

THE NEW JERUSALEM COME DOWN TO EARTH

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ABSTRACT

This paper sets out to establish the context of the Last Judgment—not just what it was, but why it was, and why it was when it was, and what it was supposed to accomplish. These things are essential to our understanding of the subtle nature of its manifestation in the natural world. Rising and falling spiritual fortunes are a cyclical reality of the human experience, and the Last Judgment of 1757 was a predictable event in an undulating chain of spiritual readjustments since the fall of the Most Ancient Church. Keys to understanding the natural expression of the spiritual Last Judgment are the incremental increases in human freedom and the evolution of human consciousness in conjunction with these changes. This new consciousness is contagious, and is slowly spreading still, manifesting itself in many of the radical developments of the modern era: Developments in modern history, politics, literature, the arts, religion, philosophy, education, and most particularly the natural sciences, can all be interpreted as either an extension of, or a reaction to, the continuing descent of the New Jerusalem into human minds. The restoration of spirituality to science is the ultimate expression of this New Jerusalem come down to earth.

The Tree of Knowledge leading to the tree of life. Science is the key to natural things whereby heavenly things are opened up. (*The Messiah About to Come* (1745) n. X)

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PROLOGUE

The search for signs of the New Jerusalem in the natural world following the Last Judgment of 1757¹ cannot begin with that event. We must start with a prologue to establish the natural world context into which this event descended. Without this perspective, the Last Judgment makes no historical sense and might appear to have no logical cause at all.

We start not with the Last Judgment of 1757, and not with Lord's first advent into the world either, but at the beginning of the human narrative, with the first "last judgment," which was the fall of the human race into the knowledge of good and evil.

Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?'" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'" Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings. And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, "Where are you?" So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself." And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?" Then the man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me,

¹ This refers to the Swedenborgian doctrine of a spiritual Last Judgment, foretold in *The Revelation* of the New Testament, as an accomplished event which occurred in the spiritual world in 1757 as reported by Emanuel Swedenborg in his theological works.

she gave me of the tree, and I ate.” And the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” So the Lord God said to the serpent: “Because you have done this, You are cursed more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly you shall go, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.”²

The internal sense identifies the last verse of this passage as the earliest prophecy of a Redeemer³ who would come into the world, in answer to the devolution, over time, from the “knowledge of good and evil” to immersion into evil itself.⁴ What happens here will eventually require the first advent of the Lord; and we find that something like this will happen again at the end of the Christian Church, necessitating yet another coming of the Lord into the world. These first two events are described in Swedenborg’s *Arcana Coelestia* (§ 2034):

After everything celestial with man perished, that is, all love to God, so that as a result the will for what is good existed no longer, the human race was separated from the Divine. For nothing other than love effects conjunction, and when love has been reduced to nothing, disjunction has taken place. And when the latter has taken place destruction and annihilation follow. At that point therefore a promise was given concerning the Lord’s Coming into the world, who was to unite the Human to the Divine, and by means of this union was to join [to the Divine] the human race that was abiding in Himself through faith grounded in love and charity. From the time of that first promise given in Genesis 3:15, this kind of faith in the Lord who was to come was conjunctive.

But once faith springing from love did not remain any more in the world the Lord came and united the Human Essence to the Divine

²Genesis 3:1–15 (NKJV).

³See *Arcana Coelestia* §§ 250–260 for Swedenborg’s exegesis of *Genesis* 3:15, with a detailed exposition of the spiritual sense, by means of the correspondences embedded in the verse.

⁴For an explanation of this descent into evil along a “slippery slope” from doubt to denial to defiance of what is good and true, see Swedenborg’s *Conjugal Love*, § 444.

Essence so that these were completely one, as He Himself states explicitly. At the same time He taught the way of truth to the effect that everyone who believed in Him, that is, who loved Him and what was His, and who abided in His love, which is a love directed towards the entire human race and so towards the neighbor, would be conjoined and thus saved.

With the addition of the Last Judgment of 1757 to these two other spiritual branch points, the idea of Redemption emerges not as a single historical event, but as a cyclical phenomenon over time, with smaller cycles within the larger ones, of falling away and Covenant renewal. In order to square with human experience our spiritual history needs to be understood in this evolutionary way. The Last Judgment of 1757 was not an isolated event, but was the culmination of a chain of identifiable spiritual and natural events from the earliest days of human history.

THE EFFECTS OF THE FIRST ADVENT

The most fundamental outcome of the first advent was the Glorification of the Lord's Human.⁵ Returning to *Arcana Coelestia* § 2034, we learn the significance of this event.

Once the Human had been made Divine, and the Divine made Human in the Lord, an influx of the Infinite, or the Supreme Divine, took place with man which could not possibly have manifested itself in any other way. Also by means of that influx the dreadful false persuasions and the dreadful desires for evil were dispersed with which the world of spirits had been filled and was constantly being filled by souls streaming into it from the world; and those who were actuated by such persuasions and evil desires were cast into hell and so separated. Unless this had been

⁵The enormity of this fact of Glorification startled Anglican minister John Clowes (1743–1831) into an almost Pauline conversion to the New Church. A spiritual epiphany on the significance of *Divinum Humanum* led him to become a patriarch of the early church in England. This story was related in an address by the Rev. Samuel Noble in 1831 and preserved in Tafel, R.L., *Documents Concerning the Life and Character of Emanuel Swedenborg* (London: Swedenborg Society, 1877, Vol. II, Part II): 1166–1168.

done the human race would have perished, for it is by means of spirits that the Lord rules the human race. They could not have been dispersed in any other way because there was no activity of the Divine by way of man's rational concepts into his inner sensory awareness, for these are far below the Supreme Divine when not so united.

