, that the early chapters of Genesis consist of purely symbolic language. This language can only be made intelligible by the spiritual interpretation, which the LORD has given, in the Writings of His New Church, namely, according to the law of Correspondences. The first chapter of Genesis, therefore, does not contain an account of the creation of the material universe. It was never written for the purpose of describing the formation of the physical earth, or the heavenly bodies. Indeed, the things there written, cannot by any literal method of interpretation, be harmonised with the facts of the sciences of astronomy and geology. The natural universe was not created in six days of twenty-four hours. Nor was the vegetable kingdom formed before the creation of the sun, moon, and stars.

I.—Certainly not; the idea is absurd. For we know that not a blade of grass, or a leaf upon a tree, or any form of the vegetable kingdom whatever, can be produced except by means of the heat and light of the sun. And, surely, since the LORD the Creator is an immutable Being, it follows that the laws and operations of nature have been the same from the beginning.

M.—It is a logical conclusion. In the spiritual sense, the subject treated of in the first chapter of Genesis, is, the formation and regeneration of the human mind. By *the heavens and the earth*, are signified the internal and the external planes of the human mind. *The earth being without form and void*, is man as yet in an undeveloped state, both as to his thoughts and affections. *The light* is the correspondent of the Divine Truth, or Wisdom, the reception of which is essentially necessary, in the formation of the mind. *The waters called seas*, are things scientific. *The grass and herbs yielding seed*, are the principles of natural truth and good which take root in the mind, in the early stages of man's regeneration. *The sun* represents the Divine Love. *The moon* is the symbol of Faith. And the *stars* signify knowledges of things heavenly and Divine. Thus, all the natural objects mentioned are correspondences of spiritual principles. The six days of creation are six states of regeneration, this being a progressive work in man, which is completed on the seventh day—the Sabbath, or day of rest.

I.—It seems to me these things must be wonderfully instructive, when one has an opportunity of studying them, and of understanding them thoroughly. What an amazing state of ignorance there is, in this world of ours! Here I have lived for more than half a century, without the slightest knowledge that there was such an interpretation of Genesis in existence!

M.—I have given you merely a few very general hints, as to the contents of the *first* chapter.

When you come to read the *Arcana*, you will obtain definite information; and you will be able to pursue the subject and learn particulars, *ad libitum*.

I.—I presume it is no trouble to you to give a reply to the question: "Who was Cain's wife?" It has often been asked without being answered.

M.—In the light of the New Church doctrine there is no difficulty at all about that point. By Adam is not to be understood a single individual, but mankind collectively. Adam is a representative name, signifying the people of the Most Ancient Church. And here we have a striking instance, of how the literal sense of the Word can be applied, to confirm the doctrine of the Church. We read: "In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God created He him: male and female created He them, and blessed them, and *called their name Adam*" (Gen. v. 1, 2). In the spiritual history of our race, therefore, which is treated of in the first portion of Genesis, there may have been many millions of men, women, and children, who were all members of that Most Ancient Church.

I.—I see. That makes the point very plain. And I must confess, that I have never heard a satisfactory explanation of it before. It seems that you can give a reasonable interpretation of almost any subject one could think of.

M.—Yes; when we become familiar with the Writings of the New Church, we find that all things that come within the range of human investigation, are therein expounded. By the diligent study of the Heavenly Doctrines, revealed in these Writings, we may obtain knowledges that are rational, comprehensive, and perfectly satisfying. We are not left in the dark concerning anything that is a proper and useful subject of inquiry, and can promote our mental culture, our spiritual advancement, our attainment of genuine happiness, and our growth in intelligence and wisdom.

I.—I should like to ask whether you have any works that treat especially on the subject of Correspondences?

M.—We have a book entitled, "A Dictionary of Correspondences, Representatives, and Significatives, derived from the Word of the LORD."

I.—It must be a very instructive book, according to the title.

M.—It is a book of reference to the Writings of our Church, and is a considerable help to the student of the Word, in the light of the Heavenly Doctrines, contained in the Writings. The natural objects and expressions, mentioned in the Word, are arranged alphabetically; the spiritual signification is briefly given; and the references to the passages in the Writings, where the subject is more fully explained. The book was especially useful to me during the early years of my study of the Doctrines. Read, for instance, that wonderful twelfth chapter of the Revelation, which begins with a description in most striking and magnificent symbolism: "And there appeared a great sign in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars."

I.—It is wonderful language, and I am sure it is totally impossible for me to understand what can be the meaning of it, without explanation.

M.—The whole of the Apocalypse is a sealed Book, and cannot be understood, except by those who accept, rationally, the LORD'S own explanation of the same. We read that a mighty angel proclaimed with a loud voice: "Who is worthy to open the Book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no one in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the Book" (Rev. v. 2, 3). And then it is further said: "Behold, the Lion which is of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the Book, and to loose the seven seals thereof" (Rev. v. 5).

I.—"The Lion of the tribe of Judah," evidently means the LORD. And do the words, "hath prevailed, to open the Book, and to loose the seven seals thereof," refer to the revelation of the spiritual sense of the Word?

M.—Yes; they mean that the LORD alone knows the internal states of all, and has power to judge all according to their state; and these words also have reference to the revelation of the spiritual sense of the Word. The spiritual sense of the Word is the Divine Truth, or the Glory of the LORD; and this the LORD alone could reveal. You are, therefore, quite correct in saying that you could not understand the sublime symbolism of the twelfth chapter of the Revelation without some explanation.

I.—I hope to understand these things better, in the course of time. I intend to investigate them.

M.—Your efforts will be richly rewarded, I have no doubt. Solomon says: "How much better is it to get wisdom than gold; and to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver!" (Prov. xvi. 16). I was about to say, with regard to the "great sign in heaven" (Rev. xii. 1), that by reading the passages in the Writings referred to in the Dictionary of Correspondences, under the heads of "woman," and "sun," and "crown," and "moon," and "stars," you would get an explanation sufficiently full and clear, I think, to satisfy your mind. The way to obtain a comprehensive knowledge of the Divine Science of Correspondences, is, to read the spiritual revelations—these beautiful interpretations of the Holy Scriptures— which the LORD Himself has given, systematically, at the same time always looking to the LORD for light to illuminate the mind. To go to the Writings for spiritual instruction, is to go to the Word; for they are entirely derived from the Word. The Divinely commissioned Scribe of the New Church, near the close of his theological works, solemnly declares that he wrote nothing respecting the Doctrines but what came from the LORD alone, while he was reading the Word (T.C.R. 779). To receive the Divine teachings in the revelation of the internal of the Word, is to follow the LORD in His Second Advent. It is to see Him in that Divine beauty, in which He manifests Himself to His finite creatures. It is to come into a state of true enlightenment; and thus into an ever more perfect appreciation of the meaning of that sublime passage of the Word: "And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see together; for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken" (Isaiah xl. 5).

VII. THE ORIGIN OF EVIL.

"Man himself is the origin of evil: not that that origin was put into man from creation, but that he himself, by turning from God to himself, put it into himself."—C.L. 444.

INQUIRER.—My knowledge of the New Church doctrines is limited; but I understand that your views on religious subjects are essentially different from those generally taught.

MISSIONARY.—The idea may be new to you, as it is to many, but the fact is that we have a system of doctrine which has been Divinely revealed for the spiritual enlightenment of the world, and thus for the salvation of the human race. That is, the genuine truths of the Divine Word are now made known by the revelation of its internal sense. And this we have in the Writings of the New Church.

I.—What do you mean by the genuine truths of the Word? The expression is new to me.

M.—We employ new terms to express distinctively new truths, and to convey definitely spiritual ideas, respecting religious subjects. By genuine truths we mean the spirit, or real import, of the Word, which is within the mere letter, as the soul is within the body. For the mere letter is no more the essential Word than the merely physical body is the actual man. Both of these, indeed, are only the outward form.

I.—There is a passage where the Lord Jesus Christ says: "The words that I speak unto you are spirit, and they are life" (John vi. 63). I suppose the terms *spirit* and *life* have reference to the spiritual sense?

M.—Yes; the Apostle Paul also emphatically declares that "the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life" (2 Cor. iii. 6). It is by virtue of the spiritual sense of the Word that we obtain a knowledge of its genuine truths, and from these are derived the living, rational, definite ideas, which alone can make us really intelligent. The literal sense in itself, though also Divine, is full of contradictions, because these are mere appearances of truth.

I.—The Scriptures say that *God is love*, also that He is *angry with the wicked every day*. This is surely a contradiction, and it looks as if this must be an apparent truth; for God certainly cannot be infinite love and infinite wrath at the same time. The idea does not agree with the revealed truth of His immutability. Since God is love, and is also unchangeable—the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever,—it seems to me that He must be love only, and that He cannot be angry with any one.

M.—Your remarks are in accordance with sound logic, and your conclusion is quite correct. That God is angry, that He manifests feelings of wrath or revenge, that He caused evil and created a hell, that He is arbitrary and cruel in the treatment of some of His creatures, that He casts the wicked into hell, and consigns His enemies to eternal torment in unquenchable fire, and a thousand other things, are all mere appearances of truth in the literal sense of the Scriptures.

I.—How, then, did evil originate? If God did not create hell, who did? And in what manner are the wicked punished, if God does not punish them?

M.—Ah! there you propound questions that require a great deal of time and consideration to answer properly. I fear it may not be possible for me to reply to them as fully as the importance of the subject demands. But we shall make as good use of the time at our disposal as we can.

I.—It is frequently much easier to ask questions than to answer them. But I want light on these dark problems; for it seems to me there is in the old systems of belief a fearful confusion of ideas concerning the points I have indicated.

M.—There is no doubt but that many of the theologians of the day are without any rational doctrine, to enable them satisfactorily to explain matters of this nature. There is great need for light. And He who is Himself the Light of the World desires that all His children should be brought from the darkness of ignorance to the light of intelligence and wisdom.

I.—That surely must be so.

M.—Let us now consider your questions, in the order in which you have put them. As to the first, respecting the origin of evil, allow me to premise that God, our Creator, gives to man, His creature, the prerogative of thinking, of willing, and of acting in freedom. In the exercise of the faculties with which he is endowed, man has the ability to receive truth into his understanding,

and at the same time good into his will, and thus to live according to Divine order. Or, he can do the reverse of this—think what is false, will what is evil, and also live contrary to Divine order. And to come into a life contrary to Divine order is to confirm the false and the evil, and thus wilfully to transgress the laws of God, and so to become wicked and perverse.

I.—Why did God not create man so that it was impossible for him to sin?

M.—Because He could not do so.

I.—Is that not, an unwarrantable assertion? Do you mean to say that anything is impossible with God? Surely there is no limit to His power.

M.—In the true sense of the word, there is no limit to the power of the Almighty. But it is impossible for the Lord to do anything that is contrary to His Divine order. The Lord is the God of heaven; and "order is heaven's first law." It is an absolute law of the Divine order that man should be a free agent. As a matter of fact, God could not create man, to be *man* in the true sense of the word, without endowing him with distinctively human faculties, and giving him the ability to exercise these faculties in freedom. Without free agency, man would be a sort of mechanical creature, and not really a human being.

I.—Very true; but how is man's free agency related to the origin of evil?

M.—We shall see presently. And here let me assure you that our doctrine, fully considered, satisfactorily explains (to any one that can understand rational truth) the difficult problem as to the origin of evil.

I.—I am greatly pleased to learn that there is such a doctrine.

M.—In most ancient times, men, from the purely natural state to which they were created, passed by stages of development into the spiritual state; and thereafter by orderly progression they at length reached the celestial state. These things are described in the sublime symbolism of the first chapter of Genesis. Then, in times immemorial, the fall of man took place. The fall of man was a gradual degeneracy, continuing through many ages, and not a sudden transition from a good and holy to an evil and wicked state. The beginning of the fall originated in the desire, in the minds of the ancients, to understand things heavenly and Divine by means of the senses, that is, to prefer the evidence of the senses to revealed truth; or, as it may also be expressed, to believe the apparent truth from without rather than the real truth from within.

I.—What about the forbidden fruit? It has always seemed to me a queer thing that sin and death, disease, and all but universal misery, should be introduced into our world by the simple act of a person eating an apple.

M.—The account in Genesis is not to be taken literally, of course. It is purely symbolic language; and it is nonsense to imagine that physical, spiritual, and eternal death could come in consequence of eating any natural fruit. In fact, the literal interpretation of the Scripture in question quite defeats itself. We read: "Of every tree in the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die" (Gen. ii. 16, 17). But he did not literally die in that day. For again we read: "And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years: and he died" (Gen. v. 5). The Scripture, therefore, has no reference to physical death, as the literalists suppose. It is exclusively spiritual death, the death of the soul, that is treated of.

I.—How do you define the term "spiritual death"?

M.—When man ceases to receive life from the Lord, who is the infinite Fountain of life, he is spiritually dead. A man may be alive as to his body, but nevertheless be dead as to his soul. Of himself, man is spiritually dead, because of the perversion of his life, which is, by inheritance, his natural state. For this reason man requires to be regenerated, or born anew. But to those who confirm themselves in evil, and will not permit themselves to be brought into a state of good, the Lord says: "Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life" (John v. 40).

I.—Now I should like you to explain something of the *spirit* of the passages you have quoted from Genesis.

M.—We will try. In the first place, then, let us consider that we do not understand the words of our Lord in their literal sense, when, for example, He says: "Except ye eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man, ye have no life in you" (John vi. 53). Nor does a consistent method of interpretation require us to take the Scripture literally, when we read in Genesis about eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. For this, in like manner as the Lord's words in

John, has a spiritual sense. Eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of Man, means to receive and to appropriate the Divine good and the Divine truth from the Lord, in order that we may have spiritual and eternal life.

I.—Quite different from the notion of transubstantiation, to which millions in the Christian world still adhere.

M.—Eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, in the symbolic style of expressing ideas, signifies man's ascribing life and all things of his being, to himself, instead of to the Lord. But from what is revealed to us in the Word and the Writings, we learn that for man to be truly human, he must freely acknowledge that he receives life and all things good and true,—all pure motives, heavenly aspirations, ennobling thoughts and affections,—only from the Divine. Of himself, man is nothing but evil, and prone to confirm himself in false notions of every kind. Whatever is of the genuine human character in him, is from above. It is written: "A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven" (John iii. 27).

I.—All very true! And the ancient philosophers were therefore quite right when they said, that "in God we live, and move, and have our being." It appears that in this respect they were really wiser than many of the learned of modern times, because these do not acknowledge this grand truth.

M.—It is the fundamental truth of the philosophy of human existence. God the Lord alone is self-existent, essential Life, Infinite, Divine, All-Good, All-Wise, Omnipotent, and Omniscient. Man, on the other hand, is a recipient of life, and of all human qualities, by influx from the Lord. The flowers and trees, the things of universal nature,—the countless forms of use and beauty, which adorn the bosom of the earth,—would immediately be dissipated, if the inflowing of the heat and light of the sun were to be withdrawn. The Lord is to the human soul, and to the forms in man recipient of life, what the sun is to the forms and substances of nature.

I.—Your comparisons seem to me quite legitimate, and they help to make the subject intelligible. But I must not interrupt you.

M.—We shall be able to understand this matter of the origin of evil more clearly, when we consider that both evil and falsity are the perversion of good and truth. That is to say, when men come into a state in which they were inclined to abuse their freedom, by thinking and willing, and hence acting, contrary to Divine order, then good and truth from the Lord (the essential principles which form the interiors of the human mind) were turned into the opposite. Thus evil and falsity had their beginning in man.

I.—But how did men come into a state such as you describe?

M.—Because they permitted themselves to be deceived by the serpent. That is, they were not content to allow themselves to be led by the Lord; but came into a state in which they desired to be led by their own intelligence. They gave way to an inclination to love self and to depend upon their own prudence, instead of continuing to love the Lord supremely, and to trust implicitly in His Divine Providence. Their self-love then induced them to begin to believe nothing but what they could comprehend by means of the senses. This was the very origin of the degeneracy of the human race. And it continued to operate, until, in the fullness of time, the Lord Jesus Christ—who was "God manifest in the flesh"—said to the sensuous-minded Jews: "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the condemnation of hell?" (Matt. xxiii. 33).

I.—You said the language about those things in Genesis is symbolic. I suppose, then, we are not to understand that a serpent ever actually talked with a woman, and persuaded her to eat fruit?

M.—It is certain that no serpent ever literally talked. Nor did the knowledge of good and evil ever literally grow on a tree. The serpent is mentioned in the Word to represent the sensual principle in man, that is, all things which belong to his senses. To be a full and perfect man, one requires the sensual principle also. But this must be made subordinate. The higher principles of human nature should rule in man, and not those of his lower nature. To allow the sensuous propensities to become predominant, is the beguilement of the serpent.

I.—I now begin to get some light upon the subject. And it is gratifying, for I have been in the dark quite long enough.

M.—Let me endeavour to make it still more plain. When men, in most ancient times, began to feel inclined to think that they were wise and good from themselves, and so gradually ceased to

be willing to acknowledge that they could only be really wise and good from the Lord, then they did that which is meant by eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The celestial man—the man of the celestial Church—so long as he remained in a state of integrity, delighted to acknowledge that the Lord is All in all; that He every instant imparts life and the power to think and act; and that in His infinite mercy He will confer upon His children the joys of angelic life to all eternity. But it is evident that man fell from a state of innocence and purity; that a gradual degeneracy ensued; that men in the process of the ages became wicked, hard-hearted, and cruel; "earthly, sensual, and devilish."

I.—No one can deny that such has been the outcome. And it is lamentable to think of the state of the Christian world to-day. The effects of the degeneration of the race are, in one form or another, constantly brought under our notice. There are shams, frauds, and deceptions of all sorts. There is a vast deal of disregard for the rights of one's fellow-man. The Golden Rule is at this day at a fearful discount, although it is the only rule of life and conduct by which we can practise the principles of true religion. Men are careless as to what they believe, and equally so as to how they live. Large numbers in Christendom have become, or are becoming, sceptics, scoffers, rationalists, and atheists. In fact, when one reads so much about the evil doings of people as we read nowadays, it sometimes actually makes one feel ashamed of human nature. But I do not wish to change the subject. Please go on with your explanations.

