

The Sacred

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Chapter One: Introduction

Motivation

The topic of this dissertation is holiness, or the Sacred.

Why holiness? Because I am interested in the **experience** of religion, not just the **understanding** of religion. Furthermore, my assumption and belief is that any person who comes into contact with the New Church likewise has the same primary interest, an interest in value or experience first, not in knowledge or information.¹

Holiness implicitly has an experiential side. Holiness is where meaning and value become obvious, without needing arguments as proof. Holiness is where the marriage of good and truth takes place in a way that is unmistakable and immediate.

Like “good” and “truth,” the word “sacred” is often used in the Writings as an adjective elevated to substantive status. Other times it is purely an adjective, describing a quality that is sacred. What is this quality? Where does it appear? How does it appear? What does it mean? What makes something holy? How is it relevant? These are the questions this dissertation will explore. These are questions a person today needs answers to if religion is to mean anything to him or her.

¹ I am obviously not discounting knowledge here. This introduction is about motivation, what moves me, what moves a person. This is always based in love, in the will, where truth provides a dressing, a garment, an access point.

Pontius Pilate asked, “What is truth?” (John 18:38). He asked this in a dismissive and philosophical way. In the same way a person may ask, “What is holy? Is there even anything holy?” In modern language the word “holy” seems to have faded from usage or become something to mock.

And so life is meaningless for a lot of people. The search for meaning is the search for the experience of the Sacred. This goes beyond merely a search for values at the levels of civil and moral life. The Sacred is found directly in the spiritual level of a person’s life (HH 267, 468). The search for the Holy is not a search for a physical thing. It is a search for a different state of life and experience. I want to establish how the Writings guide this search, and how they show where the meaning of life can be found.

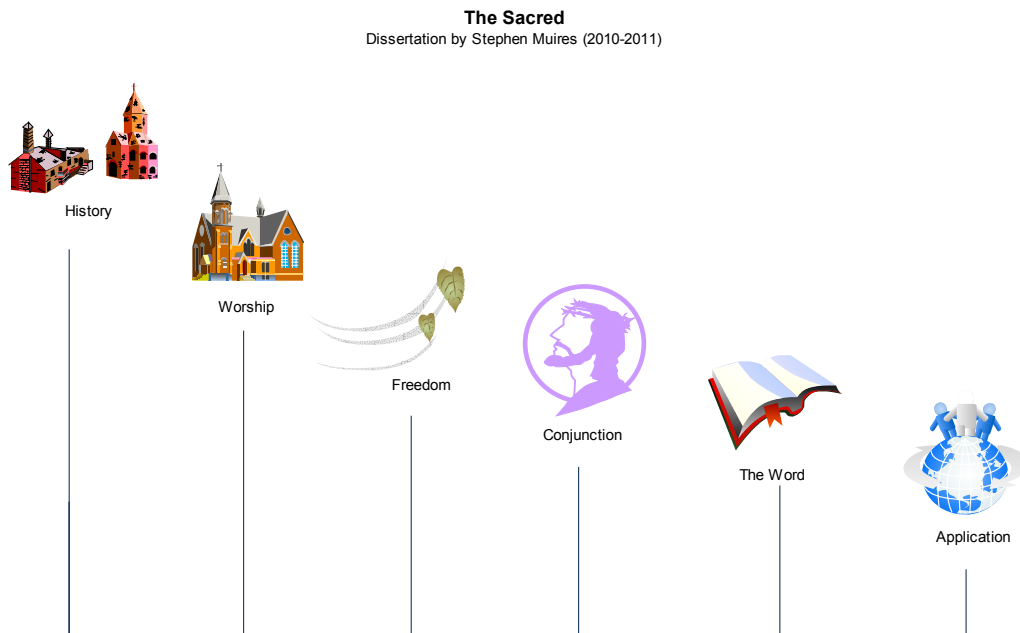
The Lord meant life to be meaningful and abundant (John 10:10). The revelation of His Word has the same purpose, a heaven from the human race (DP 323). I see the exploration of the Sacred as an “application-to-life” or “application-in-life” facet of the teachings of the New Church. That is an area of abiding interest for me. As a minister I want to be able to offer this application to people.