This last judgment brought about a housecleaning in the spiritual world: the world of spirits was cleared of its overflowing stock of evil souls, and a separation between heaven and hell ushered in a new spiritual order. This produced a beneficial effect on the natural world as well, as peoples' minds were no longer subject to the involuntary influence of evil spirits. Of equal importance was a development that is often overlooked: a higher degree of freedom was a part of this new order—an emergent human trait that would play an essential role in a spiritual judgment yet to come.

The Glorification served as a major preparatory step for this judgment to come, particularly in the arts and the natural sciences. "Heaven and earth" were now truly conjoined, the "earth" no longer a degree of reality in potential, but brought fully into the contiguum of Creation. The mechanism of this conjunction was the induction of spiritual influx, with natural afflux in reciprocation. Now there was a fully functional middle place for the human being to stand, with the spiritual mind and natural body united in unanimous action. Even this far ahead, the Glorification set the stage for the arts and sciences of the New Christian Era.

What changed? All the earth, and the human mind along with it, as a result of this change in natural matter itself. A new degree of intellectual influx could now descend fully into it, to bring a new level of understanding, both spiritual and natural. The New Testament was a new kind of revelation for this new era, accommodated to this new kind of mind. This brought about a new level of freedom—" . . . if you continue in My Word, then you are My disciples indeed, and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free . . ."⁶—and the stage was set for a new Christian

⁶John 8:32 (NKJV).

era to begin. But because of the very nature of freedom itself, what brings unlimited human potential can also bring great calamity. The Writings for the New Church plainly state that “the origin of evil is in the abuse of the faculties proper to man, called freedom and rationality.”⁷ This radical change at the first advent was also the cause of the “destruction and annihilation” described in *Arcana Coelestia* § 2034 above, leading up to the second. Freedom is a volatile element; it makes trouble wherever it goes. As we shall see, it is freedom that becomes the driver of the Lord’s Second Advent and the essence of the New Jerusalem itself.

So now the stage is set: with freedom comes a burst of human spiritual development and the rise of Naturalism to counter it. At work here is the perennial tension between good descending into the world and evil rising up to meet it.⁸ Swedenborg made dire predictions about Naturalism, the intellectual offspring of the Age of Reason, that promised even then to be the corrosive force it has now become.⁹ The great good of the New Jerusalem descends into the midst of an impressive alliance of opposing forces, and the intellectual, political, and religious landscape of our world is transformed by the apocalyptic struggle that has finally come.

After the first advent and a good three-hundred year start came the slow, steady decline of the Christian Church. In place at its vastation in 1757 was the new era of freedom foretold in John’s *Revelation*, finally come to pass with the descent of the New Jerusalem. But it was not readily visible to the natural eye. The “kingdom of heaven” had come, but it did not meet the expectations of the Christian world—this “kingdom” was the Lord’s church on earth, and nothing more; and the churches had not ostensibly changed at all. Science had made marvelous progress, but was losing its moorings to spirit. In constructing a method for getting at natural truth by combining inductive reasoning with empirical investigation, Francis Bacon’s *Novum Organum* (1620) removed Aristotle’s *final*

⁷Swedenborg, Emanuel, *Divine Providence*, § 15.

⁸See the Writings for the New Church on the concept of spiritual equilibrium. The mechanism involves evil at work in the world, but in the Lord’s divine providence this evil is put to use as one of two equalizing forces allowing a person complete freedom to move towards good or evil. Central teachings include AC 1857, 3628; HH 292, 293, 541, 593, 594; LJ 33, 34; TCR 475–78.

⁹See AC 3024:4, 3108; AE 575; CL 415; TCR 13:4, 75:7, 339, 771, and SBI 2 for core teachings on the threat of Naturalism, and its potential for harm to the culture.

cause¹⁰ from his new, “scientific” chain of cause and effect alone, and Naturalism was strengthened by this new authority. *Creatio ex nihilo* became the axiom of the day, and all things of Nature were now from Nature alone. His own religious beliefs notwithstanding, René Descartes’ *radical skepticism* helped fuel this secular departure, and the stage was set for the Enlightenment to finally do away with the need for spiritual connection altogether. It was precisely here that Swedenborg saw and reported the dawn of another era that could finally apply a rational spiritual/natural model to the sublime natural philosophy of the day. There was a growing need to restore the dissolution of science and religion, and the New Jerusalem he proclaimed was coming down to do just that.

EFFECTS OF THE SECOND ADVENT

So the Last Judgment of 1757 seems to have appeared right on schedule, and just as Swedenborg observed, all those apocalyptic images of John’s *Revelation* did come to pass. But how were these events in the *spiritual* world manifested in the *natural* world of human experience? Almost not at all. The descent of the New Jerusalem into this world is gradual, cumulative, and spiritual, and not natural at all. But translated into human terms, *spiritual* becomes *mental*, as the highest degree of the human mind is spiritual in structure and in function. This fact explains the lack of natural world influence from this momentous spiritual world event. The New Jerusalem steps down from heaven, through the successive degrees of the human mind, to find expression in the natural world of experience.¹¹ Swedenborg explained this “trickle-down” process in terms

¹⁰ Of Aristotle’s four causes (material, formal, efficient, and final), it was the final cause that involved the thing’s purpose, or reason for being. As this involved speculation, Bacon abandoned it in favor of only those attributes that could be confirmed by objective observation. See Aristotle, *Physics* Book II, Ch. 3 and *Metaphysics* Book A, Ch. 3 for his complete treatment of these philosophical concepts. Barnes, Jonathan, *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, Bollingen Series 71:2 (Princeton New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984); (*Physics*), 332–334, (*Metaphysics*), 1555–1557.

¹¹ The human mind exists as a series of degrees or levels, from the sensual to the celestial, across which spiritual substance is able to interact in an orderly manner with the natural matter of the brain. The crucial mechanism is the operation, by spiritual/natural correspondence, between these two levels. See AC 1999:3; ISB 8:4; DP 220:3; TCR 8; HH 39; LJ 25; SE 5548; WE 919. The best summary of this multi-level structure of the human mind is found in Odhner, Hugo Lj., *The Human Mind* (Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania: Swedenborg Scientific Association, 1969).

of the evolution of the New Church on earth as a function of the gradual replacement of the Christian church by the descending New Jerusalem.

