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## TABLE OF CONTENTS.

**FIRST PAGE.**—The Spiritual Rostrum: Emanuel Swedenborg, the Seer, Sage and Theologian.  
**SECOND PAGE.**—Thomas Paine—Celebration of the One Hundred and Fifty-Fifth Anniversary of his Birth. Song of the Typewriter Girl. Poetry: Behold thy Brother, The Pre-Natal Life of Man. February Magazines. Obituary Notices.  
**THIRD PAGE.**—Banner Correspondence: Letters from Florida, South Dakota, Connecticut, Colorado, Massachusetts, New York, and Maryland. Letter from New York. Spiritual Phenomena: A Séance with Mrs. Martin. In Memoriam. Notes from Boston, etc.  
**FOURTH PAGE.**—The Power of the Spirit. The Same Old Story. The Spiritualistic Exhibit at the World's Fair. Mrs. Cora L. V. Richmond. Topics of the Hour. Laconics. Mediums—And Mediums. Newsw Notes and Fifty Points, etc.  
**FIFTH PAGE.**—Meetings in Massachusetts and Elsewhere. The West. Veteran Spiritualists' Union. Connecticut. New Advertisements, etc.  
**SIXTH PAGE.**—Message Department: Questions Answered and Individual Spirit Messages given through the Mediumship of Mrs. M. T. Longley.  
**SEVENTH PAGE.**—Spirit Messages—Continued. Mediums in Boston. Miscellaneous Advertisements.  
**EIGHTH PAGE.**—Meetings in Boston and New York, etc.

## The Spiritual Rostrum.

Emanuel Swedenborg, the Seer,  
Sage and Theologian.

A Discourse delivered before the First Society  
of Spiritualists, New York City, Sunday  
Evening, Nov. 26th, 1891,  
BY WALTER HOWELL.

(Reported specially for the Banner of Light  
by Mr. Walsch.)

It is scarcely to be hoped that during the short hour at our disposal we can do ample justice to so voluminous a writer, so marvelous a seer, and so transcendental and colossal a mind as that of the seer of the last century. But in a compendious way we shall endeavor to express as best we can such thoughts as may occur to us in relation to his life and work.

Emanuel Swedenborg was born at Stockholm, Sweden, in the year 1688. His father was a Lutheran clergyman, and, of course, his early surroundings were of a very devout character. During his boyhood and youth he was given as thorough an education as the times and circumstances of his parents enabled, and we find him at a very early age distinguishing himself in various branches of science. He also added to the literary wealth of his country, bequeathing innumerable benefits by his discoveries in mineralogy, and through his wonderful engineering abilities gained a national reputation. Again, we find him branching out into other sciences, writing treatises of various kinds, and in those marvelous scientific volumes anticipating many of the theories of the present century. In astronomy he foresaw the discovery of the seventh planet, but, unfortunately, not the eighth. Modern evolution in a modified form was also foreshadowed in his writings. "The Economy of the Mineral Kingdom, Vegetable Kingdom and Animal Kingdom," with other works, constitute his most valuable contribution to science. When we add to these his philosophical and theological works, the number of books written by this most indefatigable worker amount to more than fifty volumes. Obviously, it would be impossible to give anything like an adequate review of them in one discourse.

When about fifty years of age he appears to have left the domain of material science and entered more fully the realm of mysticism. By this time his interior vision had grown clearer. Having this spiritual sight, and a predisposition toward religion, it is not surprising to find him entering the sphere of the so-called unknown. His chief object, doubtless, was to ascertain the relation between objective phenomena and those mysterious laws of causation underlying them. This involved a lifting of the veil and an entrance into the spiritual world. With his previous scientific training, he could the more dispassionately survey the land of the soul.

As a result of these spiritual voyages of discovery we have given to us by Swedenborg, "The Arcana Cælestia," "True Christian Religion," "The Apocalypse Revealed," "The Apocalypse Explained," "Conjugal Love," "Angelic Wisdom Concerning Divine Providence," "Divine Wisdom," "Divine Love," "Heaven and Hell," and other works, giving the world a transfigured theology, and restoring what is called "the science of correspondences."

