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THE INITIAL CONCEPTION IN THE *PRINCIPIA*.

IN the last (October) issue of THE NEW PHILOSOPHY the Rev. J. F. Potts has two papers on "The Principia Theory of Creation." I wish to correct the misapprehension which lies at the basis of Mr. Potts's statement that Swedenborg tried to deduce the world from mathematical points, not knowing that mathematical points are mere positions; and from mere positions nothing material can be made.

To correct this misapprehension it is only necessary to turn to Swedenborg's carefully chosen language. He says in the first place:—

Geometricians ascribe the origin of all their figures and bodies to such a point [the mathematical point], *yet not as belonging to the science itself, because the science is incapable of defining it in a geometrical manner.* Thus geometry seeks for its origin *outside of itself*, deriving this point *not from itself*, but *from rational philosophy.* (Chap. II., 2.)

Here Swedenborg says the point lies outside of the field of geometry, that it cannot be defined geometrically. He means by this that the point has no geometrical properties, no dimensions. It has only one limit, namely, position, and this limit is in the first instance determined by the mind and not by any of the properties of body, that is by geometrical attributes.

In thus raising the point out of and above the field of geometry Swedenborg, no doubt, came to new difficulties, but he was well aware of the situation.

In looking for the origin of geometry and of the world outside of themselves, Swedenborg was perfectly correct, and his argument for the existence of the finite from the infinite is clear and sound. Geometry has its origin in the conceptions of the mind and not in the properties of bodies, and the conception of the point is the first of those conceptions which make the science of geometry. This course of thought is in entire harmony with his subsequent teaching that the

spiritual world is the world of causes and the natural world the world of effects. This is enough to show that Mr. Potts is mistaken at the start and therefore in his whole contention, but it is worth while to follow Swedenborg's thought further, to see just what his conception of the first natural point really was.

In general it is perfectly clear that Swedenborg is not thinking simply of the mathematical point as it is conceived in the ordinary science of geometry, but he is viewing it philosophically. He distinctly says it cannot be defined geometrically, it has no geometrical properties, no properties of dimension, but it must be conceived as an element of rational philosophy. Defined as to its structure it is simple. In terms of its relations it is midway between the finite and the infinite. Defined as to its essence it is mere motion. Geometrically considered it is nothing, philosophically considered it is the means of creation. It is what he afterwards described in "Divine Love and Wisdom," No. 4, as a created and finite thing so formed that the divine can be in it and by means of it create distinct outer objects.

The interest in this conception centres in the statement that the first natural point is mere motion. This presents a difficulty which Swedenborg was perfectly well aware of. He is careful to remind the reader that in the ordinary mechanical sense motion which is not the motion of some moving body is nothing at all, and with this precaution he goes on to say that the first natural point is pure and total motion. This pure and total motion, he says, cannot be defined geometrically, for there is no such motion in geometrical or finite things. This motion can only be defined in rational terms, that is, in terms of its relations. It must be viewed rationally not geometrically. "The Infinite cannot be conceived geometrically, yet it is not on that account nothing." (*Principia*, Chap. II., 12.)

The infinite, the simple, and the finite are all

existences no one of which can be defined in terms of the other, and so any one of them in terms of the other is nothing. Here Swedenborg recognizes the three discrete degrees which he afterwards called the divine, the spiritual, and the natural, and he here specifies one of the fundamental characteristics of discrete degrees, namely, that they have nothing in common, or to put it otherwise, each is indescribable in terms of the other except by using the language of analogy or correspondence. We may state the case in terms of matter and spirit thus: Try to describe matter in terms of spirit and you say nothing about it. This is the trouble with idealism. On the other hand, try to describe spirit in terms of matter and you equally say nothing, and here is where materialism fails. But use the language of analogy or correspondence and you at once become intelligible.

This is the situation in which Swedenborg now finds himself, and he sees it quite clearly. To say anything about this first natural point, this first simple ens, he must use the language of geometry analogically.

If we go further and try to express the essence of this pure and total motion we can do no better than to call it effort (*conatus*). To quote:—

How then are we to conceive of this purity and totality in motion? Certainly in no other way, if geometrically and rationally understood, than as an internal state, or effort to motion. (*Ibid.*, 13.)

Here Swedenborg emerges distinctly on the plane of the spirit. Effort can only be said of the will, and we here again see him on the same ground that he afterwards occupied, when he taught that the spiritual world is the world of causes and the natural world the world of effects.

It is quite beyond the purpose and limits of this paper to discuss the ultimate value of this conception of the first natural point in a theory of creation, or to show even in a general way the significance of this second chapter of the *Principia*.

I will close with the remark that if any one will master the thought of this chapter it will probably mark an epoch in his intellectual life. I hope that the time is not far distant when the attempt to exalt Swedenborg as a seer by degrading him as a scientist and philosopher will be regarded not merely as suicidal but as a puerile superstition.

Swedenborg, whether as scientist or as seer, was at least a serious man, and he should be treated seriously.

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THE *PRINCIPIA* THEORY OF CREATION. — A REPLY.