It is in accordance with Divine order that a new heaven should be formed before a new church is established on earth, for the church is both internal and external, and the internal church makes one with the church in heaven, thus with heaven itself; and what is internal must be formed before its external, what is external being formed afterwards by means of its internal... Just so far as this new heaven, which constitutes the internal of the church with man, increases, does the New Jerusalem, that is, the New Church, descend from it; consequently this cannot take place in a moment, but it takes place to the extent that the falsities of the former church are set aside.¹²

In terms of everyday experience, the world went right on with its vastated business, while the Last Judgment silently came and went. But just as in the first advent, things changed, and the world would never be the same. What was now descending into the highest degree of every human mind would gradually find expression in a rapid succession of radical ideas that would change the world forever.

What changed? In the “judgment” of the Lord’s first advent it was the nature of matter itself, which effected a change in the substance of the brain as physical platform for the mind.¹³ This judgment of the first advent set the stage for the last. The key to understanding the Last Judgment of 1757 is to see it as a mutation, not of matter (as in the first), but of human consciousness a discrete degree above matter. Human consciousness mutated into a contagious agent of spiritual change. Contagion progresses slowly at first, in a linear way, but will increase geometrically if the environment can support it. According to the model for bacterial and viral

¹²Swedenborg, Emanuel, *True Christian Religion*, § 784.

¹³This is not the first time we have seen a change in the substance of the human brain: *Arcana Coelestia* § 4326:3 explains that after the fall into evil, the Lord effected a change in the human brain that brought about a reversal of the communicative pathways between cerebellum (the seat of the will) and cerebrum (the understanding). This represents a major developmental event in human spiritual evolution.

growth, there is first a long lag phase with a gently upward-sloping curve. But with sufficient nourishment, and if other necessary environmental conditions are met, proliferation enters an exponential phase, with an almost vertical slope of astonishingly rapid reproduction. But despite the impressive outcome, the start is always very slow. And unlike the fate of natural organisms, the exponential phase need never end if the supply of nourishment is spiritual and thus infinite.

SIGNS

What concrete historical events can be traced directly from causes put in motion by the Last Judgment two hundred fifty years ago? What has really changed from 1757 to today? It is much easier to see the things that have not.

- Naturalism marches on, and it is developing a disturbingly militant edge. The world religions are no longer just the preoccupation of harmless, soft-headed delusion. Now they stand accused of being hazardous to the health of the human race and are identified as the cause, not the cure, of human suffering. An impressive collection of atheist polemics has entered the marketplace of ideas, and religious writers have been put on notice that their irrational spiritual rambling will no longer be tolerated by the “brights” among us.¹⁴
- The Christian world view is ostensibly still in place; the church you drive by today will likely not be a Church of the New Jerusalem. Things still look the same. But this world view has eroded, leaving an ambiguous, uncertain sense of where things are going, and little sense of purpose beyond the emotional, the political, and the politically correct. There is a great divide between the blind certitude of biblical

¹⁴ Following the lead of philosophers J.L. Mackie and Daniel Dennett, mathematician Francis Crick and others, scientist-turned-polemicist Richard Dawkins has recently called for an end to all religions for the good of humanity. He calls himself and like-minded atheists “brights,” (enlightened ones), and in his *God Delusion* (2006) we find not just overweening hubris, but the Orwellian rhetoric of an ideologue as well. This is new, and it heralds an unsettling change for future science-religion “dialogue.”

literalism on one side, and the myopic solipsism of religion as consecrated social work on the other. The Christian compass is broken, and as this becomes increasingly apparent in the culture around us, the brights are increasingly emboldened. In their defense, they are hearing no credible answers to their reasoned challenges to Christian faith.

- Science continues to defend its rejection of Aristotle's *final cause* for natural things. Despite the significant epistemological challenges of causation being raised by emerging discoveries in quantum physics, the question of purpose for a natural thing remains a *non-sequitur* for a Dennett or a Dawkins. As these questions of the New Science continue to accumulate, resistance to them becomes less reasoned and more emotional, less measured and more heated, less polite and more threatening. The temperature is rising in the rhetoric of science as it considers the increasingly tenuous nature of its old, comfortable, and neatly-limited Newtonian universe. Naturalism has traded detached condescension for a kind of reactive militancy—a dangerous development for the new millennium. And yet, despite his distinction as ostensible spokesman for the cause, Dawkins' arguments against spiritual causes for natural things are specious and worn.
- The dissolution of traditional institutions—academic, religious, governmental, and cultural—continues apace. Is this just destructive entropy at work in the world of the human experience, or might this chaos represent something providential, and more optimistic, quietly at work? Concerning the Descent of the New Jerusalem, the Lord clearly predicted, "Behold I make all things new."¹⁵ What would things look like if "all things" were being "made new"? Tranquil or chaotic? The Maggid of Mezerich¹⁶ made this observation about the mystical transformation of becoming new:

Before an egg can grow into a chicken, it must first totally cease to be an egg. Each thing must lose its original identity before it can be something

¹⁵ Revelation 21:5 (NKJV)

¹⁶ Dov Baer (1710–1772), the Maggid of Mezerich, was chief disciple and public voice for Baal Shem Tov, the founder of Hassidic Jewish mysticism.

else. Therefore, before a thing is transformed into something else, it must first come to the level of No-thingness . . .¹⁷

For one brief moment, the thing that is to become new is neither egg or chick—lost in time . . . perhaps not really there at all. And to the casual observer, that no-thing state might look more like chaos than becoming new.