Long prior to his removal to the higher life he had prepared himself, as one about to take a journey, but with no misgivings about his future. He is said to have looked forward to it as one anticipates a merry-making.

Mark the wise and good man as he prepares for that season of rest to which all the sojourners of earth shall come when they have laid aside the dusty robes of their earthly pilgrimage, and in the light of the immortal morn takes his place among the seers, sages and prophets who have gone before. Ere he takes his leave of this world, he foresees the time of his departure, and predicts the day upon which his translation will occur, as may be verified by the following narrative.

Upon one occasion when John Wesley was in conference with his ministers, prior to taking a journey into the Provinces, Wesley received a note from Swedenborg, in which he said he had been informed while in the spirit world that he, Wesley, desired to have an interview with him. Wesley, addressing his ministers, said: "Brethren, here is a very mysterious

circumstance. For a long time I have had a desire to have an interview with the seer, Emanuel Swedenborg. I have never expressed that desire to any living being, but here comes a note from him stating that he has been informed, while in the spirit world, of my secret wish." Unfortunately, Wesley's journey in the Provinces necessitated his being away for a long period. He wrote Swedenborg to that effect, whereupon his reply was that upon a certain date, naming the day, he (Swedenborg) should enter the spiritual world, not to return. During Wesley's sojourn in the country Emanuel Swedenborg passed to the inner life. On referring to the date named in the note, Wesley found that Swedenborg had really taken his flight upon the very day foretold by himself.

When the snows of about eighty-five winters had whitened his locks, he, like a shock of corn fully ripened, was gathered into the garner of celestial glory. Having asked the time, at his approaching death, and received a reply, perceiving that his hour had come he said, "That is well." Then gathering the drapery of his couch about him he fell sweetly asleep, and was awakened by those with whom he was in spiritual sympathy in the home not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, there to reap the fruits of his benign labor.

### HIS SEERSHIP.

Swedenborg cannot be regarded in the ordinary sense of the term as a medium; that is to say, he was not apparently subject to what we Modern Spiritualists call control. His intellectual perception, his spiritual insight and clairaudient faculty were so highly developed in later years that he, as an independent individual, heard and saw things pertaining to subjective reality. In his interior consciousness these became, for the time or state of being, objective to him. Were we to suppose that these visions were untainted by his personality, we should be untrue to the portrait of actual fact. There have been no seers or media in the history of the world of whom it could be said they discerned absolute truth. In entering paradisaical, purgatorial, or the infernal regions through the mediumship of Dante, we find ourselves looking through the stained glass window of a Roman Catholic Cathedral. Again, if we would use the Miltonic verse as our avenue of communication, we should behold Paradise lost and Paradise regained, in forms and colors peculiar to a puritanical age.

When we become students of Swedenborg we still confront the unavoidable element of personality. In his writings we perceive most plainly the Lutheran garb in which his thoughts and ideas are clothed. It is vain to hope that through any channel we shall come face to face with truth in its purity. Our early education, our ancestral bias and the psychical influences of our times, are the tints that paint our heaven-born thoughts and inspired sentiments. Notwithstanding all Swedenborg's spiritual illumination, he never entirely laid aside the theological swaddling clothes. True, the modifications of the doctrines of the Church by Swedenborg were such as to mark an epoch in religious history. And when we remember the environment of the seer, this transfiguration is truly glorious.