IN the articles, "The *Principia* Theory of Creation," by the Rev. John F. Potts, published in the October issue of THE NEW PHILOSOPHY, there is presented the strongest attack that has ever been made publicly, by a New-Churchman, against Swedenborg's method of reasoning in his scientific and philosophic investigations, and against the *Principia*. The writer, unable to make certain statements of the *Principia* agree with the Writings, concludes that of necessity the *Principia* must be wrong, and that Swedenborg was unable to know anything rightly about creation before his introduction into the spiritual world. But it is our opinion that there is no difference if we limit the *Principia* to its own plane, and think of the terms used in it as they are there defined, and not as those same terms are afterwards used in the Writings.

In the prefatory remarks the writer says: "The subject of creation could not properly be understood by Swedenborg before the opening of his spiritual sight," because "creation is not a proper subject of the investigation of science, but belongs to the department of theology. Science deals with effects, and causes can never be known except by revelation; they cannot be inferred from a study of effects, but must actually be told from heaven, that is, by God Himself."

There are two points here to which we would call attention:—

First: That Swedenborg knew nothing properly of creation before his spiritual sight was opened.

Second: That creation is not a proper subject for the investigation of science, but belongs to the department of theology.

To these two should be added a third, which is implied rather than stated in so many words, namely: That Swedenborg in the *Principia* did not confine himself to the plane of effects, but by means of experience, geometry, and reason tried to investigate spiritual causes.

As to the first point: "That Swedenborg knew nothing properly of creation before his spiritual sight was opened." The writer seems entirely to forget that Swedenborg was all his life a firm believer in the Lord, and a devout student of the Word, and as he was a pious man we have no reason to doubt that he had illustration in what he there read, and thus knew from revelation that creation was a work of God and that it was successive. In fact he says so in so many words in the *Principia*:—

The Holy Scriptures themselves also give us plain information on this subject, and teach us that the world was created by God or by the Infinite; that it was created successively, that it was created in time, and that the Infinite is an *ens* in itself, that it is an *esse* which is, that it is all in all, and that it is universal. (§ 3, Chap. II.)

This passage clearly teaches that Swedenborg knew and acknowledged that creation was a work of God. He states it as an accepted fact, and he does not reason about it whether it be so or not, and with this acknowledgment as a starting point, together with certain universal principles which he had observed, he then proceeds to describe the formation of natural things, and the mode of their operation. And this we believe he was able to do; for besides being an earnest student of the Word (from which he learned that the world was created by God), he was also a student of the works of the ancient sopher, and they, we know from the Writings, had some knowledges about creation which were handed down to them from the Ancient Church; and we are told that as they desired to know truths for the sake of truths, that is, for the sake of uses, it was granted to them to see truths and to become intelligent from their own meditation upon them (see *Earths in the Universe*, 38). The same would apply to Swedenborg, who was a seeker after truth for the sake of truth from his early youth, and not only a seeker, but also a teacher of the same, as he tells us in the work on the "Intercourse Between the Soul and Body" (20). Moreover, he virtually says in the "Adversaria," that his theory of creation is true. For in the early part of that work he refers to what is said in the first part of "Worship and Love of God," which treats of creation more briefly than is done in the *Principia*, but nevertheless, according to the same principles, and he tells us that he compared what is there said with the Word, and that he was surprised at the agreement. Surely if there had been something so radically wrong with his method and theory, as is claimed, he would have known it when he wrote the "Adversaria" and told us of it.

As to the second point: "That creation is not a proper subject for the investigation of science, but belongs to the department of theology." If by this is meant spiritual creation or the manner in which the spiritual operates into the natural, we can agree with him; but if by it is meant that we cannot investigate the manner or mode in which natural things are created, and how accord-

ing to certain laws things compounded are formed from those less compounded, nor what those laws are, we must differ with the writer of the article, and even he practically admits it, when he says "that science deals with effects," and as all natural things are on the plane of effects, therefore they can be investigated by science.

This brings us to the third point: That Swedenborg in the *Principia* did not confine himself to the plane of effects, but by means of experience, geometry, and reason tried to investigate spiritual causes. In answer to this it will only be necessary to quote Swedenborg's own statement as to the purpose of his work:—

In this first division of our *Principia* we treat in part generally and in part specifically of the elements; of their progress from the first and most subtle, to the last which is circumfused around the earth, also of the motion of the elemental particles, of their figure and whatever else may relate to them as an attribute or as an essential to their nature. (Chap. I., p. 3.)

Again, in the same chapter, he says:—

With regard to the knowledge of the elements, which is the *chief subject* of the discussion in the present volume of our *Principia*, I confess that it appears to be of the most occult nature, being remote and imperceptible to the ken of the senses. Nevertheless, the motions of the volumes of bodies contained in the elements are perceptible to our sight and hearing. Thus elementary nature places before our eyes the most diverse phenomena, by which as so many tokens she seems to reveal herself. (§ 3.)

These passages clearly show that it was not Swedenborg's purpose to investigate anything prior to nature, but that it was his purpose to investigate elemental nature, and her interior and active forces, which in themselves are invisible to the senses, but yet may be known from their effects which are visible, and in his investigation he was guided by this fundamental principle: "That nature is the same and is governed by the same mechanical principles, in the smallest finite existences, as in the greatest" (§ 2), which principle corresponds to this from the Writings: "That the Divine is the same in the greatest and least things." The writer virtually admits that Swedenborg confined himself to the plane of effects when he admits that Swedenborg did not apply the rules of geometry to spiritual and divine things.