M.—I was about to say something in reply to your question as to who created hell. Evil and false principles, in the aggregate, constitute hell. The angels receive the Divine good and the Divine truth from the LORD, and of these the heavens are formed. But evil spirits, who are devils and satans, in the very act of reception, turn good and truth into the opposite, and of these the hells are composed. We know that reception is according to the character or quality of the recipient.

I.—It evidently could not be otherwise.

M.—We have illustrations of this in nature. Look at the difference existing in the forms of the vegetable and animal kingdoms. The wheat and the tares come up together. The rose and the thorn may grow side by side. The fruit-tree and the poison-producing plant flourish in the same soil. The same physical conditions surround the wolf and the lamb. The owl and the dove breathe the same atmosphere. All these things are developed, and live by virtue of the influences of the heat and light of the sun. But the forms, receiving these influences, being essentially different, the effects produced are various accordingly. The wheat gives us bread for our nourishment; the tares are useless weeds. The bloom and fragrance of the rose delight our senses of sight and smell; but there is nothing very attractive about the thorn. The luscious fruit gratifies our taste, and promotes good health; but the poisonous will destroy the body altogether. The wolf and the lamb are as opposite in their dispositions as they can be; and so are the owl and the dove.

I.—The Lord says: "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves" (Matt. x. 16). By the sheep are evidently meant the good, and by wolves the evil.

M.—I have not quite finished the point of my illustration. I was about to add, that the Divine love and the Divine wisdom proceed from the Lord as the sun of heaven, for the benefit of all, irrespective of state. That He is no respecter of persons is plainly stated in the Scriptures; and is also meant when it is declared that "He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt. v. 45). Love and wisdom, received by an angel, make him a form of heaven; but the same influences are with a devil turned into the opposite, and he becomes a form of hell. The angel is in pure, genuine, heavenly delight; and the evil spirit is in his own impure, sensual, infernal delight, agreeable to his state.

I.—I should like to hear an explanation of the difference between devils and satans.

M.—The devils are those in whom evil predominates, and who from evils are in falsities. The satans are those in whom falsity predominates, and who from falsities are in evils. The Lord said: "One of you is a devil," because the one referred to, namely, Judas Iscariot, was under the influences of evil to such a degree that he finally betrayed the Lord (John vi. 70). And the Lord on one occasion called Peter, Satan, because that disciple objected to the Lord's passing through those things which were necessary for Him to fully glorify His human, and to finish the work of redemption (Matt. xvi. 23).

I.—Your view seems to militate against the idea of a *personal devil*. How about His Satanic Majesty?

M.—There is no personal devil, in the sense of one big devil, or evil deity, who has supreme power in the internal regions, and rules there, as many have imagined. It is written: "I am the First, and I am the Last, and beside me there is no God" (Isa. xliv. 6). By devil and satan are respectively meant all evil and falsity in the aggregate. In the Apocalypse, for example, we read of "the dragon, that *old serpent*, called the Devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world" (xii. 9).

I.—I must now remind you of the question concerning the punishment of the wicked.

M.—The Lord says of those who confirm themselves in evil and in falsity, and make infernal loves the chief delight of their lives: "These shall go away into everlasting punishment" (Matt. xxv. 46). This expresses the truth of the matter. The wicked go away from the Lord. They turn their back upon heaven, with all its shining splendours, its glories, and its unspeakable felicities, and of their own free choice go down into the regions of eternal darkness and spiritual death. They have perverted the order of their life, have become forms of evil, and hence are like owls that cannot endure the light of the sun. They cannot abide in the presence of the beneficent Lord of heaven. And thus we read in the Apocalypse, that they hide themselves in dens, and say to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb" (Matt. vi. 15, 16).

I.—The Lord, then, is not responsible for the sufferings of the wicked?

M.—Certainly not. The Lord desires all to be happy, in time and throughout eternity. And all who come unto Him that they may have life truly human, shall be blessed for evermore. But the Lord cannot compel any one to do right, to live a good life, and go to heaven; because this would be contrary to the Divine law of human free agency. It is sad to think that it should be so; but it is the insane delight of the wicked to violate the laws of Divine order, which have been ordained of God for the direction and guidance, the well-being and spiritual prosperity, of His children. And by the wilful violation of these beneficent laws, without which the universe could not exist for a moment, the evil bring punishment upon themselves; and this as inevitably as effects succeed causes. Let us remember that there is absolutely nothing arbitrary about the Lord's dealings with His creatures. He is just in all His ways. He doeth all things well. He is, most truly, our Father in the heavens. We, His children, may confidently trust in Him, and in all circumstances of life look up to Him; for His Divine hand will lead us, and His Divine Providence will protect us, that no evil may do us harm. The Lord, whom alone we ought to acknowledge and worship, is pure Love Itself, infinite and unchanging. And it is a genuine truth, expressed in the letter of the Divine Word, where we read: "The Lord is good unto all, and His tender mercies are over all His works" (Ps. cxlv. 9).

VIII. THE WAY OF SALVATION.

"The LORD is many times called 'Salvation,' in the Word, by which is meant that He is the Saviour; as, 'My salvation shall not delay, and I will place salvation in Zion.'"—Isa. xlv. 13; A.R. 368.

SALVATIONIST.—Do you believe in salvation?

MISSIONARY.—I do. The LORD, our Saviour, while He was in the world, performed the Divine work of Redemption, and thereby prepared the way for the salvation of the human race. Jehovah God assumed our nature to the end that He might accomplish this most beneficent and glorious work. And this is what is meant by the sublime words: "The LORD hath made bare the arm of His holiness, in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God" (Isa. lii. 10).

S.—Are you saved?

M.—What do you mean by being "saved"? Perhaps I am not saved, in the sense in which you understand the term. I do not believe in salvation by faith alone. According to the Scriptures, we must co-operate with the LORD, in order to be saved. If we do our part, the LORD will surely do His part. Our part is to shun evils as sins against God. We are admonished, in the Word, to "cease to do evil" that we may "learn to do well" (Isa. i. 16, 17).

S.—You believe, then, that we are saved by works; but St. Paul says we are justified by faith.

M.—Yes; but, mark you, Paul does not mean by faith alone; because, he speaks of *working* out our salvation. He also says: "In Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but *faith which worketh by love*" (Gal. v. 6). And the LORD says that He will "give every man according as his work shall be" (Rev. xxii. 12). The "faith which worketh," is a living and active and valid faith; but "as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (James ii. 26).

S.—But are you saved?

M.—In so far as any one is born again, or regenerated, he is saved. To be regenerated, is to be purified from evils, and thus to become "a new creature." In so far, therefore, as we have confessed, repented of, and with the LORD'S help overcome and put away our evils, in so far, and no further, are we saved.

S.—So you believe you are only saved a little at a time? I believe that I am saved through the grace of Jesus Christ, and saved altogether. I *know* I am saved.

M.—Do you claim that you are saved through grace, without keeping the Divine Commandments?

S.—Where can you show me a man that ever kept the Commandments? I think Christ was the only man that ever kept them. We are saved by faith in Him.

M.—You have evaded my question, as to yourself personally—no matter. But if we would be true followers of the LORD, we must obey His Divine Precepts. He says: "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me" (John xiv. 21). To love the LORD, is to do His will; to shun the evils which are forbidden in the Divine Commandments. To the inquiries concerning the way of salvation, the LORD said: "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments" (Matt. xix. 17). And again it is written: "Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Rev. xxii. 14). To be "blessed," is, to be in a state of happiness and peace, after passing through conflicts with the evils of our nature, and overcoming them. And those who are blessed, in this sense, will finally enter into eternal joy, in the LORD'S heavenly kingdom.

S.—Well, do you believe in the blood?

M.—I do. The only way in which we can be made "pure in heart," and so be prepared for heaven, is by means of the "blood." But we are not to understand that term literally, and think of the blood that flowed from the Saviour's wounds when He was being crucified.

S.—But what else do you understand by it? Surely, the blood we read of means the blood. I think it does.

M.—Well, let us see. Let us consider what is meant by it, according to a reasonable explanation. We read, for example, about the great multitude of the redeemed, in the seventh chapter of the Revelation. It says: "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their

robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. v. 14). But we know that the redeemed never actually washed their robes, or garments, in the LORD'S blood. The words of Holy Scripture are to be understood spiritually, and not literally. Spiritual things are to be "spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. ii. 14). "The blood of the Lamb," is the Divine Truth from the LORD. He says: "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John viii. 32). Thus, when we receive the Divine truth from the LORD, and live according to it, and are purified of evils and falses, then our robes are washed and made white in the "blood of the Lamb."
S.—I can hardly say whether I can accept your idea of the blood.

M.—Can you not give up the natural idea about the blood, and try to understand the spiritual and rational idea? The LORD says: "Except ye eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man, ye have no life in you" (John vi. 53). The "flesh" and the "blood," in this passage, have no reference to physical or material substances, as you will see, the moment you think about it intelligently. They are the symbols of the Divine Good and the Divine Truth. The Son of Man is the LORD, of whom, while He was in the world, it was said: "Never man spake like this man" (John vii. 46). In the passages in which He speaks so strongly of His flesh and His blood, the LORD means to teach us that unless we receive from Him, who is "the Life of the World," the Divine Good and the Divine Truth, and voluntarily appropriate these heavenly principles, we can have no spiritual, eternal, or truly human or angelic life.

S.—Well, I cannot understand your spiritualising; and I don't care to reason much about these things; because we shall know all about them when we get to heaven.

M.—It is a common notion, that when people pass out of this world they will immediately come into possession of all possible knowledge; and you have just given expression to this notion. But it is a great error—a deception, in fact. For, the change which death brings about, that is, our passing out of the natural world into the spiritual, does not, in itself, make us any wiser. We shall never know anything but what we learn, either in this world or the other. Knowledges concerning spiritual and heavenly things do not come spontaneously, as some imagine, when we pass out of the world of time into the realm of eternity. You say that you don't care to reason about religious subjects. But there is a sense in which we ought to reason—in the sense of making a legitimate use of our faculties, in the effort to learn to understand, intelligently, the truths which are revealed to us. You certainly must admit, if you are reasonable at all, that this cannot be otherwise than well-pleasing to our heavenly Father; because it is written: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD" (Isa. i. 18).

S.—I have no objection to your argument; but I still think that we shall be a great deal wiser when we get to heaven, than we can possibly become while we remain on earth.

M.—Yes; but in order that we may grow "wise unto salvation," it is of the utmost importance that we make a beginning, by entering into the way of wisdom, while we remain in this life. This life is our state of probation. Whatever we become, as to our inner life and character, while we remain in this world, that shall we be when we enter into the eternal world.

S.—So you do not believe in probation after death, as some do?

M.—No; there is no such thing as probation after death. It is written: "As the tree falleth, so shall it lie." The ruling love, such as is its quality at death, or at the time a person goes into the other world, such will it remain to eternity. "Love is the life of man," is an axiom involving a profound philosophy. By "love," in this sense, is meant the ruling affection of the human mind. The LORD says of the wicked: "They love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." When man voluntarily confirms himself in evil, his ruling love becomes evil, and thus his state is fixed. And when once the state is fixed, it can no more be changed than the form of a tree can be changed when it is grown to its full size. It would be an impossibility to transform a wolf into a sheep, or a leopard into a lamb, would it not?

S.—I should think so.

M.—Just as much of an impossibility would it be, or even far greater, to transform an evil spirit into an angel of light. And therefore it is written, with respect to the perverse state of the wicked: "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still" (Rev. xxii. 11); while, on the other hand, it is said of those who permit themselves to be regenerated: "He that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still" (Rev. xxii. 11). The LORD will save all who come unto Him, with an everlasting

salvation; and He, in Divine compassion, invites *all*—even the lowest and vilest of mortals—to come unto Him; because He can save and from infinite love desires to save, to the uttermost. But He cannot save those who are perverse by nature, and who harden their hearts; who, delighting in wickedness, determine to *go away* from Him, by leading a life contrary to His Commandments, from dwelling finally in eternal darkness; for the simple reason that people must become good and pure and heavenly-minded, voluntarily: they cannot be rendered so by compulsion; because this is contrary to Divine order.

S.—As members of the "Army," we do not look upon religion as a philosophy, as you seem to do. We know that if we are washed in the blood we are saved, and God accepts us for Christ's sake. That is sufficient for us: the great fact of the Gospel, that the blood of the Lamb of God was shed for sinners, is enough to take any one that has faith to heaven. And I believe that all who are strong in the faith, will go straight to glory when they die.

M.—You say that God "for Christ's sake," accepts us. These words are an indication that you have in your thought an idea of two Beings, one of whom does a thing to satisfy or to please another. This arises from the fundamental error of the doctrine of Christianity, as generally held—the doctrine of the tripersonality of God, which you evidently believe.

S.—Most certainly, I believe, as the Church teaches, that there are three Divine persons in the Godhead. I have never known any other doctrine. Is not that what the Bible plainly teaches?

M.—I must emphatically answer your question in the negative. The Creeds teach that there are three Divine Persons in the Godhead; but the Scriptures do not teach such a doctrine. Three persons would be three beings; but there is only one Divine Being, and that is the LORD; the LORD JESUS CHRIST in His glorified Humanity is God, "besides whom there is none else." The Scriptures declare that "the LORD our God is one" (Mark xii. 29). The Saviour Himself said: "I and My Father are one" (John x. 30); but the Creeds affirm that they are two. How can this contradiction be reconciled?

S.—It is a mystery. The Father and Jesus certainly appear to be two, from what we read in the Gospels! But how do you prove that they are one?

M.—The LORD JESUS CHRIST was, as the Apostle truly says, "God manifest in the flesh" (1 Tim. iii. 16). He was "*God with us*" (Matt. i. 23). The Divine was in the Human. By the Incarnation, God became Man; and by being glorified, the Man, Christ Jesus, became God. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself" (2 Cor. v. 19). In the LORD the Saviour were represented two Natures—the Divine and the Human. Jesus said: "The Father dwelleth in Me" (John xiv. 10). The "Father" is the Divine: the "Son" is the Human. They are One, as He says: the Glorified Redeemer is the one Divine Being. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one in Him, comparatively as the soul, body, and operation are one in man. Thus, God, the LORD, is one Glorious Person, whose Divine Majesty is described by John in the first chapter of the Revelation. And so we can perceive intelligently the grand truth expressed by the Apostle, when he says: "In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. ii. 9).

S.—Your explanation is very different from any I ever heard before; but I am not prepared to accept it. It is too new to me. It is wonderful, to think how differently people look at things, according to their belief. You are sure you are right, and I am just as positive that my view is what the Bible teaches. You claim that Jesus Christ is God; and the doctrine that I have always been taught, is, that He is the second person in the Divine Trinity. If you are right, then I am wrong. But who shall decide which is the true doctrine?

M.—It is perfectly natural, for people, as a general thing, to hold to the religious ideas with which their minds have been imbued from childhood. It is human nature, to cling to these ideas, no matter how erroneous they may be. It is an impossibility, in the nature of things, for the religious views of any man to be changed suddenly. The human mind can only be changed by a slow and gradual process. When we plant seed in the ground, it must have time to take root and grow and produce, according to its kind. And the genuine truth of the Word is like seed, which is planted in the earth of the human mind. If there is "good ground," for the truth to fall into, it will grow and bring forth the fruits of a living faith and a heavenly love, which are meant by charity.

S.—The difficulty is, that what is true to one man is false to another; and how are we to know which man has the truth?

M.—The man who is taught by the LORD, by means of what is revealed in the Word, is in the truth. The genuine truth of the Word may be rationally understood; and when it is so understood, a man in so far knows the truth: he is positive that a thing revealed in the Scriptures is true. For example: you know that three times one are three. You don't doubt it any more than the fact of your own existence, do you?

S.—No, I don't think I do.

M.—Well, it is an eternal truth, revealed in the Word, that there is a God, the Creator of the universe, the Saviour and Redeemer of the world. And the man that once learns this truth, and understands it rationally, does he doubt it? or is there any reason for his doubting it?

S.—No, I don't think there is.

M.—Very well. Another eternal truth, revealed in the Word, is that "the LORD our God is One," as already quoted. He is "One, in essence and in Person." The Divine Trinity is in His one Person, and does not consist of three persons. He is a Being of Love, Wisdom, and Power, in all respects Infinite and Divine. He is the Good, the True, and the Omnipotent One.

S.—I believe that.

M.—You cannot help believing it. And if you continue to grow in a knowledge of the truth, you will in due time let go the erroneous teaching of the Creeds, as regards the three persons in the Godhead, and you will become a believer in the grand and rational doctrine of the Bible—the SUPREME DIVINITY OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. Look at the subject seriously and prayerfully, for yourself. Is not our Divine LORD the only God of heaven and earth? Most assuredly He is! Then why not believe in Him alone? why cling to the confusion of ideas which necessarily occupy the mind, so long as you abide by the teachings of the old Creeds? The fact is, that you can never think truly and rationally about God, our heavenly Father, so long as you think of three Divine Persons.

S.—But how did men ever come to believe it, if it is not true, according to the Bible?

M.—It would require a long time to answer your question fully; I will only say, that the Apostles believed and taught that the LORD JESUS CHRIST was God, as can be clearly shown from the Acts and the Epistles. But, in the ages after the Apostles, the Divine Truth was falsified. Various heresies crept into the Primitive Church. Pagan ideas were mixed up with the notions of men who had some knowledge of the teachings of the New Testament. And finally the Divine Trinity was divided into three separate persons, and this Dogma was promulgated throughout the whole Christian world. How did men come to believe this Dogma? Ah! "there's the rub." But it is quite plain that men were taught the false doctrine, instead of the Divine truth of the Word of God. Why? Evidently because the Teachers were in such a state that they loved the darkness of falsity more than the light of truth. And this applies to many, even at this moment—and to many besides the Teachers.