Our modern media are alike tinted by their surroundings and predilections. There are none through whom the truth shines in all its pristine purity. Would that we could be so divested of our individuality that wisdom, love, justice, mercy and the like might burst upon the world in all their effulgence! Alas! we hear too much of this kind of talk: "What a wonderful speaker she is!" "What an orator he is!" "Did you observe what a mastery of poetic rhetoric he manifests?" When love comes untainted by earthly or selfish affections, when truth dawns upon us in its transcendent whiteness, when justice and mercy appear in their beauty, then the world shall not stop to admire the medium or the prophet or the seer, but will instantly fall down and worship at the shrine of these attributes. How gladly would the self-sacrificing spirit lay itself upon the altar of human progress, and be obliterated forever, if the divine qualities of which we have spoken could be received and adored for their own sake. We never praise the transparency of a window when gazing through it upon some lovely scenery, but admire the landscape. Let us in like manner cease our over-adulation of mere instrumentality; let us bow at the shrine of truth, serve in the temple of justice, and behold earth and heaven united as one.

A perusal of Swedenborg's diary will convince us that, though his seership was of so marvelous a character, it was, nevertheless, evolved and subject to the laws of development. We are, as a rule, introduced to Swedenborg's philosophical and theological works, and never learn aught of his earlier experiences. Some of these are rather amusing. Since the average New Churchman is inclined to regard Spiritualism as beneath his notice, we will mention one case in point: On one occasion, when Swedenborg was discussing with Luther in the spiritual world, he says Luther became so angry that he "threw the Word at his (Swedenborg's) head." Now, had a Modern Spiritualist related a similar story to a New Churchman as having taken place at a séance, the latter would no doubt have shaken his sagittary head and exclaimed: "There's evidence enough of the disorderly nature of your communicating spirits!" But it was Swedenborg who had this experience, and that makes all the difference to the ecclesiastical New Churchman! True, this was a characteristic trick of Martin Luther; for once upon a time when the devil visited his monkish cell, he

threw the inkstand at his Satanic majesty. "The stain of ink remains to this day to witness if I lie." As an evidence of the spirit of that desire to any living being, but here comes a note from him stating that he has been informed, while in the spirit world, of my secret wish." Unfortunately, Wesley's journey in the Provinces necessitated his being away for a long period. He wrote Swedenborg to that effect, whereupon his reply was that upon a certain date, naming the day, he (Swedenborg) should enter the spiritual world, not to return. During Wesley's sojourn in the country Emanuel Swedenborg passed to the inner life. On referring to the date named in the note, Wesley found that Swedenborg had really taken his flight upon the very day foretold by himself.

Swedenborg gave to his friends and court acquaintance wonderful evidence of his seership. In matters of a secular character he occasionally used his inner sight. It was his scientific training and philosophical mind which gave to his seership the additional advantages which are lacking in many of our modern seers and seeresses. The seer of the last century has not given to the world the *ultima thule* of divine wisdom. Wherever there are eyes to see, there are visions of truth. Wherever there are spiritual lungs capable of dilating with upper air, there is the spirit of inspiration. We are the recipients of revelations to-day. The world's great teachers are illumined now. Let no man say here is the grand finale.

### HIS PHILOSOPHY.

The philosophy of our seer is distinctly the identity system. In his early writings he adopts the analytical method in preference to the synthetic. Later on we observe that he makes most daring speculations in the synthetic direction. The light of Egypt cast upon the horizon of his mind its golden beams. In it he beheld man as a microcosm, or a universe concentrated. The whole creation was a macrocosm, or man diffused. So that to truly understand man was to comprehend the universe, the universe with all its objective symbols being an outward manifestation of states of thought and affection within. This macrocosm, or grand man, is not readily comprehended by the uncultured mind. It may therefore require a little illustration to enable you to understand what Swedenborg means when he tells us that the universe is in the form of a man. You must try to separate in your thought the idea of form from shape. We have perception, memory, intelligence, emotion and will. Now instead of conceiving of the universe as in the shape of a man, try to think of different planets as having functions and faculties manifesting themselves through the life-qualities that predominate in any given planet, and by uniting the whole as one grand exhibition of divinely human attributes, you have the idea somewhat clearer; or, to put the matter otherwise, if instead of contemplating yourself in shape, you conceive your form as expressed in those capacities of mind and heart, and you will see this thought as Shakespeare expressed it when he said:

"His form is of such lofty pitch,  
That were the whole frame here  
Your roofs would not contain it."