Commenting on Swedenborg's means of acquiring knowledge and wisdom, our friend says that "he begins at the bottom and therefore at the

wrong end." This would be true if Swedenborg had investigated spiritual causes by means of experience, geometry, and reason, but we have already shown that such was not his purpose; nor does he mean by wisdom and philosophy in the *Principia*, what he means by wisdom and theology in the Writings. It is evident from a careful reading of his work that by wisdom he does not mean spiritual wisdom but natural wisdom, and this is confirmed by the Writings, where it is said "that he was a seeker after natural truth from early youth" (Influx, 20). And if he was a seeker after natural truth, the wisdom that he speaks of must be natural wisdom, and not spiritual wisdom, and therefore the means that he speaks of must be means which conduce to natural wisdom. This is also manifest from his own expressions as to the purpose of his work (Chap. I., p. 3, § 3). It would seem from this that he clearly saw the distinction between the two, and hence when he defines what he means by philosophy, he does not confuse it with theology, for he says:—

By philosophy is here meant the knowledge of the mechanism of our world, or of whatever in the world is subject to the laws of geometry, or which it is possible to unfold to view by experience, assisted by geometry and reason. (Chap. I., p. 2.)

As this statement is made at the very beginning of his work, it behooves us to consider the work in the light of it, for from it we see how far he intended to apply experience, geometry, and reason. But this is not the only place in which he limits philosophy to the plane of effects. He says:—

When therefore the philosopher has arrived at the end of his studies, even supposing him to have acquired so complete a knowledge of all mundane things that nothing more remains for him to learn, he must stop there, for he can never know the nature of the Infinite Being, of His Supreme Intelligence, Supreme Providence, Supreme Love, Supreme Justice, and other infinite attributes. (§ 4.)

Here again we see that Swedenborg limits philosophy to the plane of effects, and that by it he cannot go beyond effects; thus he recognized that there was a point where he had to stop, which also to a certain extent involves a recognition of discrete degrees, and therefore the causes which he speaks of are not spiritual causes but natural causes. For in nature those things which are more interior and invisible may be called the cause of those which are more exterior and visible.

Nevertheless, all are in the plane of effects relatively to the spiritual and to the Lord who is the primal cause of all, and hence having Swedenborg's own limitations on the scope of his work in our mind, we cannot fail to see that where he speaks of causes he is referring to the interior and subtle forces in nature which are the proximate or instrumental causes of nature as we behold it. That he means this we see from the following:—

Nature is only a word which expresses all the motive forces proceeding from the first motion of the Infinite till the world is completed; with this first motion it begins and as this is produced from the Infinite so also must nature; they therefore are mere children, and have reached scarcely the first threshold of true philosophy, who ascribe to nature the origin of all things to the exclusion of the Infinite, or who confuse the Infinite and nature, when yet the latter is only an effect, a causate or thing caused; the Infinite being its efficient and cause. Nature, however, when once produced, may be called the efficient and cause of the world in so far as all things afterwards successively exist by derivative motive forces and modifications, but *it cannot be called the first cause*, for no other idea can be conceived of the first motion and mode than that of an immediate production from the Infinite. (§ 4.)

Thus it is evident that Swedenborg recognized degrees of causes, and throughout his work he investigated not the first cause, by means of experience, geometry, and reason; but secondary or instrumental causes, and this he was perfectly competent to do. What he says concerning the first cause he derives from Revelation, and he admits it, for he says "whatever is confirmed by Holy Scripture is in no need of confirmation from reason, from rational philosophy, or from geometry" (§ 3; Chap. II.). Now, since Swedenborg limits his investigations to nature, it follows that the passages quoted from the *Principia* (in the article under consideration), in order to show that Swedenborg attempted to arrive at spiritual causes by natural means, cannot mean that at all, but that he attempted to investigate and did investigate proximate or instrumental causes; for as we have seen, he was well aware that he could know nothing beyond the natural by investigation.

To the statement that Swedenborg "began at the bottom, and therefore at the wrong end," we find added that Swedenborg was well aware that there was something wrong with his method, and to confirm this the writer cites what Swedenborg says about the two states of man—his state of integrity before the fall, and his state of pervers-

sity after the fall; and that man since the fall must be instructed through the senses. But we fail to see how Swedenborg's knowledge of the two states of man — of how man in his state of integrity had connate knowledge, and how man since the fall has to learn everything through the senses — is any admission that his mode of reasoning is wrong. On the contrary, it is a confirmation that his method of procedure, that is, of using experience, geometry, and reason as means of acquiring knowledge, is the correct one, for otherwise man must necessarily remain in total ignorance.

The writer states that Swedenborg "did not know where to draw the line between the world of causes and the world of effects; and indeed was not aware that these two worlds are discretely distinct from each other;" and concludes from this that "he therefore tried to penetrate beyond the line which divides them, without being aware of what he was doing, and innocently carried over into the investigation of the spiritual world a method of research which is absolutely inapplicable to it." Both premise and conclusion seem to us to be erroneous; but even if the premise were true, the conclusion would still be erroneous, for Swedenborg excepts from this mode of investigation things spiritual and divine, and limits it, as we have shown before, to natural things, and if he limits himself to the natural, we must accept his limitation and be careful not to extend the sphere of his work beyond what he intends. But we will not even grant the premise. For if Swedenborg recognized that there were discrete degrees in nature, degrees in the relation of cause and effect, or prior and posterior, he surely also knew that what is spiritual is discrete from the natural and not continuous with it. If he did not know this and thought that it was continuous why should he have said that "the philosopher, even supposing him to have acquired so complete a knowledge of all mundane things that nothing more remains for him to learn, must there stop" (§ 4)? He surely would not have him stop there if he thought that the two worlds were continuous. But he knew they were not continuous, and therefore he limits his method of reasoning to nature. If after stating that he thus limits it, he should have done as is claimed he did, that is, tried to penetrate beyond the line which divides the world of causes from the world of effects, by this method of investigation, he must have done so with his eyes open and not innocently, and hence we might ask, where appears his "manifest