S.—You do talk in a singular manner about these things! Are there many who think as you do, I wonder?

M.—There are not many, comparatively; but I am glad to know that the number of those who perceive the fallacies of the old Creeds, is steadily increasing. And as they discover the absurdities and contradictions involved in many of the doctrines to which men generally give their assent, they will, if well disposed, become receptive of the genuine truths of the Divine Word. Like men lost in a dark and dense forest, in danger of being killed by wild beasts, they will rejoice in finding their way into the cheering light, the pure air, the beautiful sunshine of heaven: will rejoice in rational knowledges respecting spiritual things, and thus come into states of inward peace, being secure from every danger that might prove hurtful to their souls, and so to their eternal well-being. Knowing the truth, and living according to it, they shall be "saved," in the only true sense of that word.

S.—I think the only way for men to be saved, is, through faith in the precious, atoning blood of Christ. If we believe in Him with all the heart—it is all that we can do, to have faith—His promises shall not fail. He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins. And God will accept us for Christ's sake; and we shall at last pass in through the gates of heaven, shouting hallelujah!

M.—If you shun evils as sins against God, your faith, held in simplicity, will be valid for salvation; but only on this condition—according to the Scriptures. To shun evils—to "cease to do evil"—is, to practise the works of charity, from a principle of religion; to do right simply

because it is right; to do good from the love of doing good to the neighbour, *i.e.* to others; and this is to act from pure motives, in all relations of human life. The LORD admonishes us to "do good and lend, hoping for nothing again" (Luke vi. 35). It is written: "What doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to humble thyself to walk with thy God" (Micah vi. 8). The greatest of Theologians has said that "All religion is of the life, and the life of religion is to do good." And the Apostle Paul also most emphatically teaches that we must do more than merely profess faith: he teaches, namely, that we must do our part in the work of salvation. You will remember that remarkable chapter on CHARITY—the thirteenth of first Corinthians.

S.—No, I can't say that I do remember just now what that chapter does speak of; but I know that he says "we are justified by faith, and have peace with God through our LORD Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Rom. v. 1, 2). That is plain enough. And when St. Paul says we are justified by faith, I firmly believe it.

M.—But, my dear fellow, you ought not to imagine that Paul teaches the doctrine of salvation by faith *alone*, as held by modern Christians. He says: "Not the hearers of the law are just before God; but the *doers of the law* shall be justified" (Rom. ii. 13). This declaration shows plainly, that when the same Apostle afterwards says: "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law" (Rom. iii. 28), he does not, by this clause, "without the deeds of the law," mean without keeping the Divine Commandments; because he explicitly says, "the doers of the law shall be justified." And what else can he mean by "the law," but the Divine Commandments? It is perfectly evident that he had reference to these, for he says:

"Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping the commandments of God" (1 Cor. vii. 19). And in harmony with his doctrine all through his Epistles, when compared, and properly interpreted, and rationally understood, in the light of the LORD'S own words, Paul affirms that of the three Christian Graces "charity is the greatest" (1 Cor. xiii. 13). That is, charity, or love, is the first essential of the Christian Religion. We are saved by works *and* by faith: we are saved from our evils by faith in the LORD JESUS CHRIST our heavenly Father, and by doing His will by means of the strength continually imparted to us from Him.

S.—All that we require to do, is, to come to Jesus. I firmly believe that His grace is sufficient to save the greatest sinner on God's earth. I know He has saved me; and He will surely save any man that will come unto Him, desiring his sins to be washed away.

M.—Very true. Just what I have been trying to show you and convince you of—but without much effect upon your mind, I fear—is, that we should look to, and think of, no other than the LORD JESUS CHRIST, who alone is our Saviour and Redeemer, and of whom the Apostle speaks as being "over all, God blessed for ever" (Rom. ix. 5). He does not direct us to go to any other, but says: "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. xi. 28). All our prayers and supplications should be addressed to the LORD JESUS alone; for He is our Father in the heavens, who hears and answers all the sincere petitions of His children, providing for them those things which are needful for their eternal well-being. We cannot, in reality, go to the Father, as a separate Being; for the LORD Jesus says: "The Father is in Me" (John xiv. 10). As I have already explained, by the Father is meant the Divine, in the Glorified LORD, and not a distinct person.

S.—But does not the Bible say that God forgives us our sins "for Christ's sake"? If your doctrine is true, what does that mean?

M.—I have been waiting for some time for an opportunity to give you an explanation of that very passage. The explanation is very simple, in fact. There is, in reality, no such expression in the Scriptures at all, as "God, for Christ's sake." This expression, which has been in such common use, throughout Christendom, is a false translation of Ephesians iv. 32. We still have these words—words which convey to the mind a very erroneous idea—in the Authorised Version of the Scriptures; but if you examine this passage in the Revised Version, you will find that they have disappeared.

S.—And how does it read in the Revised Version?

M.—It there reads: "Forgiving each other, even as GOD ALSO IN CHRIST forgave you," which is the correct rendering, according to the original. So that the literal expression, as well as the

doctrine involved, in this passage, agrees with that already quoted, in which the Apostle says: "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself" (2 Cor. v. 19).

S.—I must examine that passage, because the idea of the words "for Christ's sake," not being in the Bible at all, is quite new to me.

M.—Yes, it is new, but it is perfectly true, as you will find. And the idea taught by Paul is very different from that generally held. Paul says: "God was in Christ," etc. That is, the Father was in the Son—the Divine was in the Human—the First had become the Last—God the Mighty, yea, the Almighty, had been made "manifest in the flesh." The Divine Life was in Jesus, comparatively as the human soul is in the body of a man. For this reason He said: "He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father" (John xiv. 9). The Human Nature, in the person of Jesus, was a manifestation of the Father of Eternity. The Humanity of the LORD was glorified or made Divine. And thus the Humanity was united with the Divinity, and that prophecy was fulfilled which is written: "And His Name shall be called God, Mighty, Father of Eternity, Prince of Peace" (Isa. ix. 6).

S.—These are deep subjects; and I don't know that it is of much use for me to try to comprehend them: I don't think I ever shall, at least, in this world.

M.—You have no need to be discouraged, on that score. You can easily learn to comprehend these things, if you desire to do so. The Apostle assures us that "the Spirit," that is, the spirit of truth, which is the spirit of the Gospel, "searcheth *all* things, yea, the deep things of God" (1 Cor. ii. 10).

S.—I feel something like saying with the Psalmist: "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me: it is high, I cannot attain unto it" (Psalm cxxxix. 6). At any rate, I don't believe that any man requires to be a philosopher, in order to be a Christian. The way of salvation is so plain, that even though a fool, the wayfaring man need not err therein.

M.—It is not necessary for a man to be a philosopher, in order to be a Christian, though the profoundest of philosophers may be the humblest of Christians. To understand, and thoroughly to appreciate, the doctrines of the Christian Religion, however, a man must learn to think spiritually. And whenever one learns to think spiritually, he begins to understand rationally, that is, intelligently. One learns to think spiritually, by receiving the genuine truths of the Word. The mind is then enlightened by the truth; for truth is light.

S.—The LORD is the Light of the world; and He said: "He that followeth Me, shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John viii. 12).

M.—And a very grand idea is therein expressed. To follow the LORD, is, to receive His teachings, and to live according to them. To walk in darkness, is, to live and act under the influences of false principles; for darkness is falsity. You say the way of salvation is plain. So it is—very plain. And salvation is of and from the LORD alone. The LORD JESUS CHRIST is the only Saviour and Redeemer.

S.—Yes; that is certainly plain enough: no one can doubt that.

M.—Well, I was wishing to state to you a plain case, as to the LORD, the only Saviour.

S.—You seem to be determined that I shall accept your view of the Divine Trinity; but I don't know about that.

M.—I do not wish you to accept it, unless you can see it to be the teaching of the Word of God; for it is of no avail, as regards spiritual enlightenment, to accept any view in blind faith. A genuine faith is "a faith of light." That is, faith is the acknowledgment of the truth of the Word, when, by the proper exercise of the mind, it is rationally understood. But, at the same time, we should be careful not to reject a truth revealed to us, on the ground that we do not understand it, or on the ground that it does not agree with our preconceived ideas. We should always desire the LORD to open our understanding, that in His Divine and glorious Light we may "see light." Is not this the spirit, which, as Christians, we should manifest?

S.—It certainly is, I must admit. But when it comes to a change of religious views, some of us are—well, shall I say stubborn? or, hard to be convinced? I am still disposed to hold on to the faith I have.

M.—That is well enough; but it is the part of a man who desires to grow in the knowledge of the truth, to relinquish his ideas as soon as he discovers them to be erroneous. I have endeavoured to show you, that the faith in a trinity of persons in the Godhead is erroneous; that it is contrary

alike to reason and to Holy Scripture. And as it is a matter of vast importance, for a Christian to have a correct view respecting the LORD, as the only Divine Object of worship, you will pardon me for reminding you that a faith in three persons in the Godhead, is necessarily a faith in three Gods. You cannot possibly avoid the conclusion. Three Gods, is the logical outcome of the idea of three Divine Persons. And I present this plain case for your serious consideration, in order that you may be led to come to the LORD JESUS, in the true sense of the word, and not remain in the erroneous idea inculcated by the Creeds—an idea based upon the self-derived intelligence of men, instead of the Divine Word, rationally interpreted.

S.—Well, since I see that you are so much in earnest about it, all that I can say now, is, that I will think about the subject. If your view of it is really the correct one, it may be given me to see it and accept it, some time.

M.—Far be it from me to wish to persuade you to change your belief for any personal gratification that your conversion might cause me. But, my dear friend, think of the grand fact, that all the angels and blest spirits of the universal heavens worship and adore none other than the LORD JESUS CHRIST! Think of the sublime language in which the angelic hosts glorified Him as the God of Heaven, who alone is worthy of adoration: before whom every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that He is the LORD and Father of all! John, who, "in the spirit," beheld an innumerable multitude of the redeemed, gathered home to heaven from all parts of the habitable world, says that they "exclaimed with a loud voice, saying: Salvation to our God who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying: Amen; Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen" (Rev. vii. 10-12).

S.—You claim that God, in this passage, means Jesus Christ. But there are *two* mentioned. It says: "Salvation to our God who sitteth upon the throne, *and* unto the Lamb."

M.—And your idea is, that by God is meant the Father, and by the Lamb the Son, thus two of the persons in the Divine Trinity?

S.—Yes, to my mind it does seem so.

M.—Now let me show you that that idea is wholly erroneous. By God and the Lamb are meant the LORD JESUS CHRIST, as to His Divinity and His Humanity; and, indeed, as to the Divinity of His Humanity. When Jehovah God had assumed our nature and come into the world—when He had become "God with us," so as to perform the work of redemption—when God Himself had actually, in the person of JESUS CHRIST, been made manifest in the flesh, that He might prepare the way for the salvation of the human race—John the Baptist, the Herald of the Advent of the LORD, looking upon Jesus as He walked, exclaimed: "Behold the Lamb of God" (John i. 36).

S.—Yes; and by His precious blood are washed away the sins of the world.

M.—It was none other than the LORD JESUS CHRIST, in His Divine Humanity, that appeared to John—who was at the time "in the spirit," in the isle of Patmos—and spoke those most wonderful and sublime words, which are written in the Apocalypse. And of Him it is said: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the LORD, who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty" (Rev. i. 8). The LORD also, after His resurrection, and just previous to His ascension, said to His disciples: "All power is given unto Me, in heaven and in earth" (Matt. xxviii. 18). Now you can see that He who had, and for ever has, all power, is no other than the Almighty.

S.—But who gave Him that power? Did not the Father give it Him?

M.—It appears you cannot cease thinking of the Father as being a separate person from the LORD JESUS CHRIST. And to think of, and to worship, the Father in this manner, is, to think of, and to worship, God *out of* Christ; which is contrary to the teaching of the Apostle, who declares, as we have already seen, that "God was *in* Christ." It is also to think of, and to worship, the Father *out of*, or independently of, the LORD. And this is the very opposite of the LORD'S own teaching, who says "the Father dwelleth *in Me*." And He also says: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, *except through Me*" (John xiv. 6). This means, that the Divine, in the LORD, is not approachable, mentally visible, or rationally comprehensible, except in, and by means of the Human. The LORD said: "If ye had known Me, ye would have known My Father also" (John xiv. 7). And the Apostle affirms that "he that acknowledges the Son hath the Father also" (1 John ii. 23).

S.—You are putting your doctrine pretty strongly; but I am bound to hear you to the end.

M.—Yes; and it can be put still more strongly. I do not wish to wound you with my plain talk; but my sincere desire is, to give you clearer views respecting the LORD, whom alone we ought to worship. To worship a tripersonal God, is, to worship a creature of the imagination, and not the God of heaven and earth! And what else is this but idolatry? The idols of men's imaginations are more numerous than the idols made by men's hands. And the Creeds, which have divided the Divine Trinity into three separate persons, have been a fruitful source of mental and spiritual idolatry among the men of Christendom.

S.—You are pretty hard on those that believe in the Creeds, to make out that they are all idolaters. That's a fearful idea! The very faith by which men claim to be saved, and through which they hope to go to heaven, you set forth as being nothing else than idolatry! Surely your way of reasoning carries one to great lengths.

M.—I don't want to be hard on any man; but the truth must be spoken. I have given you proof from the Word of God, as well as testimony from the Epistles of the Apostles, to substantiate my views. If you cannot accept this proof,—if you cannot believe this testimony,—I am sorry; but it cannot be helped. It is a matter for you to decide for yourself. Every man must choose his religious principles in freedom.

S.—Yes; in this country of ours we have religious liberty; and a great blessing it is. They cannot put one to the torture, now-a-days, no matter how much they might desire to do so. I believe there are still people in the world that would put on the thumbscrews, to make others think and believe as they do, if it were possible. But I see, at least I think I see, that there is nothing of that nature about your doctrine. You are bound, if possible, to convince a man of the truth of your doctrine, by giving him proofs from both reason and Scripture. And I must admit that you have used some strong arguments in favour of your views, which are well worthy of being seriously considered.

M.—My desire is, that you should be led to acknowledge the grand doctrine of the Supreme Divinity of the LORD, which is the plain teaching of the Divine Word,—in order that you may *come to Jesus* in the true sense of the word, and not merely in a delusive and vain sense. Let me entreat you henceforth to take the LORD our Saviour at His word, when He says: "Come unto Me." Go to the Heavenly Father, in the very Person of the LORD JESUS. Address your prayers to Him alone. Think of Him as THE MAN, the beautiful, the merciful, the glorious, the DIVINE MAN: the One who is alone to be adored, by the angels of heaven and by the men of the Church. He is able,—and from infinite love desires,—to succour, to comfort, to bless, and to save. In the Human, which He assumed for the sake of our salvation, the LORD was Himself "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;" was "despised and rejected of men;" He was "wounded for our transgressions;" "the chastisement of our peace was upon Him;" and finally He permitted Himself to be taken, and to be "led forth like a lamb to the slaughter" (Isa. liii. 3-7), that is, to be crucified. And thus He suffered, not in the sense of "substitution," not to appease the "wrath of God," for there never was any wrath in Him; but He suffered as the Saviour of the world, because from diabolical wickedness and cruelty men were determined to put Him to death! But He triumphed gloriously over all the powers of darkness. He subjugated the hells; glorified His Humanity; became the Mighty God, so as to reign into the ages of the ages. Let us then go to Him and trust in Him alone; for it is He who in His loving-kindness speaks to us in the Holy Word, saying: "Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness" (Isa. xli. 10). And as we learn to confide in Him more and more, we shall be enabled to say, from the heart and from the understanding also: "God is the LORD, who hath showed us light . . . Thou art my God, and I will praise Thee; my God, I will exalt Thee. O give thanks unto the LORD; for He is good, and His mercy is for ever" (Ps. cxviii. 27-29).

IX. THE HOLY SACRAMENTS AND THEIR USES.

"The two sacraments, baptism and the Holy Supper, are as it were two gates to eternal life."—
T.C.R. 721.

INQUIRER.—What are your views in the New Church, with regard to baptism and the holy communion? Do you observe these ordinances as they do in other denominations of Christians?

MISSIONARY.—It would take some time to explain our views respecting these most important subjects; but I am happy to be able to answer you in the affirmative. That is to say, we are taught that the sacraments of baptism and the Holy Supper were Divinely instituted: that they are in the Word of the New Testament distinctly commanded; and therefore we regard it as a sacred duty to observe them.

I.—Your position is, undoubtedly, correct. At any rate, what you say appears to sound right to my ears.

M.—If you have a desire to hear what the New Church doctrines teach concerning these matters, I shall be very happy to explain some of our views. It is always a great pleasure to me to talk about these grand essentials of our holy religion whenever a suitable opportunity presents itself. And I must confess that my sympathies have never been with those who regard the sacraments, which our Lord Himself instituted, as non-essential.

I.—The holy sacraments which the LORD, our Divine Redeemer, instituted and commanded, must surely be necessary, proper, and eminently useful in the promotion of the true Christian life of the member of the Church. So it seems to me.

M.—Very true, indeed. And we shall always find, on due consideration, that baptism and the Holy Supper, as Divinely appointed ordinances, are most profoundly and beautifully significant, and that their uses are really of vast importance.

I.—Our meeting is opportune, I am sure. You say it gives you pleasure to converse on these subjects; and I can assure you that I shall be delighted to hear an explanation of them from the standpoint of the New Church doctrine. And if you have no objections, I will indicate the particular points concerning which I should like some information, by asking some questions. The doctrines of your Church, you know, are nearly altogether new to me. My opportunities for investigating them have thus far been rather limited. But I want to learn more with regard to many things. There was a time, some years since, when I thought I knew a good deal—almost everything that could be known, in fact. But that time has gone by.