- Spiritual malaise is all around us. From the impotence of leaders in every sector of our lives to the doctrinal drifting of our churches, from the absence of moral outrage to the nihilistic darkness of the media that create our culture, there is pathology that unravels the fabric of society. And paradoxically, spiritual malaise increases in the face of prosperity and security, the two most obvious characteristics of American life.

These are the things that have not seemed to change since the Last Judgment of 1757. And yet, through the lens of the New Revelation, all of these can be held up as evidence for the New Jerusalem, slowly trickling into human consciousness.

Looking back 250 years from the perspective of a New Church paradigm, we can see the New Jerusalem at work in a changing world. The signs are there if we wish to see them.

- The Romantic Movement in the Arts—born on the cusp of the Last Judgment, this Eighteenth Century intellectual movement provided early evidence that something mental and spiritual was afoot in the world. It was a radical departure from the artistic rigidity of the past, and the Romantic Movement may well represent, in retrospect, the slow lag phase of the consciousness of spiritual-natural correspondence, just beginning to spread throughout the intellectual world.
- The freedom movements—from the American and French Revolu-

¹⁷ Epstein, Perle, *Kabbalah: the Way of the Jewish Mystic* (Boston: Shambala Publishing, Inc., 1978), 118.

tions to those that continue to the present, the notion of individual freedom as an “unalienable right,” with which we are “endowed by [our] Creator” is a very new idea indeed. In the six thousand years of human social development leading up to the cultural forms of this day, the radical notion of individual freedom is only a few seconds old. Yet it is embraced as an age-old tenet wherever it falls to earth. It is a spiritual principle, and its source is in the New Jerusalem.

- The autonomy of women—who were *property* 250 years ago—speaks for itself as an event of the Last Judgment of 1757. The subjugation of women in the West has simply fallen apart from exposure to the rational ordering of the New Jerusalem coming into the world.
- The death of slavery, an institution that went from “curious” to untenable has identifiable roots in the early work of the Church of the New Jerusalem. Block and Hallengren¹⁸ identify the earliest anti-slavery movements in Europe and the West Indies as that of the Exegetic-Philanthropic Society, an organization led by philanthropist-activist Charles Wadström and founded on the principles of the New Jerusalem. Only in the most savage corners of the globe does slavery still exist, and soon it will fall victim everywhere to the inexorable contagion of human freedom.
- There is no more clearly visible manifestation of the New Jerusalem than the Internet, the astonishing development of which denotes its correspondence to something very powerful in the spiritual world. The Internet, an ethereal and almost spiritual thing, is the essence of freedom in organic form. Leaderless, multi-nodal, and driven by individuals in unanimous action, this form is the next phase of the New Church coming into the world. It is modeled on the spiritual principles of freedom and variety that make heaven a paradise¹⁹; and yet, true to form, it permits evil to express itself as well. The responsibility to use this powerful instrument wisely falls on individuals, not the government or the church, as an exercise in our regeneration. As the

¹⁸Block, Marguerite, *The New Church in the New World* (New York: Octagon Books, 1968), 54; Hallengren, Anders, *Gallery of Mirrors: Reflections of Swedenborgian Thought* (West Chester, Pennsylvania: Swedenborg Foundation Publishers, 1998), 51.

¹⁹ *Heaven and Hell*, § 56 states that the perfection of heaven is from the variety of the worship there, and it is the freedom of association that determines its social structure.

printing press was the instrument that brought the New Church into being, so will the Internet propel the New Jerusalem into all the world.

- Even the decline of New Church denominations in the world—in numbers, in influence, and in doctrinal integrity—is evidence that the Last Judgment is finally breaking through the Old Church forms that their well-meaning but short-sighted founders imposed on such a universalizing force as the New Jerusalem. This dissolution—so worrisome to New Church men and women around the world—will be a blessing to the New Church in the world to come, no longer burdened by buildings to maintain, catechisms to defend, and endowments to protect. The New Church will thrive as it was intended to do, as the contagion of love and wisdom at work spreads into the world, and people learn to apply these locally, in their own ways, in all things of life.
- Science, despite the reactive opposition of its orthodoxy, and despite the “science wars” that capture our attention, is converging towards the “omega point” of a new spiritual-natural axiom, with the final cause of creation restored. New discoveries require deeper explanations than Naturalism can supply, and the shift to this new axiom will finally happen from necessity, not compulsion. Deep science will finally meet the deep theology of the New Jerusalem, and the true purpose of the Last Judgment of 1757 will be revealed. Once separated from its spiritual roots, once stripped of final cause, science will finally embrace the rationality of the New Philosophy and build a powerful new paradigm to accommodate both sensory experience and spiritual truth. The restoration of the left and right brains of human intellectual activity—the *tikkun*²⁰ of the ages—is the coming of the New Jerusalem.

²⁰Restoration is a major theme of the Jewish mystics, from Zoharic to Lurianic Kabbalah, but it is an ancient concept, and common to all religions. From a starting point of unity, there is a separation from the Divine (*Shevirat ha-Kelim*, or the breaking of the vessels, in Kabbalistic lore). The central theme of spiritual transformation then becomes *tikkun*, the restoration of the pathways to the Divine. In Buddhism this is the delay in final liberation until all souls are free. In Christianity it is the coming of the Messiah. To the Gnostics it was the liberation of the Divine Spark, trapped in earthly bodies. In the New Jerusalem, an era of a rational spirituality, it becomes the restoration of the two receptacles of truth and good in the collective human mind, as science and spirituality are reunited in the New Philosophy. See Scholem, Gershom, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1974); *Tikkun Olam: the Spiritual Purpose of Life*, at www.innerfrontier.com.

The signs are there to see. The pulse of human culture quickened in 1757, and the notion of human freedom, once radical, is commonplace today in all its permutations. All things are becoming new—cultural forms and content, immediate communication, access to information, and a personal spiritual inclination of the human mind. But the science demands a deeper look.