honesty and sincerity"? But throughout the *Principia* we find nothing of the kind. He applies experience, geometry, and reason to nature alone, from her first beginnings to her ultimate effects, or from her inmosts to her outmosts, and therefore the quotation from the "Divine Love and Wisdom" (119), that causes, by which are meant spiritual causes, are not seen from effects, does not contradict Swedenborg's method of reasoning as applied to the *Principia*, but on the contrary there is really a wonderful agreement between what is said about the limitations that there are to philosophy, and what is said about the limitations of reasoning from effects.

In the article we also find this from the "Divine Love and Wisdom" (107):—

It is most necessary that it be known that there are two suns, one spiritual and the other natural; the spiritual sun for those who are in the spiritual world, and the natural sun for those who are in the natural world. Unless this is known nothing can be rightly understood about creation and about man. . . . Effects can indeed be seen, but unless the causes of the effects are seen at the same time, the effects cannot appear except as in night.

This is quoted to show that Swedenborg knew nothing rightly about creation and about man, for the writer assumes that Swedenborg was entirely ignorant of any cause prior to the natural. But we have already shown that Swedenborg did acknowledge God to be the Creator and Cause of all things in the universe, and hence he could know natural effects and their relations to each other, even if he did not fully know the spiritual which was in those effects, as he did after his inspiration. Moreover, that Swedenborg knew more of the real cause of creation than he is given credit for in the article, we need refer only to the "Economy of the Animal Kingdom," numbers 251 to 266 of Part II., where he tells us that there are two suns, one of nature and the other above nature, which is a sun of life and wisdom. It will be sufficient for our purpose to cite here only one of these numbers:—

Inasmuch as the one sun is within nature, the other above it, the one is physical, the other is purely moral, and the one falls under the philosophy of the mind, while the other lies withdrawn among the sacred mysteries of theology, between which two there are boundaries that it is impossible for human faculties to transcend. For the mind, which is within nature, there is no path open beyond and above nature, consequently none by which his philosophy can penetrate into the

sanctuary of theology. . . . Let us therefore on no account venture beyond bounds, nor rashly trespass upon sacred things with our reasoning powers. All that is lawful for us to do is to kiss the threshold that we may know 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, and to be loved, and that the providence of our reason is respectively nothing, while the providence of His wisdom is all in all. But what His Divine Nature is, how He is to be worshipped, in what way He is to be approached, by what means He is to be enjoyed, this it has pleased Him, immortal glory be unto Him, to reveal in His Holy Testaments and oracles.

From this passage we see that Swedenborg knew of the existence of a sun prior to the natural sun, a sun of life and wisdom from which all things which of themselves are dead, come into existence and subsist. And the attributes of this sun cannot be investigated by philosophy, but must be told by God Himself in His Revelations; and here we again see the limitations that he prescribes for philosophy. Hence it would seem that it was possible for him to know something about creation.

As to the quotation from the "Soul" (§ 521), where Swedenborg speaks of the form the soul will take after death. He there professes to be speaking about spiritual things, and he confesses that he does not know what form the soul will take, except that it will not be clothed with a material body as on earth, but will be in a form accommodated to the celestial aura in which it is to live. And so although his guesses may be erroneous, nevertheless, he had some general ideas about the soul which were true, which ideas he developed more fully even before his spiritual eyes were opened, for in number 12 of the Appendix to the same work he says that "it will be in a human form."

So far we have not taken up the statement that "Swedenborg arrived at the conclusion that the universe came into existence from geometrical points," but we will take it up in our answer to the second article, which we will now consider.

This article begins with a quotation from the *Principia* which is compared with one from "The True Christian Religion" (20), and on the disagreement of the two, is based for the most part the argument of the article.

As the passages stand in the way they are quoted, it would seem that the writer had the argument all on his side, and that nothing could

be said that would invalidate it, for there is the appearance that the one number contradicts the other.

Before taking up the argument, we wish to call attention to the fact that terms often have different meanings and that their meaning depends entirely on the context, and therefore must be determined by it. Thus we must accept the meaning and definition of the terms as they are given by the author, for otherwise we are apt to interpret them according to some preconceived idea of our own, or else read a meaning into them that is not intended, with the result that our ideas on the subject become confused and we fail to grasp the meaning that the writer wishes to convey.

We speak of this because it appears to us that the writer of the article in question has confused the term "substantial" as Swedenborg used it in the *Principia*, with the same term as used in the Writings. He seems to think that Swedenborg intended the same thing in both places, when yet with some discrimination in reading, it is evident that the term substantial as used in the *Principia* differs as much from the same term as used in the Writings, as what is material differs from what is spiritual. In fact had the writer finished the quotation from the *Principia* so as to have the complete sentence, he would have seen that Swedenborg limits the use of the term substantial. The passage reads: "In the Infinite there is nothing substantial, nothing that can be modified as in finites" (§ 13). This at once shows the limitation: that in the Infinite or in God there is nothing substantial as in finites, nor can it be modified as finites can.