Just as one drop of the ocean contains all the chemical elements of the vast world of waters, so man possesses in his microcosmic nature those qualities of mentality and combinations of matter that pervade the whole domain of nature. In the relationship observed between mind and matter in man we may find the key with which to unlock the mysterious union of the spiritual world with the mundane.

Therefore, seeing that every object has its spiritual counterpart, it follows as a corollary that the objective forms we see correspond to spiritual realities.

Within the natural world there is a spiritual world; within the spiritual lies the celestial, and within the latter the divine is veiled, or, through it, revealed. The natural sun exists by virtue of a spiritual sun, and for this reason matter is forever an index-finger, pointing upward toward spirit, which makes the existence of all outward forms possible.

The three kingdoms in nature—the mineral, vegetable and animal—correspond to and receive their life-influx from the three heavens—natural, spiritual and celestial. On the other hand we are told that we receive an inverse influx from the hells. Man as a free-will being stands between these contending spiritual forces and chooses for himself which shall ultimately prove victorious.

Perhaps one of the greatest difficulties with which the present century-thinker may have to contend with here lies in the difficulty, if not actual impossibility, to verify the truth of this hypothesis. Although the spiritual world may be regarded as a causal sphere, this only postpones the problem. The fact that creation is regarded as being from the Lord himself, out of himself, does not make it more thinkable. The relativity of thought and the conditions of consciousness alike debar us from coming face to face with the nomenon. All we can know either in this world or any other seems to be a form of phenomena, or appearances according to state of consciousness.

There is much of prose poetry in this philosophy, and one cannot help being struck with its similarity with the spiritual teaching of to-day; at the same time the former and the latter are often presented in too concrete a form to be truly spiritual. This, of course, is the fault of our state. Doubtless by-and-by we shall possess a capacity to sense the more plastic thoughts and subtle emotions of that higher life. Meanwhile, angelic thoughts must need clothe themselves in those more opaque forms in which their celestial rays are obscured from our beclouded vision.

### HIS THEOLOGY.

The belief in a golden age in the past entertained by Plato is endorsed by Swedenborg. Whilst recognizing irregularities in the evolu-

tion of the race, which imply retrogression as well as progression, we here affirm that, taking humanity as a whole, we never occupied a higher position than we do at present. Our ancestors may have enjoyed an Eden of innocence, but it was likewise a Paradise of ignorance. No doubt the origin of evil is sought to be explained upon the theory of a fall of man, but this evades the real question after all. Perhaps the hypothesis of polarity offers as good a solution as any, viewed from whatever standpoint. However, it is still a vexed problem. If we clothe God in moral attributes like those we regard as good, and judge Deity from our finite point of view, we are indeed at a loss to solve the enigma.

### HIS GOD IDEA.

In the mind of Swedenborg God is love itself, wisdom itself, and power itself. He is the essence of life itself. God is one. The Infinite Jehovah is his name. Here we see an abandonment of the tripersonalistic conception, a great advance upon the trinitarian theory. Love creates by means of wisdom. A trinity of essentials takes the place of a trinity of persons. Man, having been created in the likeness and image of God, is a trine being: intellect, sensibilities and will. Or, if you like Paul's version better, body, soul and spirit. These, you will observe, correspond to the three kingdoms in nature, and the three heavens of which we spoke a while ago. Thus man and nature reveal the essential trinity.

If we remember that these are but symbols of the real, and not the verity itself, these emblems will do no harm. But there is such danger in all these efforts to define the indefinable, to comprehend the incomprehensible, to conceive the inconceivable, that the mind forgets the symbolic nature and insists upon an unqualified acceptance. Let us ever remember that the ultimate mystery is inscrutable.