Once separated from its spiritual roots and determined to maintain this separation, scientific discoveries themselves are causing scientists to rethink the separation. Causality is no longer a linear proposition in a quantum universe with uncertain boundaries, and the simple state of being is not simple any more. Science, calm and confident on its surface, is unsettled at its philosophical base; change (and the fear that comes with change) is in the air.

The separation of spirit from nature was the greatest calamity of human intellectual development, a product of the Enlightenment, curiously the period of our greatest intellectual advancement. This has handed down to us a post-modern world-view of a purposeless, mechanistic universe, where humanity plays no major role. Observing the fallout from this calamity, Einstein remarked that “Science without religion is lame; religion without science is blind,”²¹ but he offered no solution. Others have sensed the anxiety that separation brings, but their solutions tend to be sectarian and dichotomous; winners win and losers lose, and there is no *tikkun*. The key is restoring Aristotle’s final cause with freedom built right in—spiritual truths accommodated to each person’s place and state. This the New Jerusalem can do when its universalizing principles of spiritual-natural correspondence are fully understood.

THE SCIENCE WARS: A MESSAGE FROM THE FRONT

I work in a typical university, with typical university faculty, who are typically immersed in liberal political ideology and scientific materialism. Today’s *scientific materialism* is the direct descendant of Swedenborg’s

²¹ Einstein, Albert, 1941, from *Science, Philosophy, and Religion, A Symposium*, in *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations* (Oxford University Press, 4th Ed.), 268.

naturalism that he predicted would get a lot worse over time. He was correct in his prediction. By either name it is a way of life in the intellectual circles of academic life, and it is gaining momentum, not just as an attitude, but as a movement. Religion is withering before it, and there is blood in the water of the science wars.

Emanuel Swedenborg was born on January 29, 1688. Despite this considerable historical distance, by looking at Swedenborg the man and his scientific works before his theological Writings, we find a powerful antidote to this Naturalism that still drives the learned world today. It is the belief that Nature is from Nature, and that science is the key to understanding all. I work in a place where this philosophy is the order of the day, and in this environment, in self-defense, I have developed a method for talking to my fellow professors about how the world works and how it is that from a scientist I could become a theologian. The “method” was there all along; it has been in plain sight for 250 years. But because of the unassuming nature of Swedenborg’s quaint eighteenth century science, it took me a while to see the forest for the trees.

A Rationale

First some boiler-plate New Church doctrine: We are told in John’s *Revelation*, Chapter 21 that there are twelve gates into the New Jerusalem. The number twelve in the internal sense signifies “all things of faith,”²² faith signifies the implantation of truth,²³ and this, we are told, is the beginning of the work of God.²⁴

New Church people have always taken “the twelve gates” to mean that there is a gate to suit the particular needs of every person who is seeking spiritual truth, each gate serving as some unique manifestation of “all the knowledges of truth and good.”²⁵ Since “twelve” signifies all things of faith we can assume that the number of gates equals not a literal

²² Emanuel Swedenborg, *Arcana Coelestia*, § 2089.

²³ Emanuel Swedenborg, *The Apocalypse Explained*, § 813.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, § 226.

²⁵ Emanuel Swedenborg, *The Apocalypse Revealed*, § 916.

twelve, but the number of people needing to get in. That's an infinite number in spiritual terms, and that is no doubt a good thing.

One of these gates—the one we are looking at here—is the natural truths of science. Swedenborg used that gate. From a grounding in natural philosophy, Emanuel Swedenborg was drawn through that gate into the deeper truths of the spiritual causes of natural things. He explained this process to German theosophist Friedrich Oetinger, who was fascinated with Swedenborg's philosophy of heaven and earth in the last passage of *Soul-Body Interaction* (1769). Here Swedenborg explains

. . . how I, a philosopher, became a theologian. . . this happened in the same way that fishermen were made disciples and apostles by the Lord . . . that I too was a spiritual fisherman from my youth. When my companion heard this, he asked what a spiritual fisherman was. I answered that in the Word, a fisherman in the spiritual meaning indicated a person who hunts out and teaches natural truths.

Afterward, I showed him the source of this meaning of fishermen from *The Apocalypse Revealed*—that is because “water” means things that are true on the natural level (§§ 50, 932), so also does a river (§§ 409, 932), “fish” means people who are involved in things that are true on the natural level (§ 405), and therefore “fishermen” means people who hunt out and teach truths.

On hearing these statements, my questioner said quite loudly, “Now I understand why the Lord chose fishermen to be His disciples! So it does not surprise me that he has chosen you as well, since as you have said, you have been a fisherman in a spiritual sense from your early youth, that is, a hunter of natural truths. Your present occupation of pursuing spiritual truths is because these latter are based on the former.”

“Besides,” he continued, “what Christian theologian is there who has not studied philosophy in his school days? Where else could he gain intelligence?”²⁶

²⁶Swedenborg, Emanuel, *Soul-Body Interaction*, § 20.

There is a lesson in this, beyond the obvious. Science today is confirmed by the limiting world view of Naturalism, which cannot explain the purpose of existence. This has caused a crisis of identity and meaning for the people and the nations of the earth. There is chaos at hand, and I suggest that scientific materialism is largely to blame. Naturalism leads to what the Writings for the New Church call “the negative principle,” that eventually denies all things, submits to no authority, and ends up as a kind of insanity.²⁷ From this come two great challenges: 1) The “traditional” Western religions—Christianity (from fundamentalist to liberal) and Judaism in its visible forms—do not have the theology to answer and support the recent surge of interest in spirituality by some scientists. They are asking penetrating questions that the “religious establishment” cannot answer. 2) Scientists think and ask questions in the language of science, and sublime, high-end New Church theology cannot answer them in kind. This is something that New Church people fail to understand. Our theology sounds fine as long as we are preaching to the choir, but a specialized language of religion is not the language of science. These are problems of our time, but they are not really new at all. Swedenborg responded to this same dilemma in his time by presenting a *scientific* system in which spirit is prime mover, Nature is not from nature but from spiritual substance (thus having a purpose beyond itself), but the objectivity and language of science are inherent in it. He showed the scientists of his day a rational approach to the question of spiritual causes for natural things. I suggest that this same rationale is effective for the scientists and philosophers of this day as well—more effective, perhaps, because the science of the new millennium has finally pushed itself to limits that only purpose can explain.