That we may have before us more clearly what is meant by substantial in the *Principia* we will refer to several places where the word is used. As in § 8: "It [the simple] exists before the first substantial or finited boundary." Again: "Modification appertains to that which is substantial, and everything substantial is capable of modification" (Chap. IV., § 11), and in many numbers in Chapters III. and IV. substantial is used synonymously with finite. Thus we see that Swedenborg uses the term substantial in the sense of something which is limited, bounded, or finited, in contradistinction to what is unlimited, unbounded, or Infinite. And if we have this idea of the term in our minds, the statement, that "in the Infinite there is nothing substantial, nothing that can be modified as finites," is no more

at variance with the teaching in the Writings, that "God is substance itself and form itself," than it would be to say that God is not material. The one statement is negative, while the other is positive, but neither is a contradiction of the other.

Again, if in the Infinite there were anything substantial in the sense in which that term is used in the *Principia*, then surely we would have nothing but a material idea of God, we would make the finite to exist from the finite as its cause, or we would make nature to be the origin of herself, and thus nature and God would be one and the same. But that such an enormity never entered into Swedenborg's mind may be seen from this: "That the Infinite is an *Ens* in itself, that it is an *Esse* which is, that it is all in all, [and] that it is universal" (§ 3), as also from this where he speaks about the cause or origin of the simple:—

There must be an infinite something, there must be something infinitely intelligent, which may be considered both as a cause in itself and at the same time as an operator of effects out of itself, or as an inherent force and at the same time as actually producing the existence of other things. (§ 1.)

And again:—

If it [the simple] is produced by motion from the Infinite, it is also supposed that in the producing cause there was some willing that it should be produced, some acting which produced it, and some intelligence that it should be produced in one mode in preference to another, in a word, something infinitely intelligent, provident, active, and productive. Hence this point could not exist by chance, nor by itself, but by something which exists by itself. In which something, there must also be some willing, some acting, and an intelligence to produce the effect in one mode rather than in another. There must likewise be something provident, that what is produced may be modified successively in a given series. (§ 5.)

Hence we see that Swedenborg's idea of God was not that of a mere puff of wind or airy nothing, but rather he had the idea of a God of Infinite attributes, "Who is an operator of effects out of Himself," but not of a God of finite attributes. And hence to say that he makes the Infinite or God to be nothing, is tantamount to saying that only what is material is, and what is immaterial is not, or that the finite is something and the Infinite is nothing; or what is produced is, while that which wills, acts, is intelligent, provides, and produces, is nothing. And yet the finite relatively to the Infinite is nothing; al-

though if the latter be looked at or thought of from the former it becomes as nothing, for the Infinite cannot be comprehended from space and time, and to the mind which thinks naturally or materially it is nothing, because it does not see it, but although it is nothing to such a mind, it is not on that account nothing.

In the light of what has been said it will be seen that the statement that Swedenborg denied that God was substance, in the sense that the term is used in the Writings, is erroneous, and hence all the arguments which are based on it as a premise fall to the ground, and therefore need not be taken up.

Again the writer quotes, "The Infinite itself, in a geometrical point of view, may be called an entity, yet only in an eminent sense," and concludes that Swedenborg regarded the Infinite as a mere geometrical entity. This is in line with his previous argument, but the conclusion is not warranted by the passage quoted, especially if it is taken in connection with many others in which he says that we cannot conceive of the Infinite from geometry, which is limited to the plane of nature. "The Infinite," he says, "cannot be conceived of geometrically, yet it is not on that account nothing" (§ 12). What seems to us to be conveyed by the passage is, that if we think of the Infinite as an *ens*, from a geometrical point of view, we must do so only in an eminent sense, that is, only by way of eminence or analogy. And this is borne out by the statement that "no finite . . . bears any the smallest proportion or ratio to the Infinite." (§ 13.)

Swedenborg's ideas of the Infinite were not material, as we have abundantly shown, and therefore he could not speak of it from material terms except by analogy. But because he could not do so, he did not consider it nothing, but rather he considered it the all in all from which.

Again the writer tells us that what Swedenborg says about the point being a medium between the Infinite and the finite, is contrary to the doctrines of the New Church, and quotes from the "True Christian Religion" (33), as follows:—

God first finited His Infinity by means of substances emitted from Himself, from which came into existence His proximate compass, which constitutes the sun of the spiritual world.

Here again we find a confusion of terms, the writer making finite as used in the *Principia* to mean the same as finite in the "True Christian Religion," when yet it is very evident from the *Principia* that Swedenborg uses finite in a merely

natural sense, and not in a spiritual sense at all, whereas in the "True Christian Religion" every created thing, both spiritual and natural, is called finite. Another point that is worthy of note is that the writer implies that there is no medium of conjunction between the natural and the spiritual, and that Swedenborg, in making the point a medium, must necessarily have made the natural continuous with the Infinite, when yet the Doctrines plainly teach that there is such a medium of conjunction, as in the "Divine Wisdom" (VIII. 4, 5):—

That spirits and angels derive from this that they can subsist to eternity, is that an angel and a spirit, because he is first born a man in the world takes to himself that he may subsist, for he takes to himself from the inmosts of nature a medium between the spiritual and the natural by which he is finited, so that he may subsist and be permanent; through this he has what is relative to those things which are in nature, and also corresponds to them.