M.—Then I may congratulate you upon having entered into a new era, as regards your mental and spiritual state. For it is one of the peculiar laws respecting the growth and development of the human mind on the spiritual plane, that when we come into a state in which we realize that we know almost nothing, and are only beginning to learn that then we are entering into the shining pathway that leads to the attainment of intelligence and wisdom; then we become willing to renounce our prejudices, to relinquish our self-derived intelligence, and to receive the wisdom that is from above, which alone can make us "wise unto salvation." But I must give you an opportunity to put your questions, the consideration of which will probably occupy all our time.

I.—Well, my first question has reference to the mode in which you administer baptism. Do you practise immersion, sprinkling, or pouring?

M.—You will perhaps be a little surprised to hear that we practise neither of the forms you have mentioned.

I.—Yes, I am surprised to hear that; but what other form is there?

M.—The mode in which we administer baptism, is by dipping the hand into the font, and then applying it to the forehead of the candidate, saying: "I baptize thee into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Some of our ministers in the United States and Canada, at least, say: "I baptize thee into the name of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit."

I.—I never knew of a clergyman in any of the other Churches using this form of words; but it does not impress me as being objectionable; and I presume it can be justified by the Scriptures.

M.—This form of words is used in accordance with the fundamental doctrine of the New

Church as derived from the Sacred Scriptures, that the LORD JESUS CHRIST is the God of heaven and earth, and that the Divine Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one in Him, comparatively as the soul, body, and operation are one in man. Thus the grand distinguishing doctrine of the New Church is presented to the mind, of baptism into the name of the LORD, instead of into the name of a tri-personal God. The former is in accordance with the Scriptures, but the latter is both unscriptural and unreasonable, because the idea of three Divine persons in the Godhead, is no other than the idea of three Gods.

I.—It must, nevertheless, be admitted that the doctrine of three persons in the Godhead, is the cardinal doctrine generally held in the so-called "orthodox" Churches.

M.—Yes, and when they baptize "into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit," they distinctly understand these to mean the three persons mentioned in the creeds. But herein the theologians of modern times have most lamentably departed from the apostolic doctrine of the Church. For in the Acts of the Apostles we read that the people who heard the Gospel preached with such tremendous zeal and power by Peter on the day of Pentecost, exclaimed: "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" And they received this reply: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you into the name of JESUS CHRIST for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts ii. 37, 38). We also read that those who received the Word of God at Samaria, "were baptized into the name of the LORD JESUS" (Acts viii. 16).

I.—Just before His ascension into heaven, our LORD gave the commission to His apostles, saying: "Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. xxviii. 19). But I do not recollect any passage in the Acts where it is said that the apostles used this form of words. It seems evident, therefore, that the apostles who went forth into the wide world to perform their great mission, because they baptized into the name of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, must have believed that the glorified, heaven-ascended Saviour was actually God, in whom was the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as your doctrine so emphatically declares. I never saw it so plainly before. It is wonderful how clearly one can see these things when one has some help in the way of explanation.

M.—The conclusion you have drawn is perfectly logical. You have made a strong point. There is no doubt—but everything goes to show—that the apostles believed that the Divine Trinity was in the LORD. And John afterwards wrote to the same effect, saying: "This [JESUS CHRIST] is the true God, and eternal life" (1 John v. 20). The apostle Paul, also, in at least two passages speaks of being baptized into JESUS CHRIST. (See Rom. vi. 3; Gal. iii. 27). The point, therefore, is settled that it is proper for us to baptize into the name of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, because the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit are one, in His most glorious and adorable person.

I.—Do you regard immersion as being objectionable?

M.—No, we do not regard it as particularly objectionable, but as unnecessary. The quantity of water made use of in the administration of baptism is a matter of no importance. It is not the water that washes away the inherited or acquired impurities of man's nature. A single drop of pure water applied to the forehead of the individual being baptized, is as efficacious as any larger quantity. For this reason, namely, that baptism is a purely representative ordinance. Water is used because it is the symbol of truth. A drop of water contains all the properties of water. Its application is "a sign and memorial that man is to be regenerated." Thus it is sometimes called "an outward sign of an inward, spiritual grace." The washing of baptism signifies the purification of the mind, by the removal of evils and falses. Evils and falses are removed by means of the truths of faith from the Word. As the water cleanses and refreshes the body, so the truth, of which the water is the correspondent, purifies and cheers the mind.

I.—I think your explanation is at once practical, reasonable, and beautiful. It impresses me as being in accordance with the Scriptures as well as in harmony with enlightened reason.

M.—It is only an imperfect statement of what the Writings of the New Church teach upon this subject, and these Writings are expositions of the genuine meaning of the Scriptures; our doctrines therefore agree with them.

I.—Is there any particular reason why you apply the water with the hand to the forehead of a person? I ask because you seem to give reasons for things in a manner that is as delightful as it is new to me.

M.—There is a certain significance, or symbolic meaning, in all things that are done in the

administration of baptism. Thus the face is the index of the mind; for the moods and affections of the mind are expressed by the face. The forehead is the highest part of the face; and what is highest signifies what is interior or inmost as to spiritual state. The water, as I said before, is the symbol of truth; and the hand with which the water is applied, is the emblem of power. When we now sum these things up, we can see that by the power of the truth of the Divine Word applied to the life and conduct of an individual, the very inmost spiritual principles of the mind are to be purified from evils and falses in the process of regeneration.

I.—You said that baptism by immersion was not particularly objectionable. But do you not think that immersion was the mode practised by the apostles? And does it not seem plain that John baptized Jesus by immersion? I am not a Baptist; nor have I ever been baptized by immersion; but I have always inclined to the view that, according to the letter of the Scriptures, immersion was the proper mode. But I must confess that you have thrown a flood of light upon the subject. You have certainly presented some new ideas which to any reasonable individual must carry with them a great deal of weight. Thus, you have explained that water is used as the symbol of purifying truth. That this is so, no one can deny. And that a drop of water contains all the properties of any larger quantity, is also true. The question, therefore, which arises, is: Is baptism by immersion any more valid or any more in accordance with the Scriptures than the mode you have described?

M.—It seems that the apostles baptized by immersion, and that the LORD was baptized in this manner. This opinion very largely prevails in the Christian world. And yet, when the Scriptures are critically examined concerning this point, it still remains a question whether the apostles baptized by immersion, and whether the LORD was baptized in this manner? According to the original, we read in Matt. iii. 16: "And having been baptized, JESUS went up straightway *from* the water." But in Mark i. 10, it speaks of His going up *out of* the water. If we now look at the matter from a strictly literal standpoint, and think of the Saviour as walking down with John into the Jordan to be baptized of him; and if we think further that John performed the Divine ceremony by putting water upon the head of JESUS, and that He then returned to the bank of the river; would it not be literally true that He "went up straightway from, or out of, the water"? And all this without His having been actually plunged under the water?

I.—Well, I must confess that it does appear so.

M.—There is corroborative evidence favouring the conception that this was the manner in which the Saviour and others were baptized in the Jordan. On the walls in the Catacombs of Rome, there are a good many pictures which were painted in the time of the early Christians. Several of these pictures, we are told, represent baptismal scenes. But not one of them represents baptism as being performed by immersion. The catechumen stands in the water, while the person administering baptism stands at the water's edge. In one picture—the baptism of a boy—the candidate is represented as standing in the water ankle deep, while the baptizer is standing on the shore. And what is of an interesting significance, the baptizer is in the act of laying his right hand upon the head of the catechumen, as if pronouncing the blessing. We do this in the New Church. After the application of the water to the forehead, and the declaration of the baptism, the minister lays his hands upon the head of the person, reverently saying: "The LORD bless thee, and keep thee: the LORD make His face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the LORD lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace" (Num. vi. 24-26).

I.—Very appropriate and impressive. If you continue your explanations, I fear you will shake my faith in baptism by immersion; but that is of no consequence. What I want, is to learn the truth of the matter. The early Christians who painted the pictures on the walls of the Catacombs, surely must have known what mode was practised in the administration of baptism, in the time of the apostles. At least it seems reasonable to infer that they knew. And therefore the pictures in the Catacombs you have described, militate against the idea of immersion. But does not the word baptism mean immersion?

M.—We have not time to enter into a full consideration of the subject just now; but I must give you something in reply to your question. The literal signification of the term baptism, is *washing*; and the spiritual meaning is *purification*, as we have already seen. Washings were commanded upon the sons of Israel, as we read in Leviticus xvi. 4, 24; Exodus xxx. 18-21; Numbers viii. 6, 7, and many other passages. That they might wash themselves, a

brazen sea and many lavers were placed near the temple, as described in 1 Kings vii. 23-39. They washed according to Divine command, not only themselves and their clothes, but many other things, such as their utensils and furniture. And these washings were representative of purification, the same as baptism.

I.—And I presume all this was done according to the principle that water is the symbol, or as you say, the correspondent of truth, which purifies when applied to the life and conduct of an individual?

M.—Precisely so. Let us now examine a few passages in the New Testament to see what answer we shall obtain, as to the signification of the term baptism. Your question is: Does baptism mean immersion? I should say, Not necessarily. It simply means washing. And when the children of Israel washed, they did not necessarily immerse themselves. When they washed their furniture, their tables, benches, and the like, they did not necessarily plunge them entirely under the water. It has been asserted that in the original the word *baptize* means to dip, or to immerse. But Dr. Albert Barnes says, on Matthew iii. 6, "It cannot be proved that a complete immersion ever was connected with the Word, or that it ever in any case occurred." And Schleusner says: "The word never signifies to immerse, when used by the sacred penman." Others say the same. The learned Drs. Tafel, however, in their magnificent *Interlinear Translation of the Word*, have in one passage—and in one only, so far as I can find—that of Mark vii. 4, rendered the original with the word "dipped;" so that it literally reads: "Except they shall have *dipped themselves*, they eat not." But of course it does not mean that unless they shall have immersed themselves bodily in water; it means, unless they shall have *washed*, they eat not.

I.—According to your explanations, as far as they have gone, the Scriptures certainly do not appear to favour immersion as the only proper mode of baptism. But there is a passage in Paul that I should like you to explain. I refer to where he says: "Know ye not, that as many of us as were baptized into JESUS CHRIST were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as CHRIST was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. vi. 3, 4).

M.—There is a considerable depth of meaning in this passage of the apostle; but its interpretation is not difficult in the light of the doctrine of the New Church. I believe that with our Baptist brethren this is regarded as a strong passage in favour of immersion. But we do not so regard it. Because immersion in water of a person's physical body cannot reasonably be considered as a burial into the death of the carnal man, with his sinful lusts and evil deeds. The apostle is making use of purely figurative language, as he does in many portions of his Epistles. And when he says: "We are buried with CHRIST by baptism unto death," I do not understand him to allude to immersion in water at all.

I.—That the apostle makes use of figurative language cannot, it seems to me, be denied. But what does he mean by the expression, "buried with CHRIST by baptism into death"?

M.—The figurative idea of the expression, "buried by baptism into death," is, rejected, put away, consigned to oblivion. Paul is not speaking of any particular external form of baptism; but he has reference to *an inward spiritual change*, which is effected by man's regeneration. This is evident from the last clause of the text you have quoted, which speaks of "walking in newness of life." And it is further evident from the context, where the apostle says: "Our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed" (Rom. vi. 6).

I.—What do you understand Paul to mean when he says: "CHRIST was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father"? This seems to be a figurative expression also: and one containing a certain sublimity of meaning.

M.—*The* apostle in this clause manifestly makes reference to the glorification of our LORD, that is, to the assumed Human nature of the LORD being made Divine, and thus united with the Father, that, as he says in another place, in JESUS CHRIST might dwell "all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. ii. 9). "The glory of the Father," is the Omnipotence of the Divine, by which through the human, the Lord conquered the powers of darkness, overcame the hells, performed the work of Redemption, and ascended on high as the Mighty God, the Father of Eternity, the Prince of Peace, to "reign into the ages of the ages" (Rev. xi. 15).

I.—As we have—for the present, at least—disposed of the subject of immersion, I should like to ask how you regard the matter of infant baptism?

M.—We baptize infants and children, as well as adults.

I.—But it is written: "He that *believeth*, and is baptized, shall be saved" (Mark xvi. 16); and infants and children surely cannot be said to believe in the Gospel.

M.—Very true; but they can by the Christian sign of the holy sacrament of baptism, be introduced into the LORD'S Church. They can be trained and educated according to the principles of the Church; and thus be prepared to become earnest and intelligent believers in the LORD and in Divine things, when they attain the age of maturity. The LORD says: "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God" (Mark x. 14; Matt. xix. 14). Now the Church is the kingdom of God on the earth. Baptism is the Divinely appointed gate of entrance into the Church. And when our Father in the heavens with infinite tenderness, says: "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not," we understand it to mean: Let the little ones that in the Divine Providence are given into your care, be baptized, and forbid or hinder them not to be thus introduced into the Church, which is the LORD'S kingdom on earth, to the end that heavenly influences, angelic ministries, may be more fully provided for them; that they may be led into repentance and regeneration in due time, and finally into states of unspeakable bliss in the LORD'S kingdom in the heavens.

I.—I must confess that I never looked at the subject in this light before. But it is very plainly to be seen that since the LORD says of the little ones, "Of such is the kingdom of God," and since the Church is that kingdom on earth, it cannot be improper to identify them by means of the Christian sign, as you call it, with the members of the Church.

M.—We are instructed in the Writings of the New Church, that the uses of baptism are threefold, as follows:

The first use of baptism is introduction into the Christian Church, and at the same time insertion among Christians in the spiritual world.

The second use of baptism is that the Christian may know and acknowledge the LORD JESUS CHRIST, the Redeemer and Saviour, and follow Him.

The third use of baptism is that man may be regenerated.

In the *True Christian Religion*, Nos. 677-687, these uses are definitely explained. If you will read those explanations, you will obtain much information concerning the nature of baptism.

I.—I will do so at my first opportunity. But it just occurs to me that there are those who think that infant baptism is useless because the little ones know nothing about it, no faculty of understanding or principle of faith being as yet formed in their minds. But precisely the same objection could have been raised against the rite of circumcision. The infants could not know what it meant. And yet it was positively commanded of God that every male child when eight days old, should be circumcised, as we read in Genesis xvii. 10-14. It is even declared concerning the uncircumcised child, that "that soul shall be cut off from his people."

M.—I was just on the point of speaking of this very matter of circumcision. Your argument is good, as far as it goes—quite correct.

I.—Well; now I should be glad to hear you explain the relations existing between circumcision and baptism. Was not the former typical of the latter?

M.—Yes; the Israelitish Church was in all respects representative. Circumcision was instituted in that Church, we are taught in our Writings, "because it represented, and thence signified, the rejection of the lusts of the flesh, and thus purification from evils, the same as baptism" (T.C.R. 675). And we are furthermore definitely instructed on this point, that "when the LORD came into the world He abrogated the representatives, which all were external, and instituted a Church in which all things were to be internal;" and that of all those representatives the LORD retained but two, which were to contain in one complex whatever related to the internal Church. "These two are baptism instead of washings, and the Holy Supper instead of the lamb which was sacrificed every day, and particularly at the feast of the passover" (T.C.R. 670). Thus the LORD did that which is meant by His fulfilling all things of the law, Matt. v. 17, 18.

I.—It seems the LORD Himself was subject to the law of circumcision, according to what we read (Luke ii. 21). And John also was circumcised on the eighth day (i. 59). And the baptism of our Saviour by John has always impressed me as a very remarkable circumstance. There is such a beautiful spirit of humility expressed in John's saying: "I have need for being baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?" (Matt. iii. 14).

M.—Yes, it was, indeed, a very beautiful spirit which John manifested on that occasion. In fact, he was one of the most remarkable characters of whom the religious history of the world gives us any account. On the one hand, we have the extraordinary simplicity of the man; and on the other hand, the vast importance of his mission, in preparing the way for the Divine Redeemer and Saviour of the world.

I.—From what you have said, I begin to see that the baptism of infants and children is not a useless form, as some think, and as I have thought myself; but that it is eminently proper and useful.

M.—I am much pleased that my efforts at an explanation of the subject appear to have helped you a little, at any rate. When we consider that baptism was instituted by our LORD in the place of circumcision; and when we learn the nature and uses of this holy sacrament; when, moreover, we come to see that it may be the means of exerting a most wholesome spiritual influence upon the life and character of an individual; then we shall be more zealous with regard to its administration. We shall cease to look upon Christian baptism as a mere form signifying little, or nothing; and we shall be able to see, intelligently, that its strict observance will with the Divine blessing, prove to be an incalculable power for good in the Church and in the world.

I.—As we have a little time yet, I should like you to say something about the holy communion also. I once heard a man make the assertion that the Swedenborgians did not observe the Sacraments at all. But I have to-day learned how wholly untrue this is. You not only believe in and observe them, but you give rational interpretations of their nature and meaning such as it has never been my privilege to listen to before.

M.—Unfortunately there are those who will "bear false witness against their neighbour," by which, however, they do themselves more injury than anybody else. Nevertheless, the assertion is doubtless true that some Swedenborgians do not believe in or observe the Divinely-instituted Sacraments. For some Swedenborgians are followers of the man, Swedenborg, rather than of the LORD. There are those who accept the philosophy, in some respects, which they find in Swedenborg's works, while at the same time they reject the theology which *is* therein taught. The New Churchman, however, is a follower of the LORD JESUS CHRIST. He regards Swedenborg as having been a most eminent theologian and servant of the LORD, whose extraordinary mission was to give to the world from the LORD, a Divine revelation of truth, according to predictions and promises written in the Scriptures.

I.—There is, then, an essential difference between a Swedenborgian and a New Churchman. I, of course, have heretofore had no occasion to recognize such a distinction as you speak of, but I see the point.