Naturalism cannot explain the purpose of existence. It is not allowed to even raise the question. Worse still, traditional Judeo-Christian theology cannot explain it either. And although the Writings for the New Church address this question in an intellectually defensible way, they explain it in a language apart from the language of science.

²⁷Swedenborg, Emanuel, *Apocalypse Explained* § 575, *True Christian Religion* § 13:4, *Arcana Coelestia*, § 2588:2.

A Spiritual Model of Accommodation

In *Exodus* and *The Acts of the Apostles* we find a spiritual model to help us understand this predicament. It is all about language, perception, and accommodation. In *Exodus* Chapter 4, we find Moses doing a very un-Mosaic thing. He is trying to get out of his assignment, from Jehovah Himself, to go back to Egypt and help the children of Israel out of their misery. And he uses some pretty lame excuses! *Exodus* 4:10–16:

- 10 Moses said to the Lord, “O Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue.”
- 11 The Lord said to him, “Who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or mute? Who gives him sight or makes him blind? Is it not I, the Lord?”
- 12 Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say.”
- 13 But Moses said, “O Lord, please send someone else to do it.”
- 14 Then the Lord’s anger burned against Moses and he said, “What about your brother, Aaron the Levite? I know he can speak well. He is already on his way to meet you, and his heart will be glad when he sees you.
- 15 You shall speak to him and put words in his mouth; I will help both of you speak and will teach you what to do.
- 16 He will speak to the people for you, and it will be as if he were your mouth and as if you were God to him.

Next, we find Paul, that other Apostle, spreading the Good News in Athens, the intellectual capital of the ancient world—a Harvard, Oxford, or UCLA Berkeley of the ancient world. He entered the Areopagus there, and challenged the smartest Epicurean and Stoic philosophers of the place: “All the Athenians and the foreigners,” it says “who lived there [and] spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.” Just like your typical university. How did Paul do in that arena?

- 22 Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: “Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious.
- 23 For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you.
- 24 The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands.
- 25 And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else.
- 26 From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live.
- 27 God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.
- 28 For in him we live and move and have our being. As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’
- 29 Therefore since we are God’s offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by man’s design and skill.
- 30 In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.
- 31 For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.”
- 32 When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, “We want to hear you again on this subject.”
- 33 At that, Paul left the Council.
- 34 A few men became followers of Paul and believed. Among them was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, also a woman named Damaris, and a number of others. (Acts 17:20–34)

Paul didn’t set the place on fire, but neither did he fail. He had the courage to engage his intellectual opponents that day. They were the best; and he

held his own against them. How? He got them to listen because he talked to these philosophers in their own language. And he got a few to see the light. How many? “Dionysius, Damaris, and a number of others.” We will return to these stories.

There Are Two Foundations of Truth. Why Not Use Them Both?

How can science be a gate into the New Jerusalem? Swedenborg himself had learned, the hard way, that you cannot climb *up* the ladder of being from the natural world to the world of spiritual causes; it has to be scaled downward, from the top. But as he told Professor Oetinger concerning science and religion, the one state precedes the other. Swedenborg the scientist did not fail in some way only to be rescued by the Lord for some higher purpose. His call to be a revelator came as he found himself at the top of his game, with no place to go from there. It was his science that took him to that jumping-off-place. So jump he did, leaving his science books behind. I suggest that he didn't do all that work for nothing; and after studying his science books, I am convinced that he left them for us in this time, for tools to end the science wars. Note well that the word here is *tools*, not weapons. It is time to get to work; we have had enough of war. Why do I believe this to be the case? Swedenborg tells us that there are “two foundations of truth,”

... one from the Word, the other from nature or from the truths of nature. The foundation from the Word is for the universal heaven, thus for those who are in the light of heaven; but the foundation from nature, is for those who are natural and in natural light . . . But, still, [these two foundations of truth] agree the one with the other. Since the sciences have shut up the understanding, therefore, the sciences may also open it; and it is opened so far as people are in good. . . . all things of heaven constantly have their foundation in the laws of the order of nature, in the world and in man, so that the foundation remains permanently fixed.²⁸

²⁸Swedenborg, Emanuel, *Spiritual Experiences*, § 5709.

The Writings for the New Church remind us of the causal relationship of Spirit to Nature and of Nature's purpose as anchor for the spiritual world in ultimates. What better way to bring natural people—scientists included—into the New Jerusalem than by the gate of their own natural philosophy?

Swedenborg's scientific corpus has been largely disregarded by the learned world over the past 250 years. But in providence, it lies ready to use on a new crop of skeptical scientists who would believe in spiritual reality if they were only shown a rational and plausible way to go about it. Swedenborg's science is a marvelous gate into the New Jerusalem, neglected over time, but ready now to manifest its purpose.

A Very Modern Problem

In order to address the problem of modern science and religious faith, let's first lay out a description of science as it exists at this moment in history. After three centuries of "progress," science has fallen victim to its own limitations. Science, like so many other institutions in these early days of the New Jerusalem, is in a state of radical change, with no clear sense of where it is headed. Here is how things stand: Naturalism, described by Swedenborg in the eighteenth century, is still going strong. But because of its built-in denial of purpose for the things of nature (Aristotle's *final cause*) science cannot pursue the epistemological and teleological questions raised by certain scientific disciplines themselves. Problems of knowing and being, of complexity and design and diversity, are beginning to plague the disciplines of quantum physics and cosmology, evolution, and molecular biology in the twenty-first century. There are questions emerging that demand attention to the metaphysical considerations of "why" as well as "what." The leading edge of science begs for explanations that the rules of science do not allow.