By this also spirits and angels can be adjoined and conjoined to the human race, for where there is conjunction there must be a medium.

Swedenborg seems to have had a perception of this doctrine in the *Principia*, and hence he makes the first, the inmost, and purest of nature, called the natural point and a simple, to be such a conjoining medium, for because of its purity it could the more readily be a recipient of influx.

The definition of the point, as given in § 8 of the *Principia* — "This point is a simple *ens*, and, indeed, so very simple that nothing can be more so, because what is simple admits of no degrees" — is compared in the article with this from the "Divine Love and Wisdom" (229):—

It is asserted by some that there exists a substance so simple that it is not a form from lesser forms, and that out of that substance, by accumulations into masses, substantiated or composite things come into existence, and finally the substances which are called material. But still such simple substances have no existence. For what is substance without form? It is that of which not anything can be predicated, and out of an entity of which nothing can be predicated, not anything can be made up by accumulations into masses. That there are innumerable things in the first of all created substances, which are the least and most simple ones, will be shown in what follows.

And the writer says that this is aimed against the simple substances of Christian Wolff, and hence "It is aimed *a fortiori* against the simples in the *Principia*." But he fails to see that in th

very number which he quoted, the first of all created substances are called the least and most simple ones. And hence that the word simple must have been used to convey two entirely different ideas, for we see that the theory of simple substances is first condemned, and then the number proceeds, and calls the first of all created substances the least and most simple ones. From which we conclude that the term simple is used and can be used with different meanings, and that to use it with one meaning is admissible, while with the other is not. If by simple substances are meant atoms, or monads, which flowed together fortuitously or by chance to form compounds or composite things, then the first part of the quotation applies and such a doctrine is fallacious. But if by simple substance is meant that first in nature, which, because of its most pure and perfect form, is best adapted to receive the Divine influx, and through which that influx may flow successively into the rest of the created universe, then the last part of the number applies, and in this sense we believe that Swedenborg uses the term, for he himself condemns the other in the *Principia*, as we have seen in a passage already quoted (§ 5). That there may be no doubt in our minds as to the actual existence of simples, we will adduce some more passages from the Writings, as this, from the "Divine Love and Wisdom":—

These [discrete] degrees are as simples, as congregates of these, and again as congregates of these, which, taken together, are called a compound. (184 *e*.)

Again from the same work:—

It appears as if things prior were less perfect than things posterior, or things simple than things composite, but still things prior, from which are things posterior, or things simple from which are things composite, are more perfect. The reason is because things prior or things simple are more naked, and less covered over with substances and matters devoid of life, and are, as it were, more divine, consequently nearer to the spiritual sun, where the Lord is, for perfection is in the Lord, and hence in the sun, which is the first proceeding of His divine love and wisdom, and hence in those things which proximately succeed, and thus in order, even to the lowest, which as they recede are less perfect. Unless there were such eminent perfection in things prior and simple, neither man nor any animal could exist from seed and afterwards subsist, neither could the seeds of trees and shrubs vegetate and bear fruit, for the more prior anything prior is, and the more simple anything simple is, the more exempt it is from injury, because it is more perfect. (204.)

And again from the "Adversaria":—

Nothing can exist in the composite or in the general, unless it be from its simples or parts. (654.)

These passages clearly teach the doctrine of simples and composites, and with it Swedenborg's theory of simples, as given in the *Principia*, and in some other of his scientific works, is in perfect agreement, if we think of them as recipients of life and not life itself.

The writer informs us that the passage in the "Divine Providence" (6), convinced him that the *Principia* theory of creation was a fallacy. The passage is similar to number 229 of the "Divine Love and Wisdom," but we will quote it in order to have it before us for consideration:—

It is acknowledged by many that there is only one substance, which is also the first, from which are all things, and . . . it is believed that it is so simple that there is nothing more so, and that it may be likened to a point which is of no dimension, and that from an infinite number of such, the forms of dimension have come into existence. But this is a fallacy which originates from the idea of space. . . . Thus in the first substance are the most wonderful, perfect, and beautiful things of all. The reason it is so, is that the first substance is from the spiritual sun, which is from the Lord, and in which is the Lord.

Apparently this description of the point, or simple, agrees with the description in the *Principia*, and hence the conclusion that the *Principia* must be all wrong. But is there such an agreement between what is said in the *Principia* and what is condemned in the Writings? The first part of the passage quoted gives us the keynote to the solution. "It is acknowledged by some that there is only one substance from which are all things." The *Principia* teaches that the Infinite or God is the first and primal cause of all things, and this makes the whole difference between Swedenborg's theory of creation and that theory which is here condemned. Swedenborg derives nature from God, and those that are condemned derive nature from nature. Both use similar terms but convey different ideas by them, and the mind that can be elevated above merely material thought sees in the one a theory replete with natural truths in perfect correspondence with spiritual truths, while in the other it sees nothing but a heap of fallacies. In the one it sees that nature is created by God, while in the other nature is created by herself.

Moreover, the passage in the "Divine Providence" refers to all creation, as well the spiritual

as the natural, but Swedenborg, in the *Principia*, confines himself to the creation of the natural world, and therefore his theory is not condemned by it.