Overview of structure

The topic has within it a development, moving from what is ordinary, given and part of the order of creation to the purpose, goal and process of human life. There is a movement from a state of holiness in objects, places and the human faculties, to a becoming or growing in holiness. This is also a movement from an external to a more and more internal reality.

In the Old Testament holiness was ascribed to the land, e.g. the ground upon which Moses stood before the burning bush, to the Tabernacle, to the tablets of the Ten Commandments, and above all to God, the Holy One of Israel. In the New Testament holiness is ascribed to the Spirit of God, called the Holy Spirit, as well as to the disciples taking up the mantle of following the Lord. In the Writings holiness is a goal, a result of regeneration, the seventh day of creation on which God rested, the day that was holy (AC 84).

The chapters of this dissertation will unfold in the same order, starting with history and externals (chapters 2 and 3), moving through teachings about conjunction with the Lord through the Word (chapters 4 and 5), and ending with applications that show the internals of holiness (chapter 6).



There exists a whole list of things that are called holy. Just to name a few: the Holy Land, the Holy of Holies, the Holy Bible, the Holy Spirit, the Holy Supper, Holy Marriage, the Holy Sabbath, the

Holy Sacraments, and the holy name of God. We are going to look in greater depth at some of these, though by no means all of them. For example, I will not cover at any great depth the topics of the Holy Land, marriage, and the Sabbath. This dissertation is not long enough for that. That choice does not imply that the holiness of marriage, e.g., is in any way less relevant than the holiness of the Tabernacle.

A word on words and format

The Latin word for holy is *sanctus*. This is used both as an adjective and a noun. In the latter form it can mean holy thing, holy person, or, more abstractly, holiness. The English translation is either “holy” or “sacred,” and in this dissertation these two are used interchangeably. No subtle difference in meaning is indicated when either word is used.

Concerning quotations from the Writings: any **bold text** used for emphasis is mine.

The symbol **[key phrase]** is used in the text, as a highlight, whenever a conclusion or summary is given that forms a major point in the presentation. These key phrases, taken together, are the condensed result of research into the theme of the Sacred.

Further, in various places in the text that follows I will comment on the non-technical nature of Swedenborg’s terms. What this means for the terms “holy” or “sacred” is that they do not have one fixed meaning. They can mean one thing in one context, another somewhere else. This does

not imply a contradiction, only different levels or extensions of meaning.² This is not unusual and Swedenborg has himself commented on this phenomenon, using the example of the term “the Law” (AC 6752.1). One of the goals of this dissertation is to lay out these various meanings.

Core statements

The nature of the first few chapters is explorative. In other words, we will be focusing on aspects of holiness as encountered in the Writings, primarily in the *Arcana Coelestia*. Some of these findings will at first seem limited in scope and somewhat unrelated to each other. That is a natural result of a research approach that asks questions and then documents the answers found.

However, the teachings of the New Church are to function as a lamp in understanding the Word. “By means of doctrine ... the Word is understood” (SS 54). Therefore, right here at the outset we will lay down what are the core statements concerning sacredness.

The first core statement is that “the Divine which emanates from the Lord is holiness itself” (AC 9229.1; TCR 188.11; AR 237). When we think about holiness, we are thinking about the Lord, who is the source. Holiness is not natural, but is of the Divine. It is terminated in the natural, but is not natural itself. Neither a person nor a natural object can be holy in itself. They can only be holy “from that which comes and is received from the Lord” (AC 9229.1).

² An example would be AC 9229, which talks about a “state of life composed of good,” first focusing on holiness as an attribute of a person, then expanding to the source of holiness, which is the Lord. Another example is DP 96, which highlights the faculties of freedom and rationality as sacred things: this brings holiness very much down to earth, since these two faculties are common and everyone can see them.

[key phrase] The Divine which emanates from the Lord is holiness itself.