Science, which must be objective above all things, is dealing with some unsettling phenomena. The Heisenberg uncertainty principle and Bell's theorem of "spooky-action-at-a-distance," challenge what objectivity really is. Force carriers come and go, in and out of "reality," as matter at its lowest (or is that highest?) level redefines objectivity. And Richard Dawkins'

red face notwithstanding, certain levels of complexity in biological forms strain the limits of the neo-Darwinian synthesis to explain. Worse yet, science—honest, hard-working science—is under fire as never before by Evangelical Christian Fundamentalists, whose battle plan is to take no prisoners. The “Science Wars” are going strong, and scientists who only a few years ago might have been neutral on issues of spirituality are now understandably reactive to anything that sounds religious in tone. Once burned is twice shy. Who could blame them for their reactivity?

And yet, despite the reactive environment that prevails, there is new and genuine interest in the interface of spirituality and science. Inspired in part by the John Templeton Foundation over the last ten years or so, the inclusion of spiritual possibilities alongside of physical laws is a new but no longer startling development in our culture. “Science and religion” is no longer an oxymoron, and finding the two together in conversation has become an ordinary thing. But the boundaries between this new culture and the vicious, anti-intellectual agenda of the “religious right” are lost on scientists who see only danger when religion enters in. Reactivity becomes backlash, and a new spirit of active atheism is on the rise, animated by the energies of anger and indignation. The Science Wars are heating up. The “dialogue” is in danger of collapse.

A new intelligentsia is arising that is calling for the end of religion as a menace to the human race and an impediment to human understanding. Theirs is an impressive voice. A list of major players includes J. L. Mackie (*The Miracle of Theism*, 1981), Francis Crick (*The Astonishing Hypothesis*, 1994), Daniel Dennett (*Breaking the Spell*, 2005), and Richard Dawkins (*The God Delusion*, 2006). These books increase in vitriol over time, more acrimonious as time goes by. Reasoned scientific and philosophical arguments are giving way to emotional outbursts by scholars who have been ravaged by Christianity’s militant fringe and who now are looking for revenge. They are organizing on a university campus near you: There are websites and foundations springing up to encourage people to throw off the ancient yoke of religion and join the “brights,” as they smugly call

themselves, in the building of a new and harmonious (but pretty one-dimensional) world.²⁹

Why this surge of anti-religious energy from scientists and philosophers? First, we really do have our evangelical friends to thank for poking that snake of science; it is hard to see Christian charity at work in the tactics they employ. But that is not really it at all. It is the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven, from God, one mind at a time, that has got the scientific world in such a state. Since 1757 that's getting to be a lot of minds. And it is the vastation of the Christian Church, finally unraveling after 250 years. The old stuff just isn't working any more. Fear of loss manifests itself as anger, not fear, and anger shuts off the higher levels of the mind.

One thing more. There is just no plausible religion in the mainstream for scientists or philosophers to consider, were they so inclined. The religion they see at work in the world is a straw man, easily demolished with well-aimed questions—questions that traditional Judeo-Christian theologians cannot answer.

The last part of Chapter 4, "Why there almost certainly is no God" in Richard Dawkins' *God Delusion*,³⁰ is a perfect example of the trouble we are in. We find a big problem here, as Dawkins describes his experience at a Templeton Foundation conference at Cambridge on Science & Religion, a gathering at which he says he was the "token atheist amongst the 18 invited speakers." There he challenged the participants to respond to his point that "a God capable of designing a universe, or anything else, would have to be complex and statistically improbable."³¹ Describing the response, he says,

²⁹See the Appendix, pp.375–379, to Richard Dawkins' *God Delusion* entitled "A partial list of friendly addresses, for individuals needing support in escaping from religion." Dawkins has moved from polemicist to evangelist here, with this impressive listing of anti-religion organizations.

³⁰Dawkins, Richard, *The God Delusion* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2006).

³¹This argument against the existence of God, showcased in *The God Delusion*, is his best shot, which turns out to be little more than the tired old "infinite regress" argument dressed in an Armani suit.)

The theologians were *defining* themselves into an epistemological Safe Zone where rational argument could not reach them because they had *declared by fiat* that it could not. There are other ways of knowing besides the scientific, and one of these must be deployed to know God. The most important of these turned out to be the personal, subjective experience of God.

It is easy to feel his annoyance at the exclusivity of the ground rules. And it is easy to identify with his frustration at this obvious manipulation of the process.

Dawkins says that he was eventually attacked by name-calling (“nineteenth century”), which he assumed was in retaliation for his asking, “Do you believe in miracles,” “Do you believe Jesus was born of a virgin?,” and “Do you believe in the resurrection”? But the questions he asked were perfectly fair game. He broke through the customary barrier of politeness and asked Christian theologians if they believed the core doctrines of their own religions. According to Dawkins, “it embarrassed them because their rational minds knew it was absurd, so they would rather not be asked.”

Dawkins says he left the conference “stimulated and invigorated,” but from a close reading of this narrative, I believe that he left with his feelings hurt. And his hatred of all things religious was not diminished by the experience.

Did you find the problem here? Despite his editorializing, Dawkins is right on all counts. Traditional theology (which is all that these traditional theologians had at their disposal) could not respond *in kind* to his perfectly rational challenge (infinite regress), and these traditional theologians could not answer his direct challenges to the tenets of their faith. They stonewalled him; they retreated into the rarified air of “subjective experience.” In doing so, they made him the winner of the encounter. But they lost his respect.