M.—A New Churchman is perfectly willing to accord to his fellow-men the privilege of thinking for themselves. The freedom of every individual to exercise the faculties with which his Creator has endowed him, is an important principle in our teachings. But a New Churchman generally has convictions, and the disposition to hold them firmly. For this reason, some men have appeared to be dogmatic, when, in fact, that was not their spirit at all. A man is dogmatic, in an objectionable sense, when he attempts to force his views upon another's acceptance; but not when he holds firmly, and expresses plainly those views, at the same time manifesting a disposition to leave others in freedom to think for themselves, and to either receive or reject them.

I.—I think your definition is a good one. Of course, if we feel positive that a certain view of a subject is the correct one, we will feel equally positive that another quite opposite view is erroneous; and in this case, if we have a warm interest in the subject, it is perfectly natural for us to have a strong desire to have others think as we do. Some people allow this desire to carry them altogether too far. They seem to think that if others do not hold the same views as they do, their hearts cannot possibly be in the right place; they seem to feel that unless others are, as it were, travelling on the same road as they are, they cannot by any means be on the way to heaven. But there is in this spirit more or less of fanaticism. They forget that the holy city, the New Jerusalem, has "on the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates" (Rev. xxi. 13). By which I understand is meant that from different directions, by different roads, that is, from different standpoints of doctrine, and by various experiences and states of the Christian life, people can enter into the kingdom of heaven.

M.—In the Writings of the New Church we have very definite teaching concerning the sacrament of the Holy Supper. Its nature, objects, uses, and effects, as a part of the Divine service and worship which a Christian is to render to his Lord and Master, are very thoroughly explained, and illustrated from the Word. As baptism is an introduction into the Church, so the Holy Supper is an introduction into heaven. When we speak of the Church, we do not mean its; external organizations, or its buildings, or forms of worship; although these are as necessary as are a man's garments; but we are now speaking of the Church as to its Divine doctrine, and of the life of the Christian according to that doctrine. These constitute the Church within man, and through the Church, that is, by the reception of the Divine Truth, and by a life of good into which the truth leads, man is introduced into the kingdom of heaven. And by heaven we do not mean simply a place — although it is a transcendently beautiful and glorious place—but we mean a good, pure, orderly, heavenly, angelic state, as to the heart and mind of an individual.

I.—Yes, the Divine Teacher does say: "Behold, the kingdom of God is within you." It is to me quite interesting to learn how baptism and the holy communion are related to each other. I should be glad to hear a little further explanation of this.

M.—Baptism, as we have seen, signifies purification from evils and falsities. And the meaning of the celebration of the Holy Supper is the reception and appropriation of the Divine Good and the Divine Truth from the LORD, the infinite and inexhaustible fountain of life and goodness and truth; the source of all human joys and blessings. For man is a mere recipient of life, and of all things that constitute his being, notwithstanding the fact that he has a self-conscious existence by virtue of the exercise of his faculties, and is a free agent in spiritual things.

I.—It seems to be a doctrine peculiar to the New Church that man is a recipient of life, and not life in himself, in the sense of being self-existent.

M.—It is; and this according to the Scriptures. All life proceeds, primarily, from God, "in whom we live and move and have our being." Human qualities are by derivation from the Divine, in whom all qualities are Divinely Human. A tree is dependent for its life upon the influences of the heat and light of the sun of nature. And man, who is in the Scriptures compared to a tree, is momentarily dependent upon the inflowing of life from the Lord, who is the Sun of heaven. Thus it is written: "A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven" (John iii. 27). The Lord is called "the fountain of life" (Ps. xxxvi. 9). And as "God manifest in the flesh," He said: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life" (John xiv. 6); and again: "I am the resurrection and the life" (John xi. 25).

I.—That man has no life of himself is a new idea;_ but that it is a truth, is self-evident the very moment you look at it. Your illustration confirms it; for where would the tree be without the heat and light of the sun?

M.—And where would be the man, without the reception of the Divine Good and the Divine Truth from "the LORD our God, who is a sun and shield"? (Ps. lxxxiv. 11). The LORD says: "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you" (John vi. 53). Now the flesh and blood of the Son of man, the same as the elements of the bread and wine in the sacrament of the Holy Supper, are the symbols of the Divine Good and the Divine Truth from the LORD. The flesh and blood of the Lord, the Son of man, are mentioned in the Word as correspondences of the principles of Divine Good and Divine Truth. And unless we receive these, we can have no life that is truly human, that is, no life that is spiritual, heavenly, angelic; and in the Word is called eternal or everlasting life.

I.—I have often in the years gone by, felt a strong desire to understand these things better; and your explanations are a great satisfaction to my mind.

M.—When the LORD instituted the Holy Supper, "He took bread, and blessing, brake it, and gave to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is My body" (Mark xiv. 22). In the heavenly doctrines of the New Jerusalem we are taught that bread in the spiritual sense, signifies the Divine Good of the Divine Love; and that in the supreme sense, it signifies the LORD, and everything holy which is from Him. And this is in agreement with the LORD'S own words, where He says: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (John vi. 51).

I.—The Jews afterwards had a contention among themselves, saying: "How can this man give

us His flesh to eat?" (verse 52). They took the words of our Saviour literally; and I dare say the contention arose as to what it could mean; but this was quite natural, because those Jews were in an unspiritual state. It is, therefore, no wonder that it was beyond their comprehension when the LORD said: "Whoso eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day" (verse 54). You explained some particulars about baptism, and as I presume all things that were done in the Last Supper have in like manner a spiritual sense, I should like to ask what is meant by the LORD'S breaking the bread?

M.—The breaking of bread, and eating together, according to a spiritual idea, means the communication and appropriation of the principle of good, and thus the conjunction which can be effected, on the part of man, in no other way than by the reception and communication of love or charity. Eating signifies the appropriation of principles of good as to the faculty of the will, and drinking signifies the reception of principles of truth as to the faculty of the understanding. As the material substances we eat and drink sustain the body, so the spiritual elements we appropriate nourish the mind and spirit. The LORD says of the bread, "This is My body," because by His body is also meant the LORD'S Divine Love; and those who receive the influences" of the Divine Love, and come into the sphere of charity, and become spiritual-minded, delighting in the reception and communication of mutual love—of these it is said that they are in the LORD'S body; that they are in the LORD, and the LORD in them; which means conjunction with the LORD, and communion with the angels of heaven. Thus we see that the Church is the LORD'S body. For all on earth who are in conjunction with the Lord and in consociation with the angels of heaven, constitute the Church. And the Divine Good of the Divine Love, and the Divine Truth of the Divine Wisdom, are the essential principles of the Church with man. They are in the LORD, yea, they are the LORD, and proceed from Him alone; so that He is All in all. I.—Your doctrine certainly gives one very profound and beautiful ideas, such as one does not hear of in any other system of religious teaching. My uniform experience has been that people do not look at these things intelligently, and therefore they do not recognize the sublime significance of the Divinely-appointed ordinances. It seems to be a generally prevailing sentiment, that if these things are observed in their outward form, it is sufficient, without endeavouring to understand their meaning. This is evidently because they have no knowledge of the spiritual sense of the Scriptures as taught in the New Church. But there are probably too many of the old superstitious notions, too many preconceived ideas, still occupying people's minds, to admit of their becoming interested in the new doctrines. They are satisfied with the old views of things, and appear to have no hunger or thirst for the new truths, which are now revealed—as I begin to see—in comprehensible terms and in rational forms. An indisposition to exercise their minds concerning spiritual subjects, causes many to say that the faith of their forefathers is good enough for them. The masses of mankind, as a matter of fact, seem to have no desire for changes in religious belief. They do not realize the need of any changes. A spirit of this sort would never have begun and carried forward the Reformation. The light of the glorious Gospel being withheld from men, the world would have seen no other than "dark ages" to this day. And what is amazing to me, is that most of the preachers of our time encourage this spirit, and continue teaching the old views to please the people, instead of giving them rational doctrines to enlighten their minds. It seems to me these are not the kind of teachers the Lord promises His people when He says: "I will give you pastors according to Mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding" (Jer. iii. 15). But I had not intended saying so much.

M.—You have not said too much. Indeed, I am glad to hear what you have said, because you have spoken the truth. It cannot be denied that even with all the religious denominations, the Churches so called, the vast cathedrals, and the worship conducted in them, there is nevertheless a widespread and increasing indifference to spiritual things. It is lamentable that it should be so; but our observation and experience are continually presenting proofs of it. Mankind generally are submerged in the sphere of naturalism and materialism. Self-love in various forms, largely prevails among men, insomuch that it is often asserted that every one acts from selfish motives, and that no one is capable of manifesting a disinterested love of the neighbour. Scepticism is advancing with rapid strides, both in Europe and America. There are millions in Christendom who repudiate the Sacred Scriptures as containing a Divine revelation; millions who disregard

the sacred ordinances of the Church, and all things of Divine worship; millions who never cross the threshold of any place dedicated to the service of the LORD, the God of heaven. Men devote all their faculties and powers to the acquisition of silver and gold and all manner of earthly possessions. Temporal things alone are desired, while spiritual, heavenly, eternal realities are regarded as of no importance. The spiritual state of the world in our time, reminds one of the words of lamentation written under inspiration by the prophet Isaiah, saying: "Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord, . . . they are gone away backward" (Is. i. 4).

I.—There is to my mind, a tremendous amount of truth in your characterization. But is there not also a bright side to the picture?

M.—Yes, there is. Thanks and praise be unto our LORD, the Father of mercies, for the knowledge and assurance that there is a bright side to the picture! And by contrast we shall perhaps be enabled to see the greater beauty on the bright side of the picture. There is a grand truth expressed in the poetic sentiment: "There is a silver lining to every cloud." It reminds us that the sun of nature always shines. No matter how dense and dark the clouds may be, no matter how the gloom may veil the face of nature, or how fiercely the storm may rage, the glory of the sun is perpetually the same. Exalted in majesty far above the earth, and far beyond the cloud, the sun shines on with undiminished splendour. In like manner, through all the "dark ages" of a consummated Church, through all the fearful conflicts of the religious wars and persecutions which the world has experienced, through all the tribulation and anguish, greater than that" which had been before, or has been since, the glory and majesty of the LORD, the Sun of Righteousness, remained the same. His Divine Providence was continually exercised on behalf of the children of men. He always made His sun to rise both upon the evil and the good; for He is "no respecter of persons."

I.—It was prophetically written: "The LORD shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee; and the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising" (Isa. lx. 2, 3). What application might this passage have to the subject just now before us?

M.—The beautiful passage you have quoted, in the spiritual sense, treats of a new dispensation of the Church, and its establishment on the earth. And in the fact that this is now taking place, we have the bright side of the picture before spoken of. The faith of the New Church, signified by the New Jerusalem (Rev. xxi. 2), is a faith of light. In so far as this faith is received, it brightens up everything in the human mind. The darkness of falsity, ignorance, bigotry, and superstition is dissipated. The rays of the beneficent light of truth shine into the mind, as it were, and communicate bright ideas respecting spiritual and heavenly things. A man's thoughts and ideas are gradually changed, and he becomes more and more rational. The light of the world now goes forth to illuminate the nations; which is meant by the expression: "The LORD shall arise upon thee." And the man of the Church in the new dispensation will most readily give up his erroneous ideas just as fast as the Divine Truth points them out to him. And thus he will be led into intelligence and wisdom, even while he remains in this world; and in the world to come he will enter into the joys of eternity. Intelligence and wisdom constitute man, in the true sense of the word; and an angel of heaven is no other than a perfected man.

I.—There are, it seems to me, very few comparatively that can realize any need of new doctrines, or of the founding of a new dispensation of the Church; but I can see great need of a change for the better, even in the affairs of what is commonly called the Christian world. And I am profoundly impressed with the conviction that the LORD did not too soon provide for the revelation of the inner sense of His Divine Word. Because we frequently have occasion to notice, when conversing with intelligent men—that is, men who are inclined to reason about things—that the literal sense of the Scriptures is quite inadequate to satisfy them. But as I took you away from the main topic of our conversation, I should now like to bring you back to it, if you please. The time when we must close is near; and I think you have something more to say about the Sacraments.

M.—Before we return to those subjects, permit me to say that with the beginning of the upbuilding of the LORD'S New Church, there was the dawning of a new spiritual day for humanity; that transcendently glorious and joyous day which many centuries before was prophetically spoken of in the words—to those who had long been in spiritual night, most

wonderfully cheering and hopeful words—"The morning cometh!" (Isa. xxi. 12). And although on the part of many millions of our race it is still night spiritually, because "they love darkness rather than light" (John iii. 19), nevertheless the morning has come. The LORD, the Sun of Righteousness, has arisen, and His Divine glory is seen: that is, the spiritual sense of the most Holy Word is understood by all who are disposed to look to the LORD, humbly praying: "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law" (Ps. cxix. 18). And with respect to the LORD in founding His New Church, is written: "Thy sun shall no more go down; and thy moon shall not be withdrawn: for the LORD shall be to thee for a light of eternity, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended" (Isa. lx. 20).

I.—This passage seems to prove, very plainly, your statement that the faith of the New Church is a faith of light, because in it the sun is to continue to shine for ever. I might ask more questions, but will leave this for some future time; and will let you close with any remarks that may occur to you.

M.—A great deal more could be said; but as you intend to read the *True Christian Religion*, and thus go for information to the fountain itself, I will add but a few words now. You will find it to be there taught that the two Sacraments, namely, baptism and the Holy Supper, are the most holy things of all Divine worship (TCR 699). And these are there particularly explained and beautifully illustrated with numerous passages from the Word. It is said that "baptism and the Holy Supper are, as it were, two gates to eternal life." There are several sublime passages in the Scriptures where gates are mentioned; and thereby are meant the principles of truth and good—from the LORD, the bountiful giver of all perfect gifts—which introduce the faithful into the Church on earth, and into the kingdom of the heavens. A reverent and humble spirit will lead one to desire to enter by the door into the fold (John x. 1), according to the order of the LORD'S appointed way, being in all things obedient and submissive to the Divine will. And therefore it is written: "Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise: be thankful unto Him, and bless His name: for the LORD is good; His mercy is everlasting; and His truth is to all generations" (Ps. c. 4,5). Again: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in" (Ps. xxiv. 7). And again: "Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Rev. xxii. 14).

I.—Please accept my most grateful acknowledgments for the information you have given me concerning these interesting and important subjects. May the LORD bless and prosper you, and grant that success may attend all your endeavours to disseminate the truths of the everlasting Gospel! Farewell.

X EMANUEL SWEDENBORG, THE PHILOSOPHER.

INQUIRER.—I hear that your people recently celebrated the bi-centenary of the birth of Swedenborg.

MISSIONARY.—Yes; festivals were held by many of our Societies, in memory of that event, on the evening of January 29th, 1888.

I.—My knowledge of the character of "the illustrious Swede," as I have heard him called, is but limited. In fact, I ought to know more about the man who is regarded as one of the most remarkable individuals that ever lived.

M.—There is no lack of means available to enable you to increase your fund of information on the subject, if you are disposed to do so. And it is a matter well worthy of your investigation. Every man ought to possess some knowledge respecting Swedenborg and his Writings. For his claims are great, and their acceptance is becoming more general. But we ask only that they should be brought to the test of Scripture and reason.

I.—Not long ago I saw something that aroused in my mind a desire to know more about him; and I resolved to make use of my first opportunity. As you are familiar with the subject, you may perhaps be disposed to give me an outline of some of his leading teachings.

M.—Well, this is to accord to me a very pleasant task. Allow me to suggest, then, that the best thing to do, in order to start aright, in your investigation of these things, is, to take one of Swedenborg's theological works,—the *True Christian Religion*, for example,— and give it a careful perusal. But, remember, you will find it to be a profound work. All his Writings are profound. You will accomplish little by reading rapidly. You must proceed slowly and deliberately, and do much close thinking. And as you are fond of things intellectual, you will in this way acquire many genuine knowledges, which are more enduring, precious, and comforting, a thousand times, than silver and gold or any earthly treasure. And thus, if you make some progress,—as doubtless you will,—in the understanding of spiritual principles, your mind will gradually be prepared to appreciate Swedenborg's philosophy; or, more properly speaking, the philosophy contained in Swedenborg's works, scientific as well as theological.

I.—It is quite a bright picture you have presented to my mental vision. And I ought to feel encouraged to enter, with a good deal of confidence, into the shining pathway which, as you evidently are certain, leads to the attainment of true knowledge. But it was my impression that if I were to read Swedenborg, I should like to begin with one of his scientific works.

M.—You can do so if you prefer, but it seems to me better for you to begin with one of the theological books.

I.—What is your reason for thinking so?

M.—My reason for thinking so is this: It is of great importance for us to receive rational knowledges, concerning the character and attributes of the Divine Being. From rational knowledge there comes a humble acknowledgment of God. And without an acknowledgment of God, the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, the Fountain of intelligence and wisdom, no man can make any real progress in the investigation of things, either natural or spiritual.

I.—It is evident that when we receive the wisdom that is from above, we shall acquire rational ideas and enlightened views of things.

M.—All genuine wisdom is from above, because it is of a spiritual and heavenly quality, and is derived by means of Divine Revelation. So long as a man's intelligence is self-derived it is not genuine. A man cannot be truly wise from himself; for he is only a recipient of life and of all really human attributes and qualities.

I.—The expression, "man is a recipient of life," seems to be peculiar to the New Church theology; for I have not met with it in my reading.

M.—It is a grand truth taught in Swedenborg's theological works, which are the Writings of the New Church, given by the LORD through the instrumentality of the man, Swedenborg. You asked me to give you a start in the direction of the investigation of the System of Truth contained in these Writings; and I will here repeat that in my opinion it is desirable for you to

begin with one of the theological works.

I.—Very good; I am willing to follow your directions, and give the matter a fair trial, and see how I shall get along in my explorations of these new realms of thought.