The second core statement is that “the Lord is the Only Holy One” (AC 9229.2; cf. 2 Kings 19:22; Psalm 71:22). The Lord is the only Creator, Redeemer, Savior. What comes from Him is holy and so is called the Holy Spirit. When we think about holiness itself, we are thinking about the Lord Himself. When we feel awe, reverence, holy fear, love (AC 8925), and experience these as holiness, we are in the presence of the Lord. He is the beginning and end of it.

[key phrase] The Lord is the only Holy One.

This is the teaching that shines light on all else that follows.

Chapter Two: Holiness in worship and rituals

Introduction

This chapter will look at the Sacred in history, in architecture, traditions, and forms of worship and ritual, as documented by the Old and New Testaments and as explained in the Heavenly Doctrines.

What makes a natural object holy

One of the earliest mentions of holy objects is found in the book of Exodus, in the construction of the Ark and the Tabernacle.

Unless every single thing in this sacred Ark had been **representative of the Lord and His kingdom**, it would have been no more than a kind of idol, and the worship that took place would have been idolatrous. So too with Solomon's Temple. **Of itself it was in no sense holy**. Nor did the gold, silver, cedar, and stone there make it so, but the particular things represented by those materials. Unless the ark and the construction of it with all its details meant some secret of the Church, the Word would not be the Word of the Lord but some dead piece of literature such as that found among the works of any secular author. (AC 639.2)

This passage states that the specific details of the sacred Ark of the Covenant that Moses ordered built, in themselves are not holy. The same is said about Solomon's Temple. What made the Ark

and the Temple holy were “the particular things represented by those materials” (AC 639.2), in other words the gold, silver, wood, and stone, as well as the particular dimensioning of the construction and the furniture. These things were representative “of the Lord and His Kingdom” (AC 639.2). “The tabernacle constructed by Moses in the desert was a representation of heaven and the church” (TCR 220). The holiness of the Ark or the Temple derives from the correspondence with the Lord and the spiritual and celestial heaven.

[key phrase] As to natural objects, holiness derives from the correspondence with the Lord and with heaven.

Correspondences make conjunction with the Lord

Likewise, the holiness of the Tabernacle, or Tent of Meeting, was to be found in the correspondences³ between it and the Lord. The Tabernacle was to perform a use, namely connecting the human race to heaven, through representative worship, “for without any communication of heaven with mankind ... the human race would perish” (AC 4288.5).

The Divine Love is Infinite and Eternal, and so is the Divine Wisdom. Nevertheless, both ... can have conjunction with an angel or with a person.... No ratio exists between what is natural and what is spiritual, but there is conjunction between them by means of correspondences. (Divine Wisdom 12)

³ A more extensive treatment of correspondences and what they are will follow later on in the chapter on the Word.

The key point to take from this passage is that conjunction is established through correspondence. This correspondence is a fact of creation. It is not just the symbols and images found in the Word that correspond; this relationship extends to every single created thing.

All things in the world come into existence from the Divine, and are clothed with such things in nature as enable them to exist there and perform a use, and thus to correspond.
(HH 108)

We find the same idea in *Divine Providence*: “The Lord conjoins Himself with uses by means of correspondences....” (DP 220.1). There are many kinds of correspondences, as many as there are uses. This teaching establishes a basic understanding. It does **not** follow that objects, stones, trees, altars, etc., have part in holiness. It does follow that everything that exists is held in existence by the Lord; and to the extent that it performs a use that serves the purpose of creation there is a greater degree of conjunction with the Lord.

How is conjunction with the Lord effected?

Be it known that of himself a person cannot come near to the Lord and be conjoined with Him; but the Lord will come near to the person and be conjoined with him. ... This takes place when the person **desists from evils**. (AC 9378.2)

Desisting from evils is given here as requirement that makes conjunction with the Lord possible and actual. The same passage then goes on to say that the Word plays a role in this process.

The conjunction and presence of the Lord is **through the Word**, ... because the Word is the union of man with heaven, and through heaven with the Lord. (AC 9378.2)

This gives a progression of truths about our relation with the Lord. First we have to turn away from our own evils, and secondly there are the truths from the Word that establish a union.