So what is the answer to this predicament, with the theologians circling their wagons, and Dawkins & Co. on top, with confidence in their own human ingenuity growing by the day? Good religion, right? The obvious answer is deep, wide, New Church theology to provide these people with a rational basis for spiritual belief. But as counter-intuitive as it may seem, that would be wrong. Scientists will not (many, such as

Dawkins apparently cannot) engage in high-end theology, so they do it poorly when they try. Why? Because they are scientists, not theologians. They lack the vocabulary, the training, the experience, and the specialized vocabulary for doing deep theology. Scientists are no more conversant with these specialized things than theologians are with genetics or molecular biology. So why expect them to be?

The disconnect comes at the level of expectations—ours and theirs. They ask scientific questions. They expect scientific answers. This is to say they are looking for answers in their own language, because that is what they expect and understand. And what is wrong with that? Dawkins likes to taunt his religious enemies by saying (incorrectly for that matter) that the existence of God is a *scientific* question. If someone—anyone!—were to answer him in his own terms, I predict that he would at least stand and listen. It is time that someone did.

An Age-of-Reason Solution for a Very Modern Problem

Swedenborg confronted this challenge from the beginning of his career, so he set out to give scientists and philosophers scientific and philosophical answers to their rational challenges to faith. He did this very well in the scientific works that he wrote before his call. They are rich with meticulous description and reasoned speculation. They are rigorous in method and the terminology is precise. They are everything that scientific works should be, and more. Here we find good science applied from the axiom that the human body is a dynamic spiritual-natural unit, animated by a soul, and created for a purpose. But there is no magic in these works, only rational arguments from experience. They model an effective method that we can learn to use.

Contrary to the conventional wisdom of a hundred years of New Church culture, Swedenborg did not “abandon science” at his call. He had not “failed” at anything, although he was still had lots of work to do. He had accomplished his major goal, which was to lay out an intellectually defensible model for spiritual-natural interaction in the human body, in the language of science, to leave behind for generations to come. And then the Lord moved him to a different place, where he could continue to work

out the same great problems, but from the top down, and this time in the language of spirit.

*When Israel was a child, I loved him. And out of Egypt I have called my son.*³² In the Word, Egypt signifies natural truths. At some point a person is able to move up from his or her foundation of natural truths into the universalizing knowledge of spiritual reality. But most of us start out in Egypt. Isn't Egypt the right place for natural people to begin?

Scientists and philosophers want science and philosophy that makes sense, and Swedenborg's scientific and philosophical works are just what they will understand. There in those "scientific works" lie the core theological doctrines of the New Jerusalem: Influx, Degrees and Series, Forms, and Correspondence. Here is *formative substance*, flowing in from the spiritual world bringing human form to matter; and here is the soul's descent into the body, bringing life to even the smallest parts. Here is a spiritual-natural paradigm—not in the arcane language of New Church theology, but in the everyday language that scientists will recognize and understand. It's all there, in scientific terms, to fit their states and to meet their expectations. It is a wide and visible door into the New Jerusalem.

Not everyone will want to jump right through that door. But some will, and all will see how it is possible to enter with the understanding into the mysteries of faith. And that is worth a lot. Is this work easy? No. Sometimes we will be apprehensive that we won't know the right things to say, or that people will reject our ideas. But then we remember those stories about Moses and that other Apostle, Paul.

Tikkun

The Lord told Moses not to worry about what to tell the people of Egypt. He said, "I will help you speak and will teach you what to say." But for whatever reason in the literal sense, the Lord saw that His truth would require a "stepping down," *through* Moses, *to* Aaron, who could accommodate it to the perceptive requirements of those people at that time—the same message, but on a different level, and in the language of its receivers.

This is a powerful spiritual model for the healing of the Science Wars of our day. Scientists speak their own language and see things according

³² *Hosea* 11:1 (NKJV).

to their own cognitive structures. The language of theology is foreign to them, and kindles resentment in some; many scientists have experienced only irrational religious systems and are not receptive to ideas couched in religious terms at all. But if divine truth were to come to them in the language of science and philosophy, and if it were able to bring rational answers to their penetrating questions, then Aaron will have spoken, from the inspiration of Moses, whose wisdom was from the Lord Himself. This is the New Jerusalem stepping down to earth.

Won't people reject religion out of hand? Some surely will; that is what freedom is all about. But look what happened to Paul in Athens. "A few men became followers of Paul and believed," it says, "among them Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, also a woman named Damaris, and a number of others." That is a start, and it beats the dismal showing of traditional theology against the heated rhetoric of scientific materialism. If nothing else, it could bring a new level of civility to the conflict.

Look what happened to Swedenborg himself, who never set out to be revelator or a theologian, but who chose to devote his time and energy to Natural Philosophy. Natural truths eventually became his doorway—his personal gate—into the next level: from philosopher to theologian, from scientist to spiritual fisherman.

Swedenborg's science—his natural philosophy—has been neglected long enough. It is effective in addressing the questions that scientists are asking, and in answering their demands that any claims to spiritual causes for natural things be made in the language of logic and experience. I suggest that we, the keepers of this flame, teach it for what it is and prepare our New Church scientists to use it for the tool it is, that they can take to any university or areopagus of the modern world. That may have been the idea all along,³³ as Swedenborg watched his scientific works receding in the rear-view mirror, on his way to meet the New Jerusalem. □

³³That this was the actual case is suggested by the inscription chosen by Swedenborg for his *Dynamics of the Soul's Domain* (1740), a quotation from Seneca's Epistles, no. lxxix: *That man is born merely for a few, who thinks only of the people of his own generation. Many thousands of years and many thousands of peoples will come after you; it is to these that you should have regard. Malice may have imposed silence upon the mouths of all who were alive in your day; but there will come men who will judge you without prejudice and without favor.* In his own day the silence had begun, and Swedenborg apparently knew full well that he was writing to the scientists of the future.

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