M.—Lest I should make an erroneous impression upon your mind at the outset, permit me to say here, that Swedenborg, in all his scientific and philosophical works, acknowledges God, the Infinite, the Divine, as the Creator of the universe. He teaches, moreover, the most comprehensive idea, that the entire glorious fabric of Creation is momentarily upheld by the Divine Omnipotence.

I.—I remember seeing a statement to the effect that Swedenborg was a devout Christian Philosopher, a man similar, in this respect, to Sir Isaac Newton.

M.—Yes; a spirit of humility, and of the utmost reverence for the Divine Being, pervades all of Swedenborg's philosophical works. For example, in the *Economy of the Animal Kingdom* he says: "God is the Fountain of Life, the Sun of Wisdom, the Spiritual Light, the very Esse and I Am, in whom we live and move and have our being; from whom and for the sake of whom are all things; who is the First and the Last" (vol. ii. No. 238).

I.—It is a grand sentiment; and to my mind very impressive. I have never been satisfied with the philosophy which describes creation to take place by evolution, independently of a personal Creator. The very fact of the existence of human beings, is sufficient to convince me of the revealed truth that there is a Divine Being.

M.—Let me give you another quotation from the *Economy*, and then we shall discuss the point you have suggested; for it is an interesting one. The characteristics of Swedenborg, as a humble-minded Christian Philosopher, are shown by such passages—and there are many of them—as the following: "To be lost in silent astonishment, at the display of the Divine Wisdom, is more becoming our nature, than to overburden ourselves with proofs of its existence. In all the heavens there is nothing, throughout the whole universe there is nothing, but that exhibits, in most palpable signs, the presence of a superintending Deity; so that he who sees nothing in all these evidences, is blinder than a mole and viler than a brute" (vol. ii. No. 267).

I.—We do not find such sentiments in the writings of the scientists of the present day. The theological element seems to be pretty thoroughly eliminated from the philosophy of the day. But when one begins to think about it, it certainly does seem a strange philosophy, to represent creation without a Creator, and to imagine the universe to be without a God. I know there is a something occult which the scientists may call God; but I am speaking of a personal God, the Supreme Being, all of whose attributes are Divine and Infinite, according to what is revealed to us in the Scriptures.

M.—In his *Principia*, Swedenborg says: "True philosophy, and contempt of Deity, are two opposites." In another place he observes: "He who is possessed of scientific knowledges, and is merely skilled in experiment, has taken only the first step to wisdom." Again, in the same work: "Man's highest wisdom consists in a proper knowledge of his relation to the Infinite." And again he admonishes his reader in these words: "In all thy contemplations, remember, that if thou wouldest be great, thy greatness must consist in this,—to worship and adore Him who is Himself the Greatest and Infinite."

I.—These are certainly grand statements of most sublime truths. And I must confess that they arouse in my mind a strong desire to read and study the books which contain such profound and beautiful sentiments.

M.—They that thirst for rational knowledge may drink at the Fountain of Truth, and be satisfied. Swedenborg's scientific writings are a Fountain of natural truth, from which men shall drink for ages and ages to come. But I have suggested to you to first get a good taste of the waters of spiritual truth by reading one of the theological works.

I.—And if I do this, perhaps it will prepare my mind to appreciate the other all the better afterwards. But tell me, how comes it that the learned world, as it is called, is so oblivious, as it seems to be, of Swedenborg's scientific works? Why do not our modern scientists study them? Surely they could learn much from them.

M.—One reason, I apprehend is, because the minds of modern scientists are, for the most part, occupied with principles which are averse to the fundamental truths expounded in Swedenborg's philosophical works. Their science is a refined materialism; but Swedenborg's philosophy is of a

higher quality, because he always acknowledges the Infinite and the Divine as its Source. Swedenborg teaches that all things of the finite universe are derived from the Infinite. The scientists believe in Evolution, and ascribe creation to Nature; and therefore Swedenborg's philosophy is not congenial to their minds.

I.—Are there any other reasons?

M.—Another reason why Swedenborg's philosophical works do not command more attention in the learned world, doubtless is, because of the popular superstitious notion, that about the time that he began to write on spiritual subjects, Swedenborg became insane, and that his powerful imagination grew extremely fanciful, and that in this peculiar state he had visions and saw spirits, and imagined all that he wrote in his theological works.

I.—Is it not a strange perversity that caused men to circulate so gross a falsehood as the charge of Swedenborg's insanity! It seems to me, from the very little that I know of him, that he must have been one of the most enlightened men that the world has ever seen.

M.—Those who read his Writings with an unprejudiced mind learn very soon that the spirit that has called Swedenborg a madman is the same as that manifested by those who said of the LORD JESUS.-CHRIST: "He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye Him?" (John x. 20). And this was even a more evil spirit than that which caused the Roman Governor to say to the Apostle with a loud voice: "Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad" (Acts xxvi. 24).

I.—In the case of Christ, unprejudiced persons retorted: "These are not the words of Him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?" And Paul replied to the Roman Governor: "I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness."

M.—And in the case of Swedenborg, it may be said: The language he employs is not that of a madman. Could a madman write such Books as he has written? The tree is known by its fruits; but we must taste of it, in order to be able to judge of its quality. Only they that have earnestly, sincerely, and prayerfully studied Swedenborg's Writings are qualified to pronounce a rational judgment as to their character. And all who have thoroughly investigated these Writings have found, by actual experience, that they are of such a nature as to open the eyes of the blind; that is, to enlighten the understandings of those who are in a state of mental and spiritual darkness.

I.—When was Swedenborg born, and how long ago did he publish his scientific works?

M.—Swedenborg was born in Stockholm, Sweden, on January 29th, 1688, and in 1709, when twenty-one years of age, began his literary career, which extended through a period of sixty-three years. He died in London, March 29th, 1772, at the age of eighty-four years. And on October 7th of the same year, in the Royal Academy of Sciences of Stockholm, Chevalier Sandels, Superintendent of the Mines of Sweden, and Knight of the Order of the Polar Star, delivered an Oration or Eulogy upon the illustrious member deceased, at a meeting of the Academy, held in the Great Hall of the House of Nobles. And every word of that memorable Address is in the highest degree favourable to the personal and literary character of Swedenborg.

I.—This being authentic, it certainly establishes the greatness of the man.

M.—His greatness was of the genuine kind. It consisted in his perfect humility. Through his profound studies in science and philosophy, he as a finite being, had attained a proper knowledge of his relation to the Infinite Being. And thus he affirmed that there is "a Deity, the sole Author and Builder of the universe, and of all things in the universe, who is to be revered, to be adored, to be loved, and that the providence of our reason is respectively nothing, while the Providence of his Wisdom is all in all" (*Econ. An. King.*, vol. ii. No. 266).

I.—A little while ago you quoted some passages from the *Principia*. It must also be a grand work. Please tell me something about it.

M.—The *Principia* is a wonderful book. It is the work of a Philosopher, the study of which is calculated to do much in helping to make Philosophers; and, indeed, Philosophers of such a sort as the world stands in need of to-day. The *Principia* will interest, and instruct, and delight the men of even the far distant ages of the future. In it are laid down solid foundation-stones of natural truth. There is elaborated a most comprehensive theory of the creation of the Solar System. He describes the formation of the sun, and then, by means of the sun, the planets and their satellites. The work is not merely speculative, but it is also demonstrative. The author proceeds in a profoundly philosophical manner. He evidently does not expect his reader to

believe what he says because he says it, but because he is teaching the truth on the subject. Accordingly, he gives numerous experiments, by which his theory can be verified and his principles demonstrated.

I.—How does Swedenborg's theory differ from the nebular hypothesis of creation?

M.—The difference is this: According to the nebular hypothesis, creation proceeded from the circumference towards the centre; but according to the *Principia*, creation proceeds from the centre towards the circumference. Thus the two systems are opposites. The former starts with the assumption that the substances of which all the bodies of the solar system are composed, originally existed in the condition of gases, diffused throughout the immensity of space. But the latter begins by teaching that the universal substances of nature are produced by creation from God; that all finite things are evolved out of the inexhaustible fullness of the Infinite Creator, who is the Maker of the heavens and the earths.

M.—I see there is a great difference between the two systems; and it is interesting to have it pointed out. From what you say it appears that Swedenborg gives us a conception of the *origin of matter*, while the nebular hypothesis leaves us in the dark on that point. It does not tell us how the inconceivable volume of original gases came into existence. It assumes, and asks us to take for granted, things that it does not and cannot demonstrate.

M.—When you come to read the *True Christian Religion*, you will find that where he treats of the creation of the universe, Swedenborg says: That the universe, which includes both the spiritual and natural worlds, was created out of the Divine Love by the Divine Wisdom, is clearly shown by all its parts. . . . It is to be observed, however, that Love and Wisdom, which are one in God, are not love and wisdom in an abstract sense, but are in God as a substance; *for God is the very, the only, and consequently the first substance and essence, which is and subsists of itself* (T.C.R. 76).

I.—This is very different from the idea of the creation of the universe out of nothing, as some of the creeds have asserted.

M.—It is both illogical and irrational to imagine that something can be created out of nothing; that entities can be formed out of nonentities; that stupendous suns and ponderous planets, which are substantial bodies, can be produced from anything non-substantial.

I.—I should say so.

M.—But Swedenborg's teaching is agreeable to enlightened reason. God the Creator is a Spirit; but spirit is even more real than matter. Love and Wisdom are in God as a Divine substance. They proceed from Him as heat and light, and form the Sun of Heaven, and create all things of the spiritual universe. And then, out of the Divine Love by the Divine Wisdom, the natural universe was also created. All material substance is derived from spiritual and Divine substance. It could not be formed out of nothing. The sun is the medium-through which the planets were originally formed, and by which they have been kept in existence every moment ever since.

I.—The ancient Philosophers said: *Ex nihilo nihil fit*—Out of nothing nothing is made. They were evidently possessed of far greater wisdom than many in modern times. But please go on with your remarks.

M.—The sun is an orb of fire or heat, and is clothed, as it were, in the garments of light; and is of inconceivable magnitude. The finite mind can no more comprehend the size of the sun than fathom the very infinity of God. The sun is the most perfect representative of the LORD, who is the Sun of Heaven. We read: "The LORD our God is a Sun and shield" (Ps. lxxxiv. 11). Our sun is to the natural universe what the LORD as a Sun is to the spiritual universe; but the natural sun, of course, is created and kept in existence every moment by influx from the Divine Sun. It could not create itself, or exist of itself.

I.—My friend, these are grand ideas. It seems to be a fundamental principle, in Swedenborg's philosophy, that nothing exists of itself but the Divine and the Infinite; and to my mind this is perfectly philosophical.

M.—In the *True Christian Religion*, No. 472, you will find this remarkable statement: "The sun of nature consists of created substances, the activity of which produces fire."

I.—And this reminds me of the scientific axiom, that *heat is a mode of motion*. But Swedenborg accounts for the cause of motion as he accounts for the origin of matter. You said, a moment ago, that the natural sun was kept in existence by influx from the Divine Sun. By influx I

presume you mean the operation of the Divine, in the act of creating and sustaining the universe? This is my understanding of it.

M.—Your definition is correct. In the beginning of the *Principia*, Swedenborg lays down fundamental principles, from which, and according to which, he elaborates his theory of the creation. He begins with what he calls the *simple, or first natural point*, and then traces the origin and development of things by a gradual and orderly progression. He employs such terms as *finites, actives, passives, elementaries*, and proceeds, logically and philosophically, all the way from beginning to end. And finally he gives us a beautiful picture of the planet as an earth adorned with innumerable forms of beauty and of use, occupied by the great variety of animals, and inhabited by the crowning handiwork of the Creator, man, who is endowed with the immortal faculties of mind, and exclaims: "O man, how happy, thrice happy thy destiny, to be born to the joys both of earth and of heaven."

I.—And I suppose he defines his terms in such a way that they are quite intelligible?

M.—I will give you his own definition of the *first natural point*. He says: "It is produced by motion from the Infinite; and is the medium between the Infinite and the finite." He also says: "It is the same as the mathematical point, or the first *ens* of geometry; and is the origin of every finite body." The natural point from which the creation of the universe began is further defined as consisting of pure motion. And the most perfect figure of motion is the perpetual-circular, or spiral. It cannot be demonstrated by geometry; but it contains the potency of all production. The whole *cosmos* is a pure system of mechanism, and is incipient in the natural point.

I.—These definitions are rather abstruse to suit my comprehension; but they must be interesting when a person once learns to understand them.

M.—To the student of these things they become intelligible, and exceedingly interesting. Our Philosopher gives his ardent reader the most sublime conceptions, showing how, from the natural point, the solar vortex was produced; how motion resulted in the composition of the first finite; how finites became actives, and actives evolved elementaries; thus, how the sun was created, how by a gradual process the enormous volume of matter originated, of which our planetary system is composed. It is illustrated by comprehensive diagrams, showing how the original volume of matter, in a fluid condition, became disrupted, forming larger and smaller globes, which moved away from the parent sun, found their respective orbits, passed through marvellous and innumerable changes, and finally became habitable earths.

I.—And you think that, in his *Principia*, Swedenborg has actually given to the world a true theory of creation?

M.—I can see no reason for doubting it. In fact, the more one studies the work, and the more one comes to understand it, the grander and more convincing it becomes. But I had no intention of taking up so much of your time with the consideration of these matters. We have naturally drifted into this subject.

I.—And I am very glad of it, because it is to me one of the most interesting subjects you could dwell upon.

M.—Such discussions are useful, because they are a wholesome exercise of the mind, and tend to expand our thoughts, and to give us more elevated ideas respecting the LORD our Creator.

M.—You have presented some wonderful ideas concerning the sun. The astronomers to-day believe that the sun is an orb of fire. But formerly they held a very different theory, viz. that the sun was an opaque body. So it goes. The theories of one generation of scientists have been exploded by the discoveries of the succeeding generation.

M.—Your mention of the point with regard to the sun is opportune; because it brings to our notice the remarkable fact, of how Swedenborg's theory has recently been corroborated. He published his *Principia* in the year 1734,—more than one hundred and fifty years ago,—in which he teaches, and philosophically demonstrates, that the sun is pure fire. In his theological works he frequently states that the sun is fire. And now we find that the advance of science has brought men to the same standpoint, as that occupied by Swedenborg a century and a quarter before they found out this natural truth.

I.—It is certainly a striking fact; and it seems that Swedenborg's science and theology are in harmony with each other. And this is to me an interesting point. It gives one greater confidence to enter into an investigation of his Writings.

M.—In his scientific writings Swedenborg teaches genuine natural truths. By the help and guidance of the Divine Providence, he was enabled to go through the whole circle of the sciences. He wrote on all subjects involving the laws and forces, the operations and phenomena, the progress and development, of the material universe. In his scientific works alone, Swedenborg accomplished an amazing task. And we always find him reasonable, consistent, profound, and truly philosophical. Thus was the Philosopher prepared to become also a Theologian: thus was he fitted for that higher mission to which he was afterwards called, of being a Revelator of spiritual and Divine Truth.

I.—Has the advance of science also verified Swedenborg in other particulars?

M.—Yes; he wrote much upon the subject of Anatomy,—sufficient to make about a dozen large volumes. And the Rev. Dr. R.L. Tafel, of London, the learned translator of Swedenborg's work on the Brain, which is now being published, gives us (if I rightly remember) a list of eighteen discoveries in Anatomy alone, all of which have been accredited to more recent writers. Another instance just occurs to me. The discovery of the theory of what is termed *the translatory motion of the stars*, is generally ascribed to Sir William Herschel. But Swedenborg treats of the subject in his *Principia*, describing that grand law in most sublime language. And Swedenborg's work was published in the year 1734, while Herschel was not born until 1738.

I.—Is it possible? According to these facts Swedenborg has not received the credit which is due to him, as an original investigator and discoverer of the laws, operations, and facts of nature.

M.—I will give you, in his own words, Swedenborg's conception of the translatory motion of the stars. He says: "The whole sidereal heaven is one large sphere, constituted of innumerable solar systems or vortices, moving in harmonious order, in accordance with their axes" (*Principia*, vol. ii. p. 231). This is the theory in a nut-shell; and he explains it in most eloquent terms, his thoughts soaring to the highest flights, and his mental vision sweeping through the boundless immensity of space, and beholding the movements of the countless suns and systems of worlds, which compose the glorious and stupendous universe.

I.—What a mighty intellect, and what a marvellous intuition, and clear-sighted mental vision, the man must have possessed! Surely he must have been all that his greatest admirers have claimed for him, namely, that he was pre-eminently *the Philosopher*, the greatest genius that has ever appeared upon the face of the earth.

M.—Men who never even accepted Swedenborg's teachings as a Theologian, have been profoundly impressed with his writings as a Philosopher. Emerson says: "His writings would be a sufficient library for a lonely and athletic student. Not every man can read them, but they will reward him who can. The grandeur of the topics, makes the grandeur of the style. One of the missourians and mastodons of literature, he is not to be measured by whole colleges of ordinary scholars."

I.—A handsome tribute, from one who is regarded by many as an eminent authority.

M.—In speaking of the *Economy of the Animal Kingdom*—Nos. 208 and 214—Coleridge remarks: "I remember nothing in Lord Bacon superior, few passages equal, either in depth of thought, or in richness, dignity, or felicity of diction, or in the weightiness of the truths contained in these articles. I can venture to assert that as a moralist Swedenborg is above all praise; and that as a naturalist, psychologist, and theologian, he has strong and varied claims, on the gratitude and admiration of the professional and philosophical faculties."

I.—From this it would appear that Coleridge was a decided believer in Swedenborg.

M.—It does seem so; and the fact is, that no sincere seeker and lover of the truth can study Swedenborg's works without being profoundly impressed by them. There are no other books like them extant.

I.—I believe many eminent men have expressed themselves in favour of Swedenborg in plain terms.