The first part is the process of reformation (TCR 461.5). This is the epic battle between good and evil that each person takes part in, consciously or unconsciously, during their life on earth. This is why books and films that depict this battle touch many people in their spirits.⁴ Shunning evil can be done, because we have free will and an understanding with which to make informed choices. But we are not always clear about what is evil and why; the battle lines get muddled very easily. A person may be battling an addiction, knowing that the habit is wrong and destructive, but still not knowing that it is evil, nor why it is evil. Therefore, knowledge direct from God is needed, which brings this clarity and understanding (SE 4758; AC 8944.1).

This is the second part: the Word. Not only does the Word give understanding, it gives union with the Lord, and so the power to turn away from evil successfully. These two actions are not really separate. The complex human mind is able to host an interplay between acting and thinking, between standing against evil and knowing what is evil. This process, with its ups and downs, is called regeneration and brings us into conjunction with the Lord. Since the Lord is the source of holiness, regeneration leads into a Sabbath state of holiness (Ex. 20:8).

The Word as a source of holiness

Foreshadowing the later chapter devoted to the Word, it must be said here that holiness is intimately connected to the nature of the Word. Not the Word as the book in itself, but as “the Divine truth from which the angels have intelligence and wisdom” (De Verbo 14.1). It is in this light that a passage such as the following must be read:

The very holiness of the whole Tabernacle was from the ... two tables of stone on which the law was inscribed, because the law signified the Lord as to Divine Truth, and thus as to the Word, for this is Divine Truth. (AE 700.5)

The Ark is holy just because it contains the tablets with the Ten Commandments. But the tablets themselves are no more holy than the printed paper that makes a modern Bible. In themselves these are natural objects. We have already seen above that holy, natural objects correspond with the heaven and the Lord. Only because the tablets represented the Divine Truth did they make the Tabernacle holy.

Altars and holiness

In the Bible the simplest and earliest form of a man-made holy place was an altar (Gen. 8:20, 12:7). Apart from the obvious link to holiness as an instrument of worship, the word itself refers to a place of slaughtering or sacrificing (from the Hebrew *zebach*, Strong #2077). Sacrifice means: to make sacred.

⁴ Lord of the Rings; Star Wars; etc.

In the early Abram accounts altars are presented as tokens or symbols of the communication with God that had taken place:

The Lord appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.” So he built an **altar** there to the Lord, who had appeared to him. (Gen. 12:7)

The *Arcana* calls an altar a “chief representative in worship” (AC 1448). What makes an altar holy is the Lord appearing there. Therefore, an altar is also called a “chief representative of the Lord” (AC 4541). All this is actually not hard to see. We use an altar even today for that purpose. A shelf in the home with objects that remind of God. A nicely kept table in church with flowers and candles and a copy of the Word. Leading someone to the altar is a metaphor for getting married.

An altar is a place that represents something holy to us. It isn't the altar or the objects placed on it that are considered holy, only that which they bring to mind. The holiness is internal. This reality is expressed with the somewhat cryptic words, “the holiness by which interior things are enveloped” (AC 4547). The Latin word here translated as “enveloped” is *terminantur*, which could also mean: terminated, limited, anchored. The external objects on the altar anchor the interior realities of God. This makes an altar holy.

External holiness

Staying with externals, let's look at the Israelitish church, which is called an external or representative of a church (AC 4288). To the extent that the Israelites had practices and rituals that

represented holy things, they were a church. In that vein, the *Arcana Coelestia* speaks of the sanctuary that the people of Israel were to build:

‘And they are to make Me a sanctuary’ means a representative of the Lord, and so of heaven. (AC 9479.1)

The physical sanctuary, i.e. the Tabernacle, was holy because of its representation. It represented the Lord and heaven. A place or building becomes a holy place when it represents “realities of which the Lord is the source” (AC 9479.2). The purpose of building a sanctuary is expressed in Exodus 25:8: “And they are to make Me a sanctuary that I may dwell in their midst,” in other words, so that the Lord’s presence could come into the Tabernacle and be with the people, as described in Exodus:

Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the LORD **filled the tabernacle**. And Moses was not able to enter the tabernacle of meeting, because the cloud rested above it, and the glory of the LORD **filled the tabernacle**. (Exodus 40:34-35)

The question now is, whether this means that the presence of the Lord manifested itself externally, as a physical presence, perceivable by the bodily senses? Was the holiness (also) an external reality?