### DOCTRINE OF THE LORD.

Now we come to that point where Swedenborg's early education colors most highly his visions. The Lord Jesus Christ is his revealer. Further, the Lord Jesus Christ is very God; Jehovah manifest through Jesus. In him is the fullness of the Godhead bodily. Strange that so profound a thinker should offer us such an anthropomorphic conception. Yet, when we come to study his Arcana, we find him repeatedly telling us that in order to rightly comprehend the word we must eliminate therefrom the all of time, the all of person, and the all of space. Now let us apply this method to the case under consideration. Jesus the person, Palestine the place, nineteen centuries ago the time; and what have we left? The ideal. This is ever being born, and yet never confined to one matrix; sacrificed upon every soul's Calvary, and yet never dies. It makes every land holy. It declares every age to be Messianic. Instead, therefore, of seeking our Christ in time, place or person, let us behold in universal humanity the true, the beautiful, and the good. Rather than assert the incarnation of God two thousand years ago, let us affirm that goodness, justice, love, truth, and the like, were, are, and ever more will be manifested in the flesh.

### THE ATONEMENT.

The ignoring of the dogma of the trinity as untenable undermines the foundation of vicarious atonement, or doctrine of substitution. Hence, God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. The dogma of the atonement is here transformed into at-onement, or at one mind. Man in an unregenerate state may be regarded as far from the ideal, or likeness and image of the perfect. Therefore, in so far as the life, teachings and ideal of Jesus inspire us to nobler endeavor, in so far as he is the means of our approximate oneness with the ideal. The blood receives an esoteric interpretation which makes it infinitely more rational. The lamb being the symbol of innocence, Jesus manifesting the spirit of meekness, the blood of the latter has been called the blood of the former; meaning that the life, for which blood is a symbol of innocence when exchanged in lieu of one of guilt, becomes the blood that cleanseth from sin, whilst the life's blood of selfishness, when shed, is for the remission of sin. Thus it will be seen that, in mystical language, the blood shed and the blood applied are not the same blood, but stand as symbols of the egoistic and altruistic life. With the spirit of this idea of the atonement we have no quarrel, but when New Churchmen, who profess to be of all men most spiritual, insist upon a too literal interpretation, we most certainly raise our dissenting voice.

### THE SECOND COMING OF THE LORD.

A loftier view than the old church offers is given us in New Church literature upon this subject; although even here the Lord is represented as coming for the second time in the year 1756 or thereabouts. Now the truth is many of us live in the antediluvian age, others in the Moslem dispensation, some in the first Christian era, and a few perhaps in the second Christian era, whilst, on the other hand, there may have been exalted souls prior to the birth of the historic Jesus, who enjoyed the spiritual blessings which the state called the second advent reveals. May truth descend upon us and dispel the darkness of our ignorance; may love banish the winter of our selfishness; and may the spirit of justice away its sceptre within the soul of us all. Then:

"No more shall nation against nation rise,  
Or ardent warriors meet with hateful eyes,  
Nor fields with gleaming steel be covered o'er;  
Nor brazen trumpets kindle rage no more;  
But useless lances into scythes shall bend,  
And the blood-faction in a plowshare end."

In every cradle where sleeps the infant

child shall be found a prince of peace. Over every maternal couch the angels shall sing their glad anthem. Universal Brotherhood shall be established, and the idea reign on earth supreme.

### THE LAST JUDGMENT.

This is said to have taken place at the same time as the second advent. Now is the judgment of this world. Every age judges the preceding age. To-morrow if wise enough shall judge to-day. If in this hall to-night the voice of conscience condemns you, the judgment-seat for you is erected! Within you the trumpet blast is heard, and lo! thoughts, motives, affections and desires are rushing to the bar to receive their sentence! To those elements of character that approach the ideal will be uttered the words: Come, ye blessed. And to those not in harmony with the higher it shall be said: Depart ye. Thus information and reformation, regeneration and generation go hand in hand.