M.—Many of those who were great men, in the highest sense of the word, have been believers in his Writings; and have been grateful to the LORD for His goodness and mercy in raising up such a man, and in doing what He has done through his instrumentality. I could give you many quotations from the writings of eminent men in which this is shown. The pious Fletcher, for example, said: "Swedenborg arose at a time when some manifestation of God was needed by the world—an age of corrupt morals and stagnant faith—an age when the life had exhaled from the

Churches. . . . He was of all men I have met with the calmest, wisest, deepest. He was a profound scholar, a true Christian, a loyal subject, a magnificent poet, an unrivalled philosopher, and a little child."

I.—An extraordinary combination of qualities, such as are not generally found in the same individual.

M.—The Rev. Paxton Hood, among many most emphatic statements in favour of Swedenborg, declared that "his learning was boundless, and that in science his knowledge was imperial on almost every subject." And Thorild, a celebrated Swedish poet and metaphysician, says: "What are we to think of this truly extraordinary man? That he was a fool, say those little men, whose good opinion never did good to any man. That he was an arch-heretic, bawls Orthodoxy, with loud and ferocious voice. What the philosopher sees in him is a man of vast and consummate learning, an honour and glory to his nation, who preserved the veneration for his genius by the truly apostolical simplicity and purity of his morals."

I.—It seems an easy matter for you to bring evidence to establish the good character of the man in every particular.

M.—There is not the least difficulty in doing this. But this sort of evidence, which is of an external nature, is not really necessary. Because those who read the Writings from pure motives find out soon enough that the internal evidence of the truths they unfold is quite sufficient to satisfy them. The reception of genuine truth always produces a rational conviction in the human mind. You do not doubt the fact that three times four are twelve. Why should you doubt it, and stop to reason, in order to decide whether it is true? You do not doubt as to the form of the earth after you have learned to understand that it is a sphere. You are positive that the earth is round and not flat, notwithstanding the appearance of the contrary to the senses.

I.—These things illustrate to me the idea of a rational conviction in the natural mind. And do you think that it is possible for a person to be in like manner rationally convinced, as to the truth of a thing, in the spiritual mind?

M.—I certainly do think so. You said, near the beginning of our talk, that the very fact of the existence of human beings was sufficient to convince you of the revealed truth that there is a Divine Being. This is a conviction in your spiritual mind. Perhaps it is produced in this way: You believe the revealed truth that there is a God, the Infinite, the Creator. Then you look at a finite creature—a man. He exists, and is endowed with distinctively human faculties. He did not bring himself into existence, nor did his parents create him. The forces of nature—electricity, magnetism, heat, and light—did not form him, develop his body and mind, and bestow upon him reason and volition, thought and affection. The man could not be produced by evolution, any more than a watch or sewing-machine or locomotive. You conclude, accordingly, that God created him, and endowed him with the faculties and attributes which characterise him as a human being. Thus it is a rational conviction with you, that, as Swedenborg says, the Divine Being is "the sole Author and Builder of the universe, and of all things in the universe, who is to be revered, to be adored, and to be loved."

I.—I never before followed a line of argument of this kind; but it seems to me the correct method of reaching a rational conclusion about the matter. I do not doubt the existence of God, any more than I doubt my own existence; and it is to me an unspeakable satisfaction, to be able to realize this conviction. There are a thousand things to convince one that there is an Infinite Creator of the universe, and of all things and all beings in the universe. Surely it is not according to sound reason, to affirm that any material forces and substances could, of themselves, produce such a marvellous being as man is, when fully considered as to his physical and mental constitution.

M.—The Evolution Theories of our modern scientists are very apt to lead men to reject the grand truth of the existence of a Personal Creator, revealed to us in the Scriptures. And the consequence is, that they drift into all sorts of fallacious reasonings, such as ascribing creation to Nature, and the endless string of imaginary nonsense which is naturally spun out from that idea. There is, indeed, a true doctrine of Evolution. And according to the true doctrine, which is a rational philosophy, Evolution is God's method of creating and perfecting His universe.—But the time has come for us to bring our present discussion to a close.

I.—Then, I hope we shall have an opportunity to continue it at no distant day. But I should like

one more question answered concerning Swedenborg— Did he believe in the Scriptures as a Divine Revelation, while he was a natural Philosopher?

M.—It gives me great pleasure to be able to answer this question in the affirmative. On page 37 of the first volume of the *Principia*, he says: "True philosophy detracts nothing from the credibility of miracles." And on page 49 of the same volume he says: "Whatever receives confirmation from Scripture, must necessarily be true." He evidently means that this is the case according to a reasonable interpretation of Scripture. And in the *Economy of the Animal Kingdom* he also says: That we are forbidden by Holy Scripture to doubt that God is the Fountain of Life, the I Am, the First and the Last, from whom are all things. There is, therefore, no doubt but that Swedenborg, while a Philosopher, had a profound veneration for the Scriptures, the spiritual sense of which he was employed to reveal after he became a Theologian.

XI SWEDENBORG, THE THEOLOGIAN.

INQUIRER.—At the close of our talk about Swedenborg as a Philosopher, some time ago, you stated that he always had a great veneration for the Sacred Scriptures, the spiritual sense of which he was the means of revealing, after he became a theologian.

MISSIONARY.—And I presume you have thus far not met with anything that gave you cause for doubting the statement.

I.—No; I have found good reasons for believing that it is perfectly true. I have been reading the *True Christian Religion* since we last met, and it certainly is, as you assured me, a very grand and profound book. There is an immense amount of instruction in it on important subjects. There are wonderful revelations of spiritual things on every page. Surely, the man: must have been inspired, to be able to write as he did.

M.—I am delighted to hear you express yourself in such terms. It is to me exceedingly gratifying, to learn that you have been so decidedly interested in the work. I felt certain that you would like it; and that was the reason why I recommended you to read it.

I.—It is doubtful whether there is a book in existence that would have been better adapted to the state of my mind at the time.

M.—And therefore the Divine Providence furnished that very book for your perusal. The LORD knows: infinitely better what we stand in need of than we do ourselves. If we are disposed to "search the Scriptures," that we may learn concerning the way of salvation and eternal life, the LORD will surely provide for all our spiritual wants. He does not neglect any of His creatures.

I.—Yes; I am beginning to realize that it is far better to trust in the Divine Providence, than in our own prudence. It is very evident that we cannot provide for our own spiritual wants. The *True Christian Religion* has taught me more about the character and attributes of our heavenly Father, during the past few months, than I had hoped ever to learn in this world. The LORD is indeed merciful and gracious, to furnish us with such means of spiritual instruction, as are given in the volume I have been reading.

M.—Is it not wonderful that an octogenarian could write such a book?

I.—Do you mean to tell me that Swedenborg was eighty years of age when he wrote that book?

M.—Yes; he was about eighty when he began to write it.

I.—Marvellous! How was it possible?

M.—He did it by the Divine aid and guidance; for Swedenborg as a Theologian was the servant of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and this pre-eminently. He did not write these spiritual books from his own ordinary intelligence. When we become familiar with his theological works, and learn how much he wrote; when we consider the nature of his writings, and find out how profound they are, we are led to conclude that it would have been just as impossible for Swedenborg to develop such a system of truth as they contain from his own intelligence, as it would have been to create a universe by his own power.

I.—Your comparison is a strong one; but as you know whereof you speak, I am not disposed to gainsay it. If Swedenborg did not write the books from his own ordinary intelligence, he must have been in some way endowed with an extraordinary measure of spiritual wisdom. And to my mind it is quite evident that such was the case. As I said before, the man must have been inspired to write as he did.

M.—That is the truth of the matter: he wrote under Divine inspiration. He was the chosen instrument through whom the LORD revealed the spiritual sense of the Word, and spiritual knowledges concerning all things that come within the scope of human experience, By means of this Divine Revelation the LORD effected His Second Coming spiritually; for, in the nature of things, He cannot come again into the world personally, and be actually visible to the bodily eyes of men.

I.—I suppose most people would reject the idea of Swedenborg having been inspired?

M.—Yes; but their rejecting it does not alter the truth of the matter. The beheading of John the Baptist did not prevent the LORD from accomplishing the Divine work of Redemption, and then, by means of His Apostles, promulgating the doctrines of Christianity, and establishing the Primitive Church. Nor will the rejection of the fact of Swedenborg's Mission, on the part of

some, or even on the part of large numbers of men, prevent the LORD from carrying forward the Divine work begun at His Second Advent. The LORD will provide the men and the means necessary for the dissemination of His Everlasting Gospel, and thus for the establishment of His New Church, signified by the New Jerusalem in the Apocalypse.

I.—You seem to feel confident that the LORD on high is mightier than all the adverse influences that can possibly arise; and that the fact that Swedenborg was an inspired and Divinely-chosen Servant of the LORD will ever remain.

M.—I do most fully believe that "the LORD God Omnipotent reigneth," and that He will, henceforth and even for ever, establish His Divine Kingdom on the earth. This Kingdom is the Church of the New Jerusalem, which, according to His own declaration, He will build upon the Rock of Eternal Truth, that the gates of hell may never prevail against it.

I.—In the prophecy of Daniel the same thing appears to be taught, where (Dan. vii. 13, 14) it is said that the LORD'S dominion is of an Age that shall not pass away, and His Kingdom that which shall not perish.

M.—As to Swedenborg, it is quite evident that he was inspired. The student of his Writings finds that he never takes any credit to himself, or claims any merit for what he has done. In the *Arcana* he frequently uses the expression, "by the Divine mercy of the LORD,"—such and such things shall be explained. He always ascribes the theological works to the LORD, the Divine Teacher, and not to himself. He declares that the books were written by the LORD, through him,—in a Sketch of an Ecclesiastical History.

I.—I have noticed in my reading that he keeps himself as much in the background as possible, evidently desiring to be regarded as merely an instrument in the hands of the LORD.

M.—In the course of his preparation for his super-eminent mission, Swedenborg passed through many wonderful, and some very severe, experiences. He was enabled to attain a state of absolute self-humiliation before the LORD—that is, to regard himself as nothing, and to acknowledge the LORD as All in all. The Divine Providence so overruled the circumstances of his life, that he was prepared to be a suitable Human Instrument, through whom the LORD could accomplish His most beneficent designs on behalf of the human race. And finally he adopted this motto: "God's will be done; I am Thine and not mine." Thus, by the Divine mercy, he reached a state of such human perfection, that he desired to do the LORD'S will, and not his own. And therefore he said: "As I have given myself from myself to the LORD, He may dispose of me after His own pleasure."

I.—He was surely most highly favoured of mortals.

M.—He was, it is true; but he passed through very dark hours of temptation and mental conflict, in which his sufferings were most intense. But spiritual temptation is the only means of attaining a state of spiritual purification. Our LORD Himself could not be glorified without passing through temptations; and man cannot be regenerated, without enduring, in a finite measure, what the LORD suffered in an infinite degree in the Human He assumed. In the preparation for his mission as a theologian, therefore, Swedenborg was not exempt of these things. It was necessary for him to pass through the fires of affliction, in the form of direful mental sufferings. These were caused by combats with the evil influences from the regions of darkness, where dwelt the infernal genii that would delight in man's spiritual destruction, if their insane desires could only be accomplished.

I.—So the LORD protected him, that he should receive no harm, but that he might pass through the ordeal and come out purified as gold—the dross of sin, selfishness, and all the imperfections of human nature being removed from him.

M.—You have expressed the idea correctly. While Swedenborg's preparation for his mission as a theologian was progressing, he wrote: "I was at last able to see that the Divine Providence governed the acts of my life uninterruptedly from my very youth, and directed them in such a manner, that by means of the knowledge of natural things I was enabled to reach a state of intelligence, and thus, by the Divine mercy of God-Messiah, to serve as an instrument for opening those things which are hidden interiorly in the Word of God-Messiah" (Adv. iii. 839).

I.—These things respecting Swedenborg's preparation for his mission are to me exceedingly interesting. And what has surprised me all along is, that so great a philosopher as Swedenborg was, should become a theologian. I am sure very few of our modern philosophers are disposed

to become theologians. It looks as if they were more inclined to confirm themselves in naturalism and materialism, and to reject the Scriptures as a Divine Revelation altogether.

M.—You are quite right; and it is much to be regretted that so many repudiate the sublime truths of the Word, which are now given to the world by the Revelation of the Internal Sense. Swedenborg tells us that, by means of the knowledge of natural things, he was enabled to reach a state of intelligence. But this was not a state of mere natural intelligence. Mere worldly wisdom, without any acknowledgment of the wisdom that is from above, does not amount to much. To receive the wisdom that is from above is to acknowledge the Word as a Divine Revelation from God, who is the Fountain of all Wisdom.

I.—You understand, then, that by means of natural knowledge, Swedenborg was enabled to attain a state of spiritual intelligence?

M.—Yes; and the more that he progressed in a knowledge of natural things, the greater became his devotion to the Supreme Being, and the more perfect his veneration for the Sacred Scriptures. This we learn from his writings of the scientific period of his life in general, and also from his correspondence.

I.—It is very remarkable. The more one learns about the man, the more extraordinary does the character that was developed in him appear to have been.

M.—No man could become such a theologian as Swedenborg became without first being a thorough student, a profound investigator, a genuine philosopher. It was necessary for him to understand scientific and natural truths, in order that the LORD could afterwards use him as a Revelator of spiritual and Divine Truth. By means of a knowledge of natural things, his mind became so enlightened,—acquired so comprehensive a grasp of things,—that he understood the laws and principles in general underlying the universal realm of effects, which comprises the entire fabric of the physical creation; for all natural or material existences are effects.

I.—And then he also became acquainted with the realm of causes, which enabled him to understand things immensely better than before.

M.—Yes; he experienced the wonderful state of the opening of his spiritual senses, and the consequent intromission into the spiritual world, which is, as you say, the realm of causes. With regard to this change in his state, he makes use of the beautiful expression: "Heaven was opened to me." And in the same connection he says: "The LORD has also granted me to love truths in a spiritual manner—that is, to love them, not for the sake of honour, nor for the sake of gain, but for the sake of the truths themselves; for he who loves truths for the sake of truth sees them from the LORD, because the LORD is the Way and the Truth."

I.—What a beautiful passage that is! Such sentiments show very plainly that he was a thoroughly good man; that, indeed, he had attained a state of life approaching angelic perfection. His Writings are very different from anything we meet with in the whole range of literature, so far as my knowledge extends.

M.—There are no other works on religious subjects that are so profound, rational, systematic, and comprehensive. They are in harmony with all the Sacred Scriptures, being a Revelation of their internal meaning. And thus they are a Divine Revelation, which illustrates and gives rational interpretations of all preceding Revelations. In these Writings the mysteries of the kingdom of God are explained. The problems which had been dark and incomprehensible to men for many ages, are solved by that Divine Science of all sciences, that of Correspondence, which shows the relations existing between things material and natural and things spiritual and heavenly.

I.—Your affirmations are somewhat startling; but I am not prepared to offer any objections to them.

M.—If you have objections, I want you to feel in perfect freedom to state them. I do not wish to be dogmatic at all; but as New Churchmen we are generally rather decided in our views, and regard it as our privilege to express them in plain terms. But our doctrines teach us toleration, which is an element in the principle of charity, and therefore we should always be willing to accord to others the same privileges which we claim for ourselves.

I.—A very commendable spirit. In fact, no man can be a genuine Christian without it. However, I like people who have convictions, and are not afraid to express them in a decided way. There is such a definiteness in the truths as taught in Swedenborg's works, that there seems to be a

natural tendency to make his readers decided in their views. And I heartily wish there were more people who read these works, so as to get this kind of culture. It would no doubt be a very wholesome thing for the world in general.

M.—Very true; the principles taught in the Writings are precisely what the world stands in need of to-day. The grand, the fundamental, principles of the Christian Religion, of love to God and of charity toward the neighbour, are nowhere expounded in such comprehensive terms, as in the Writings of the New Church. And if these were universally taught and practised, the world would be in a very different state, morally and spiritually,—yes, in every conceivable way,—from what it is at the present moment.

I.—There is not the least doubt of that. In fact, there is a great lack of both love to God and charity toward the neighbour, now-a-days,—of which we have painful evidence, when we observe human society as it is in its various aspects.

M.—The world has made some progress, it is true. The New Jerusalem is descending from God out of heaven. We are living in the early dawning of a New Age, which was prophetically represented in the Apocalyptic visions of John. He that sits upon the Throne will make all things new; and old things are bound to pass away. The old systems are now being shaken, from the circumference to the very centre. There are moral earthquakes as well as mundane ones; spiritual convulsions as well as natural cyclones. It is as certain as the existence of the Omnipotent, that there are mighty spiritual influences at work, which are Divinely directed, and will gradually bring about great changes in the affairs of the nations. Disorder, injustice, and oppression, will slowly but surely disappear, giving place to vastly improved and more desirable conditions of human society.

I.—According to our senses the physical earth stands still, though we know by education that it moves at a tremendous velocity. Perhaps, if we were sufficiently instructed as to the operation of the Divine Providence, to realize it, we should know that the world moves with greater speed, spiritually, than we are apt to imagine. The longer I live the more settled becomes my belief in the wise and merciful overrulings of the Divine Providence. It is an unspeakable comfort, to know—to realize without any misgivings—that the LORD reigneth; and that He provides the best things that can be, on behalf of the human race.

M.—Yes; it is a blessed thing to be able to acknowledge the Lord as the Supreme Ruler of the universe, our Father in the heavens, who provides for the highest well-being of all His children, conferring upon them the greatest possible good, in time and in eternity.

I.—I should like to get a little more information about the extraordinary subject of our talk. Judging from the immense quantity, and the superior quality, of Swedenborg's scientific and philosophical writings, he must have been well advanced in years, when he began to write on theological subjects.