For us to conclude that Swedenborg derived the world from an infinite number of points accumulated together in mass (as the writer would have us infer from the passage quoted), would be as logical as it would be to conclude that Swedenborg makes the human body to consist of an accumulated mass of those simplest and purest substances which are the first recipients of the soul, or that a tree is made up of an accumulated mass of seeds. The absurdity of this is self-evident. Swedenborg derives the world from the point, in the same way that the human body is formed from its simplest substance, if you please its point, or in the same way that a tree is derived from a seed, but he does not derive it from a mere accumulated mass of points; and thus again his theory cannot be classed with those which the Writings pronounce fallacious.

In conclusion we would say, that since the articles take the position, that *all causes* are in the spiritual world, that unless causes are seen effects do not appear in light but only in darkness, that Swedenborg could know no cause before his spiritual sight was opened, and hence was incompetent to present a proper theory of creation in the *Principia*, therefore he must have been incompetent to present any natural truth in any of his scientific works.

Again, as Swedenborg is made to derive the origin of nature from geometrical points, which, from the tenor of the article, means that he derived nature from nature, therefore Swedenborg is made out to be a naturalist, and lastly, since it is held that Swedenborg taught that the Infinite, or God, is nothing, and since what is nothing cannot be revered and worshipped, therefore he must have been an atheist.

But can we believe that such was the preparation, and that such was the character of the man who was chosen by the Lord as His instrument to give to the world the crowning Revelation of divine truth? Most assuredly not; and Swedenborg himself tells us how he was prepared by the Lord for his peculiar work. He wrote to Oettinger:—

I was introduced by the Lord into the natural sciences, and thus prepared, and indeed from the year 1710 to 1744, when heaven was opened to me.

And this was done for the purpose, —

That the spiritual things which are being revealed at the present day may be taught and understood naturally and rationally; for spiritual truths have a correspondence with natural truths, because in these they terminate, and on these they rest. . . . The Lord granted me besides to love truths in a spiritual manner — that is, to love them not for the sake of honor, nor for the sake of gain, but for the sake of truths themselves, for he who loves truths for the sake of truths sees them from the Lord. (Documents, II., p. 257.)

Again at the end of the treatise on the "Inter-course Between the Soul and Body," we read:—

I was once asked how from a philosopher I became a theologian, and I answered, In the same manner that fishers were made disciples and apostles by the Lord, and that I also from my early youth had been a spiritual fisher. On hearing this, the inquirer asked what a spiritual fisher was. I replied, that a fisher in the spiritual sense of the word signifies a man who investigates and teaches natural truths, and afterwards spiritual truths in a rational manner. . . . On hearing this, my interrogator raised his voice and said: "Now I can understand why the Lord called and chose fishers to be his disciples, and so I do not wonder that He has also called and chosen you, since, as you have said, you were from early youth a fisher in the spiritual sense, that is, an investigator of natural truths; the reason that you now become an investigator of spiritual truths is because these are founded on the others."

To these statements of Swedenborg about his preparation and insight into natural truths, we shall only add that it would seem that his scientific works ought to be examined in an affirmative and not in a negative spirit, and that if there be any doubt about any principle that he advocates, it ought to be examined in the light of all the doctrines, and not be rejected because it appears to disagree with some literal statement in the Writings.

C. E. DOERING.

SWEDENBORG'S *PRINCIPIA* THEORY OF THE ORIGIN OF MATTER FROM POINTS.

MR. POTTS, in his articles, criticizes Swedenborg's conception of the first production from the infinite, and makes it appear that he practically teaches the idea of creation from nothing. This certainly is a stretching of Swedenborg's teaching beyond what is legitimate. He is treating of a subject extremely difficult of comprehension, and therefore difficult of expression in terms; but that he favors the doctrine of creation from nothing

is not true, because he expresses the very opposite idea in his philosophical works.

In trying to gain a true conception of Swedenborg's meaning, we can go to his treatise on "The Infinite," which was written immediately after the *Principia*, and published at the same time, in the year 1734. In this work he sometimes refers to the *Principia* for a fuller treatment of some of his subjects.

Of the Infinite Itself he teaches as follows:—

Actual NOTHING can furnish us with no cause: *nothing comes of nothing*. It follows that the infinite was the cause, and that whatever is in the cause is infinite. The circumstance of all contingencies in the finite sphere conspiring so marvelously to a single end, can proceed from no other ground than a cause involving an *infinitely intelligent being*; whence it follows that *there is a pre-eminent being* in the cause, and an *infinite intelligence in the being*. (p. 57.)

It is manifest from this that Swedenborg at the time of the publication of the *Principia* regarded God as the cause of creation, and God was a Divine Being, infinite in all His attributes, possessing infinite intelligence. He does not however at this time describe Him as Divine Substantial, and discriminate between the Divine Substance, spiritual substance, and natural or material substance, as he does in the theological works; but he does teach that there is a distinct line of division between Him and created things.