Swedenborg ever emphasizes the ethical. "The religion of life is to do good, and to do good is the life of religion." Man is judged not by his creeds, but by his deeds. The love of truth, the embodiment of charity, the manifestation of love and chastity, are always insisted on as the only passport to heaven. We are exhorted to unite truth and goodness, faith and charity, love and wisdom, that we may enter into fullness of conjunction with the Lord and the angelic heavens.

### THE RESURRECTION.

There is scarcely sufficient difference between the teaching of Swedenborg and ourselves to make comment needful. "There is a natural body and there is (not shall be) a spiritual body." It is not the body that doth the soul create, but the spirit that doth the body make. We have been too much accustomed to speak of our body as though it were really our self, the true I. We should reverse this inverted order and affirm thus: I am a spirit, I have a body! When we thus learn to think and speak we shall lose much of that ultra-materialism which has so darkened our spiritual vision.

Man does not die. Man is never buried. The body dies, and it alone is buried. The death of the body involves the resurrection of the man. This body of ours is not sown in burial. When was it sown? In embryo or at birth. It was then sown in weakness; at death it is raised in power. It was sown into conditions of dishonor; at death it is raised in glory. It was sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. It was sown in mortality, it is raised in immortality. Here, then, Paul, Swedenborg and ourselves are in sympathy.

### HEAVEN AND HELL.

Though the visions of the seer reveal many truths held by us in common, when his views of heaven and hell are presented to us, we are not fascinated by the one and we loathe the other, if the usual interpretation given to his writings be accurate; but, as we shall see presently, there is room for disputation even upon Swedenborgian grounds.

The doctrine of discreted degrees taught by the New Church makes advancement upward after death impossible. We may progress along the line, or on the level of those planes opened within us while here on earth, but we are forever debarred from ascending to those still more interior spheres or higher planes. For many reasons we emphatically refuse to assent to such a fixity of state. Not only is it to be refuted upon grounds of involved tendency, but upon humane principles. An eternal hell, even though it may be modified by a philosophy like that held by the New Church, is nevertheless an everlasting disgrace to God and humanity. To imagine spheres hermetically sealed on the lower side, or external plane, and never to be opened from above or within, is to imagine, at least, for a vast number of poor humanity, that God could not or would not remedy the ills of his children. And if, on the other hand, it is affirmed that God could not keep man in freedom, then the finite will prove itself virtually stronger than the infinite will. If the passage in Isaiah be a true presentation of divine sentiment, what can we understand by this language? "My word shall not return unto me void, but shall accomplish that which I please in the thing whereto I send it." If it is God's will and pleasure, that all men should be saved, then if all are not eventually saved, then is God's will limited and his pleasure diminished.

Now, according to the doctrine of influx, we at present receive our life-influxes from the heavens and hells. Poisonous plants and carnivorous animals are the expression of hellish influx, while forms of flora, and fauna, good for food and beautiful to look upon, receive their influx from the heavens. By-and-by, we are told, a time will come when the poisonous plants and carnivorous animals will either become obsolete or be transformed, so that the kingdom of the heavens may be represented more fully upon the earth according to man's then exalted state. Now if the spiritual world is the world of causation, and this is the realm of effects, what are we to infer when these changes take place? Obviously, we must conclude that as the effects of hellish influx have vanished, the causes that produced them must have ceased. If this proves the redemption of the hells, then as a corollary, we should expect that passage from the natural heaven to the spiritual, and from the spiritual to the celestial, and so on, progressively forever, were the real order of psychic unfoldment. If Swedenborg taught the doctrine of an eternal hell, he did so as a result of early education, judging from appearances the state of man to be everlastingly fixed. For surely the most ultra



Additional line will be charged. Ten words on an average  
a line. No space for poetry under the above heading.







**ALBANY, Feb. 8th.**—Assemblyman Stein, after nailing the execution at Sing Sing prison of Charles McElvaine at noon to-day, hurried back to Albany and introduced an amendment to the criminal code repealing the law providing for the execution of criminals by electricity.











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