M.—He was about fifty-five years of age, when he first experienced the opening of his spiritual senses. This was in the year 1743. He then began to look into theological matters, and in the following two years, that is, in 1744-5, published the last of his philosophical works that were ever published by himself. These were the *Animal Kingdom* and the *Worship and Love of God*. Swedenborg then began to apply all his extraordinary powers of mind to the study of the Sacred Scriptures. He read the Bible through several times in the original, thus making himself perfectly familiar with the Hebrew language. He passed through many strange mental and spiritual experiences, to which I have already referred. The diabolical spirits,—or spirits of a similar kind,—that attempted to destroy the Lord our Saviour after He came into the world, also strongly opposed the Lord's Servant, in the insane desire to prevent him, if possible, from performing his mission. But he was Divinely protected from the most direful assaults of his spiritual enemies. The LORD was with him continually. Faithfully and well did he serve his Divine LORD and Master, in that highest Office which it has ever fallen to the lot of any man to fill. For he was the Human Instrument, chosen and especially prepared, through whom the LORD accomplished the most sublime work of making a Revelation of the Internal Sense of the Word, and thus of effecting His Second Advent spiritually.

I.—It is evident that a Human Instrument was necessary to accomplish this work; and a marvellous work it was. You regard Swedenborg's Theological Writings as a Divine Revelation, and I have no reason to doubt that they are. And this involves the idea that he was inspired, to be

able to write these Books. Will you now allow me to ask, for the sake of information, how you substantiate the fact of Swedenborg's inspiration? This is a point of great interest to me, and I shall be very thankful if you will make it clear.

M.—I will with the greatest of pleasure try to do so. And in the first place let me say that I have been a reader of Swedenborg's theological works for a period of thirty years; and the more that I have studied them the firmer has become my conviction that they are the LORD'S own Writings for His New Church. They are true, harmonious, instructive, and elevating,—satisfying to the demands of the intellect, and to the inmost desires and needs of man's spiritual nature. They contain,—or, rather, they are,—a grand, glorious, and stupendous system of Divine Truth. Some men have imagined that they found contradictions in them; but this was simply on account of misapprehension on the part of the reader.

I.—It is evident that the student can only by degrees learn to understand the principles of a system so grand and new and comprehensive.

M.—Yes; the acquirement of genuine truths is necessarily a gradual process. And the teachings in the Writings are so interior and profound, that few in this age are able to fully understand them. There are many things that are beyond our comprehension; but this need not disturb us. We may well be grateful to the LORD that we are permitted to receive these Heavenly Doctrines in a measure, according to our ability. Divine Truth is infinite, and we can merely receive it in a finite way. If, for example, we cannot fully comprehend the miraculous process of growth, by which the Creator forms the smallest flower that helps to beautify the face of Nature, and to cheer the world, how can we expect, with our limited knowledge of spiritual things, to understand all the ideas involved in the deep *arcana* that are revealed in the Writings of Swedenborg? We should be content to understand things, according to the measure of our ability, and also according to our spiritual need for the time being. The experiences of life will open our minds more and more interiorly, if we apply our knowledges to uses for the sake of the well-being of others.

I.—It is true that with all created things there are connected mysteries we cannot fathom. And since it is so with regard to natural things, it must surely also be so as to spiritual things.

M.—Most decidedly. But I must come to the point and try to give a reply to your question as to Swedenborg's inspiration. In the first place, then, I regard the Writings as given to the world by the LORD, through the instrumentality of His Servant, Swedenborg. It follows, therefore, that all that is written in the Books is true; and their own internal evidence is quite sufficient to demonstrate this. Thus we are in a position to go to the Writings themselves, and see what they say respecting Swedenborg's inspiration. Because, if we receive the truths they teach about things Divine in general, to be consistent we shall also believe what they say in this particular.

I.—Your position seems to be both logical and reasonable. And I presume you can give us the passages which answer my question?

M.—In the Preface to the *Apocalypse Revealed*, Swedenborg says: "Any one may see that the Apocalypse could not possibly be explained but by the LORD alone. . . . Think not, therefore, that anything there given is from myself, or from any angel, but from the LORD alone." In the *Apocalypse Explained*, No. 1183, he also says that nothing was written in the Books except what came from the LORD.

I.—This being true, what he wrote comes to us with the weight of Divine authority. He says he wrote nothing but what was communicated to him from the LORD alone. Do you understand that what was communicated to him from the LORD, was by inspiration?

M.—Yes; in the *True Christian Religion* this is plainly stated. We read: "That the Second Coming of the LORD is effected by means of a man, before whom He has manifested Himself in Person, and *whom he has filled with His Spirit*, to teach the doctrines of the New Church from Himself by means of the Word" (T.C.R. 779).

I.—There we have it. That is plain enough. The expression, that the LORD filled him with His Spirit, can mean nothing more nor less than inspiration.

M.—That Swedenborg was inspired, no New Churchman doubts or denies. But, of course, we understand that there are different degrees of inspiration. The Prophets and Evangelists wrote as the LORD dictated to them through spirits or angels whom He filled with His Holy Spirit. But Swedenborg "received revelation immediately from the LORD Himself, who dictated to him

what to write by influx into his internal thought."

I.—According to this Swedenborg was inspired in a higher sense than the Prophets.

M.—The Prophets were the means through whom the LORD gave the letter of the Word; while through Swedenborg the LORD gave a revelation of the Internal Sense of the Word.

Swedenborg's state was that of illumination, as well as of inspiration. He understood all that he wrote. He understood rationally the relation of all the truths taught in his Writings, from the lowest to the highest. The spiritual sense of the Word was dictated to him, as he says in the *Arcana*, AC 6597; but he comprehended it in every particular. The Prophets, on the other hand, did not understand anything of the internal sense. They wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, that is, the Angel of the LORD spoke the Word to the Prophets, being filled with the Holy Spirit; and they were inspired to write exactly what the Lord desired should be written.

I.—I must say that you are making out a clear case for Swedenborg's inspiration. And it seems to me that we can read the Writings, and receive the beautiful and profound truths that are in them communicated to us, with far greater confidence when we understand this, than we can when we regard him as writing from his own intelligence like an ordinary commentator. That he was infinitely more than a commentator; that he was, as you claim, a Revelator, is quite evident to my mind; for no other man ever wrote as he did.

M.—The LORD, in His Divine mercy, in past ages raised up many faithful servants, whom He filled with a greater or less measure of His Spirit; but no other individual, of whom human history gives us any record, was ever inspired in the degree that Swedenborg was. There have been hosts employed in ministering in heavenly things among men. The LORD has provided for His Kingdom on the earth in every age. He has always had servants to do His will on behalf of His children; but those who earnestly study the Word and the Writings learn that Swedenborg was indeed pre-eminently the LORD'S Servant.

I.—And yet he was, in one sense, not more than any other man in the sight of the LORD.

M.—The LORD is "no respecter of persons; and He does not, really, favour some men more highly than others, although it appears so, because some are enabled to perform more eminent uses than others.

I.—I do not see any reason why we should not regard Swedenborg as having been inspired. There are many things in the *True Christian Religion* which it would, as it seems to me, be quite impossible for a man to write in an ordinary state of mind. There is nothing of the nature of speculation; at least, I have met nothing of the kind. He says *it is so*—puts everything in a strongly affirmative light. He speaks as one having knowledge, and therefore authority. It is marvellous how he opens up things to one's understanding. There is no such a thing as *blind faith* with Swedenborg! No such thing as ignoring reason, or keeping it under subjection to any dogma; but every page filled with glorious truths which tend to enlighten the reason, to stimulate thought, and to cultivate all the faculties and powers of the mind.

M.—Swedenborg does not leave his readers to labour under a misapprehension as regards the state in which he was while he wrote. He does not wish any one to think that his own opinions merely are given in the Writings. And therefore he so often mentions the matter, that men may ascribe all things that he was the means of doing, to the LORD alone. He says: "No spirit dared, neither would any angel, instruct me about anything in the Word, or any teaching derived from the Word; but the LORD alone taught me and illuminated me" (D.P. 135). And more than twenty years after he began writing on theology, he made the following statement to the Royal Librarian in Stockholm: "When I think of what I am to write, and while I am writing, I am gifted with a *perfect inspiration*; formerly this would have been my own, but now I am certain that what I write is the living truth of God" (*Documents concerning Swedenborg*, Doc. 251, No. 7).

I.—The subject is becoming plainer. I see that in the Writings we have the LORD'S own true interpretation of the Divine Word. And what a blessed thing it would be, if the religious teachers of Christendom were to read these Writings, have their minds enlightened by means of them, and then preach the pure Divine Truth which is therein revealed.

M.—If they were to do this, there would be more spiritual enlightenment, it is true. But the fact of the matter is, that the pure Divine Truth is not what is desired by many in this materialistic age. Our LORD spoke of people who "loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were

evil." And there are too many, even at this day, to whom the "darkness" of falsity is more congenial than the "light" of truth; evidently because their ruling loves are not of a heavenly nature.

I.—I should now like to ask whether there are any intimations given, in the literal sense of the Scriptures, that there should be made a revelation of the spiritual sense?

M.—There are many passages that imply this. We read, for example: "The glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together" (Isa. xl. 5). The *glory* is the spiritual sense of the Word. To be *revealed* means to be made known; and to be *seen*, means its being rationally understood. The expression, "all flesh," means all the qualities of good, with which the principles of truth can be united, in the process of regeneration.

I.—Are there any other passages that have a bearing on the question?

M.—Yes; with reference to His Second Advent, the LORD says: "They shall see the Son of Man, coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory" (Matt. xxiv. 30). This does not mean that the LORD will come personally into this natural world, to raise from the graves the dead bodies of men, and to execute a Judgment. But it treats of the Second Coming of the LORD in a spiritual manner. The Son of Man is the LORD as to the Divine Truth. Coming means revelation from the LORD, and concerning Him. The clouds of heaven symbolise the literal sense of the Word; and the power and great glory are the internal and spiritual sense of the Word.

I.—It is a beautiful explanation. But give us, if you please, a few more passages.

M.—There are many things in the Scriptures that are applicable to your question. The LORD, when He was in the world, said to His disciples: "I have yet many things to say unto you; but ye cannot bear them now." And again in the same chapter it is recorded that He said to them: "These things have I spoken unto you in parables; but the hour cometh when I shall no more speak unto you in parables, but shall show you plainly of the Father" (John xvi. 12, 25).

I.—These significant words of the Divine Teacher evidently had direct reference to further revelations of spiritual things, to be made in a then future age of the world.

M.—There is no doubt of it. The promises made by the LORD, in the memorable words just quoted from John, have been fulfilled, and that most abundantly. In the heavenly doctrines of the New Jerusalem, which have been given to the world through the instrumentality of Emanuel Swedenborg, the LORD

does say "many things" to His disciples to-day, which at the time He was on earth as the Saviour they could not "bear"—that is, receive intelligently; because they were as yet too natural-minded. And in these Doctrines the LORD no more speaks in parables, using the style of language in which the Divine Word is written—the heavenly language of Correspondences; but He shows plainly the real import of the wonderful things written in the sacred Volume.

I.—So you think "the hour," or state of the world, to which the LORD alluded has come? and the mysteries of the kingdom of God are more plainly revealed, because some, at least, can receive and appreciate them?

M.—That is precisely the truth of the matter. And the number of those who can and do receive and appreciate them, is continually increasing. There are those who utterly repudiate the irrational dogmas which during past ages were foisted upon the world as pure Gospel Truth. They discover how absurd; and unscriptural are many of the doctrines generally taught. Some grow indifferent to doctrines and creeds of every description. Some "progress in thought" to such an extent as to go into naturalism, agnosticism, infidelity, or atheism. But it is a great comfort to know that there are also some who desire to learn the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, respecting religious subjects.

I.—And if they will go to the Writings, they will find the truth, as I can declare from my own experience of the past few months. A friend said to me the other day: "If these Swedenborgian doctrines are so grand and beautiful as you seem to think, why were they not revealed ages before Swedenborg's time?" And I replied: "The reason is obvious, in my opinion—namely, because the world was not ready for them. And your question can be further answered in a sort of way by asking: Why did not the Reformation take place ages before? Why were not such men as Luther, Melancthon, and Knox raised up sooner? Why were not the 'dark ages' brought to an end until so late a day of the Christian Era? How was it that mankind had to abide in spiritual darkness so long?"

M.—The LORD, our heavenly Father, in His own good time, and in His own wise ways, provides for the temporal, spiritual, and eternal well-being of His children; for He is our Father, in the highest and best sense of the word. The greatest blessings He can bestow upon His creatures, come at the earliest moment possible. The LORD is the God of earth, as well as of heaven. He therefore provides in natural things, as well as in spiritual things. In the Divine Providence of God, Columbus discovered America, when he did. And Swedenborg was raised up at the most suitable time, and prepared to be a Revelator of the internal sense of the Word; to be the Herald of the Second Advent of the LORD, and to be the means of giving to the world spiritual-rational knowledges on all subjects.

I.—According to these considerations it was in the very nature of things, that the new truths were not given to the world sooner than they were. It seems to my mind perfectly reasonable. How could we regard the matter in any other light?

M.—It would have been of no avail to have made the New Revelations before "the hour" had come, that is, before the world had made sufficient progress, to enable some men to come into a state to receive them intelligently, and to apply them to the practical affairs of life, and also to promulgate them for the moral and spiritual well-being of mankind. Thus there was necessary a state of preparation, for the reception of these genuine principles, on the part of even a few men, at first. And comparatively few are as yet prepared to receive and appreciate them.

I.—Is not the same thing true with regard to our modern discoveries and inventions? Suppose that telegraphic machines, electric lamps, and telephones had been constructed in some other sphere, and had been handed down to people in this world, five -hundred or a thousand years ago: would they have been of any use to anybody? No; they would have been mere useless curiosities. Men would not have possessed the requisite knowledge to utilize such inventions at all. But the progress and developments of the age, naturally brought such things into existence; and now the world could not well get along without them. How could we manage without steam and electricity, now that these agencies are applied in so many different ways?

M.—You have suggested an excellent illustration of the reasons why the New Revelations which we have in the Writings, were not given sooner. The men of the earlier ages could not receive them. The "hour" had not come, when the LORD could "speak no more in parables," but could make an immediate Divine Revelation, "showing plainly of the Father." The marvellous forces of steam and electricity were always in Nature; but it remained to "the latter days," at the dawning of the New Age, for these forces to be discovered and applied to uses in a thousand ways. And to make this possible, required the development of natural things up to a certain point. And when this had taken place, the conditions and circumstances brought about, made the modern inventions an actual necessity.

I.—They have certainly become a necessity to us from the extensive uses to which we have applied them. But excuse me for interrupting you.

M.—I was about to add, that in like manner as the forces of steam and electricity were always latent in Nature since the creation of the universe, so the Internal and Spiritual Senses of the Word were always contained in the Literal Sense since it was first given by inspiration. But it remained until "the fullness of time," for the glory of Jehovah to be revealed, that all flesh might see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, that is, spiritually, as already explained. And to make this possible, required the spiritual development of the minds of men to a certain degree. And when this had been accomplished, the spiritual states and conditions, on the part of a portion of mankind, made the revelation of the spiritual sense of the Word an imperative necessity. The LORD, in His Divine mercy, provided for all these states and conditions. And we shall never be able to fully express our gratitude for the manner in which He has provided for the spiritual needs of His children. Truly, He doeth all things well.

I.—I can realize the force of your remarks, from my own experience. And I can truly say that not for the material wealth of the world, would I be deprived of what I have learned from the Doctrines, and be again shrouded in mental gloom and spiritual darkness. It is not many months since that, from the very depths of my soul, I cried to Heaven for light upon the problems of life and death, the momentous questions of man's free agency and responsibility, of man's immortality and eternal destiny. I experienced unutterable longings for the knowledge that should make things intelligible; the light that should illuminate my mind, and solve the

problems that were then so dark to me. In the LORD'S good time that knowledge was communicated, according to my capacity of reception; that light was given in as great effulgence as I could bear. And although I have just begun to learn; although I have only taken the first feeble steps in the way of wisdom; I rejoice in the cheering light and satisfying knowledges, which are imparted to us by the new and everlasting Gospel. And I shall never (as you say) be able to express my gratitude to the LORD for permitting me to become acquainted with the grand system of truth which is vouchsafed to the world in the heavenly doctrines of the New Jerusalem, which were revealed through the instrumentality of that most illustrious theologian and Servant of our LORD, Emanuel Swedenborg.

M.—There are many who have passed through similar experiences as yourself. At this day many are disposed to reject the Scriptures as a Divine Revelation. From doubts and perplexities, caused by certain theological fallacies that are based upon the Creeds, and have been taught for ages, men are gradually led into a state of denial of all things of revealed religion. Some men cease to acknowledge the existence of a Personal God, who is the Creator and Preserver of the universe, and become materialists and atheists. But the doctrines of the New Church are of such a nature as to satisfy the mind of the honest sceptic, the sincere doubter, the diligent inquirer. These doctrines do not require the suppression of human reason; but they encourage the exercise of that God-given faculty, in the investigation of religious subjects. In the Writings, and by means of them, the Word is transformed by the revelation of its inner meaning, its genuine sense, its real import. Thus the glory of the LORD hath been revealed, showing plainly wherein the Divinity of the Word resides. And to the devout student of spiritual things, there is a new and radiant light beaming from every page of the Sacred Word. His mind is illuminated, his heart is cheered, his thoughts and affections are purified and elevated. He learns to understand what the LORD means, when He says: "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, are spirit and are life" (John vi. 63). All who are in genuine natural good, shall, in due time, receive spiritual truth, become enlightened Christians, and finally attain the unspeakable felicities of eternal life. All who "thirst," that is, ardently desire knowledges respecting things heavenly and Divine, shall, by the LORD'S merciful Providence, be led to the inexhaustible Fountain of Truth, the Opened Word, whence they may ever take freely the Water of Life, and be spiritually refreshed and strengthened thereby.