The question now arises, did Swedenborg conceive creation to be from nothing, and hold that the first created thing possessed properties that logically reduce it to a nonentity or to nothing? His description of the point, with its mathematical attributes, at first would appear to tend in that direction, as Mr. Potts shows. But on the other hand, Swedenborg seems to be laboring to remove from the first created substance the limitations that belong to grosser substances. In the very nature of the case such a conception must be very imperfectly expressed, but from a view of his other teachings, we hold that he did not think of creation from nothing, even though the definition of his points seems open to such objection. In the work on "The Infinite" he says:—

If there be motion, and the motion be carried by contiguity to the soul, there must be *substances* capable of receiving such motion and conveying it. If there be an end, there must be means; if a mode, there must be a *substance* from, or by, which it exists. *Mode is nothing without substance, motion is nothing without substance. There is no motion without there be something to be*

moved; motion, unless it supposes a subject, is a nonentity. (pp. 122, 123.)

In this place Swedenborg distinctly teaches that there can be no motion except in a substantial, thus we may see that from the very primitive created thing of which motion is predicated, substance also must be predicated.

This primitive form, which was the first created, is said to be *substantial* (The Infinite; pp. 88, 89). It is produced *immediately* from God (pp. 87, 73). It is most perfect (p. 73). It is the first natural end, the first created minimum, the smallest natural seed, or the simple principle of the world (p. 67). The infinite created this minimum entity and through it the following (p. 126). The mode in the finite is referable to substances. (p. 146).

Having thus shown that Swedenborg had the idea of creation by successive productions of substances from God, let us compare this conception with the first created forms as given in the *Principia*.

Speaking of the first finite production from the infinite it is said:—

The first finite is the first substantial of the natural world. (*Principia*, pp. 72, 73, 80.)

In the world there is no other substantial than this finite. Composites are indeed substantials; but they consist of parts less than themselves, or of other individuals which are themselves also substantial; and ultimately of this first substantial. (*Ibid.*, p. 74.)

Thus we may see that Swedenborg conceives of a series of substantial entities subject to motion, of which all things in the world were created. But it will be said that he goes back of this to the origin of the finite in *points*, and that the contention is that this creation from points, and the properties assigned to these points, is not in agreement with the teachings of the "True Christian Religion," where the doctrine is given that God Himself is substantial, and all things created by Him were spiritual substances and then material in successive order.

In the first chapter of the *Principia* it is taught that the Infinite Cause is God, and that He is a Divine Being, thus we have here the same teaching as in the work on "The Infinite," that He is a Being possessing infinite intelligence. In considering creation from Him, Swedenborg calls the first production a simple. He says:—

Thus does rational philosophy acknowledge some first *ens* produced from the infinite, and some simple as the origin of entities not simple. This

first *ens*, or this simple, we here call the natural point. (p. 48.)

He next goes on to compare this with the mathematical point. This natural point or first *ens* is intermediate between the infinite and the first finite. Let us here call attention to the attributes of the first finite, which is also substantial, and we find that this is material or natural. But the first *ens* or natural point, Swedenborg describes as not limited by the laws of space. He endeavors to lift it out of the material plane. In treating of the first finite we find that the substance of it is equivalent to material. It is therefore the first form of material substance that is meant by the first finite. Swedenborg in the *Principia*, and in the work on "The Infinite," describes the first *ens* as an intermediate between the infinite and the first finite. He says of it in the *Principia*, that it is purely motion. It is immediately from the infinite. Its motion cannot be conceived of according to the laws of geometry (p. 55.) This motion presupposes nothing substantial (p. 57), but let us keep in mind that by the term substantial he here means material. It has no extension and does not fill space. (p. 59.)

We may here see that the mind of Swedenborg was reaching out for the conception of something not limited by the laws of time and space as they exist in the material world, and yet he conceived the idea of something between material substances and the Infinite. He was not yet prepared to conceive the idea of spiritual substance, of a substantial spiritual world under spiritual laws above time and space; nor could he yet form the idea of the Divine Being as Divine Substantial (True Christian Religion, 20). He could not yet conceive the idea that,—

God first made His infinity finite, by substances emitted from Himself, from which exists His proximate encompassing sphere, which makes the spiritual sun; and that afterwards, by means of that sun, He perfected other encompassing spheres, even to the last, which consists of things quiescent; and that thus, by means of degrees, He made the world finite more and more. (True Christian Religion, 33.)

He could not conceive and express these ideas because they are subjects of revelation, which were given to him only after the Lord opened his sight into the spiritual world and revealed them to him.

It is evident however that what Swedenborg is endeavoring to reach, in his conception of the first *ens*, is covered by what he afterward reveals to us

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JOHN WHITEHEAD.

as the entire spiritual world, including the spiritual sun. It is also evident that Swedenborg in the *Principia* holds that there is an *ens* which possesses supereminent qualities of motion, through which the infinite accommodates his activity to the finite. It is the cause of all the succeeding series. It is certain from his theological works that spiritual substance is this *ens* which is the origin and cause of all succeeding forms. This spiritual substance is really the first created *ens*, if we think of it in its first form as existing in the spiritual sun; but Swedenborg as a natural philosopher could not give us the clear conception of it and its degrees. What he could and did give was a clear and rational conception of the successive formation of the world from its first material forms, through degrees of formation even to the ultimate, and of the creation of the planets from the centre, that is from the sun.

It is also evident that although Swedenborg was laboring to form and express a most sublime conception of the first form, which was the form of forms, entering in and producing all succeeding forms in degrees of composition even to ultimates; yet he expresses it in terms which come under the ban of his own pen in his theological works, when he says, that the conception of the "origin of the substances and forms of the world from points, and then from geometrical lines, is of no predication, and therefore in itself it is not anything." (True Christian Religion, 20.)

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