“Dwelling in their midst” (Ex. 25:8) has two meanings, an internal and an external one. For us today the meaning would be as indicated by the words “one’s being and life” (AC 9480) as the place where the presence of the Lord is felt. This indicates an internal relationship with the Lord.

However, the people of Israel, at the time of the Exodus, had no possibility of an internal relationship.

They [the Israelites] were interested in outward forms but **not their inner substances**, that is, in the worship that represented goodness and truth but not goodness and truth themselves. (AC 9320. 2)

The same passage confirms the same truth many times over, by referring to no less than 54 other *Arcana Coelestia* passages in which the quality of the Israelites is further described. The Israelites only knew external things. It is explicitly stated that “the Lord’s presence with that people was not within internal things..., but solely within the external things which represented those internal ones. Such was the nature of that presence” (AC 9480). This says that the Lord was present in an external way. What does that mean? Does it mean a presence in actual external reality, in Raiders-of-the-Lost-Ark kind of way?

It is necessary to understand at this point that the term “external” in the Writings often refers to the most external level of the natural mind (AC 4973.1). In other words, it does not refer to objective, sensory reality. We have been educated, by the culture we grew up in, to believe in the evidence of the senses and the reality of an objective out-there world. This has also been the foundation of physical science for many hundreds of years. Still, this objective reality is a fallacy, which is proven by the discovery of the Uncertainty Principle⁵ and phenomena like quantum

⁵ Werner Heisenberg (5 December 1901 – 1 February 1976). The scientific observer’s choices of experimentation influence the outcome of the experiment.

entanglement⁶ or even water crystal photography.⁷ All of these discoveries teach us that our minds and so-called objective reality are intertwined at a deep level. This does not prevent us falling back into the objectivity fallacy occasionally. The truth of the senses is very convincing...

The mechanics of external holiness

Back to the question: what does it mean that the Lord's presence was within externals? And how does that work?

The quote below indicates that holiness can appear to be independent of people. Of course it can never actually be independent, since the human being is the only creation made in the image and likeness of God, and the only way that creation can fulfill its purpose.

In order that [the nation of Israel] might nevertheless play the part of a representative of the Church, the Lord made provision in a miraculous way so that when **an external holiness existed with them**, and at the same time they were surrounded by evil spirits, that holiness existing with them might nevertheless be raised up to heaven. But this was effected through good spirits and angels who were **not within them but outside them**, for within them there was nothing but an empty void or else uncleanness. For this reason there was **no communication with any person himself**, only **with the holiness which**

⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quantum_entanglement. Particles are connected to each other at a level of deep reality, called quantum reality. Regardless of spatial distance, measurement of one particle gives accurate information about the other one, without the transmission of information between the particles.

⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Masaru_Emoto. The projection of human emotion into water creates patterns of crystals in that water when it gets frozen. These patterns can be photographed and so empirically related to the nature of the feeling or idea that was projected.

existed with them when they observed ordinances and commandments, all of which were representative of the spiritual and celestial things of the Lord's kingdom. (AC 4311.2)

This was accomplished by the Tabernacle and the ritual observances being designed with such a pattern as to represent heaven. It becomes clear from the usage of the words "within" and "outside" in this passage that both belong in the realm of the mind.

In *Arcana Coelestia* 8588.6 further explanation is given.⁸ The spirits and angels with us exist in chains from low to high, outer to more inner (SE 185, 3525; HH 510; AC 6600.1). Simple spirits were present with the Israelites in their worship. They were simple in the sense that they believed that external holiness automatically implied internal holiness, even though that was not the case. More internal angels then looked at the simple angels and saw the actual holiness represented. The result of this chaining was that spiritual and celestial values could be connected to the worship, in an indirect way. Since the Israelitish church formed an anchor for heaven on earth, it is in this indirect way that the connection was maintained. It is in the light of this bigger truth that the following (apparently contradictory) passage must be read:

Anyone who is governed by bodily and worldly love, and not at the same time by spiritual or by celestial love, does not have any but evil spirits with him, **even when external**

⁸ Not wanting to clutter the text with another lengthy quote I place it here in a footnote, since the passage itself is very elucidating on this issue: "The communication with angels in heaven by means of representatives was effected at that time in the following way. People's outward worship was conveyed to angelic spirits who are simple and give no thought to inward values, though they are themselves nevertheless good inwardly. Such spirits ... pay no attention at all to what is in a person inwardly, only to what is visible outwardly; and if this is seen by them to be holy they think that what is inward is so too. The more internal angels of heaven saw in these spirits the realities that were being represented, consequently the corresponding heavenly and Divine values; for they could reside with these spirits and see those values, but not with men, except through those spirits. Angels dwell with men in their inward values; but when no inward values are there, they dwell in the interiors of simple spirits; for the wisdom of angels extends only to spiritual and celestial values, which are the inward realities of representatives. From this brief explanation one may recognize how communication with heaven through such a people could be made possible" (AC 8588.6).

holiness exists with him. Good spirits cannot in any way be present with such a person, for they perceive in an instant the kind of love which governs a person. (AC 4311.2)

The conclusion is that a person indeed can have external holiness with him, even when his life does not match up to it. This possibility is also confirmed in other passages, like the following: “High priests, bad ones no less than the good, represented the things that belong to the Lord’s Divine priesthood” (AC 4281.3).

What other aspects of external holiness are there? The love that governs us determines what kinds of spirits and angels are present with us. Spirits and angels “are forms of affections belonging to love” (DP 50), and those present with us are always in the same affection as we are. Seeing that the Israelites had internal loves that were incompatible with the Lord, they could not have good spirits **in** them. But they were instrumental in maintaining a link with heaven by having good spirits **outside** of them (AC 4311.2). These good spirits were anchored in their external observances, not in the people themselves. Further descriptions of what that was like are found here:

External things ... serve to represent internal, and the internal things are made evident in heaven, to which those people are consequently joined. (AC 8788)

When these objects [the Tabernacle and its contents], being outward forms of Divine celestial and spiritual realities, were beheld by the people while they were engaged in holy acts of worship, such realities as were represented by those objects were **brought to notice** in heaven. (AC 9481.2)

For our purposes, the interesting part of this statement is found in the last few words, “brought to notice in heaven.” In the Latin the verb here is *sisto, sistere*, meaning to stand, to become, to be, to exist. This suggests two things.

First, there is no indication here that the people engaging in acts of worship perceived or felt any internal holiness. In fact, the opposite is suggested. *Arcana Coelestia* 8788 says it even more clearly: “They thought that those [external] things themselves were intrinsically holy, indeed Divine,” where the Latin for “thought” here is the verb *pono*, which means to place, to put. This means that they ascribed holiness to externals, but could not feel it, since “their internals had been covered over” (AC 8788).

Second, that the worship had a real effect in heaven. This effect linked the human race with the Lord, which is stated to have been the purpose of the church of the Israelites (AC 1361, 4288, 4293, 9481.2). It was a spiritual life line.

An example of this effect is given in the early Genesis exposition of the Noah story. Jehovah instructs Noah to “not eat flesh with its soul/blood” (Gen. 9:4). “‘Blood’ meant charity... that which was **holy**, and ... ‘flesh’ meant what belonged to the merely human will... [and so] that which was **unholy**” (AC 1001.1) The *Arcana* then comments on this:

For in those times ‘the eating of flesh together with the blood’ was representative in heaven of ... the mixing together of holy and unholy.... For at that period of time all things that took place among members of the Church **were converted among angels**, according to

the meaning such things had in the internal sense, into corresponding spiritual representations. (AC 1001.1)

Although the example here is a negative one, containing an instruction as to what **not** to do, it shows the effect that worship and ritual practices had, by correspondence, in heaven. The same effect happens in positive rituals, like the sacrifices, incense burning, etc. At first glance such an effect seems to go against the teaching that the spiritual flows into the natural, and never the other way (HH 567.2). So does not a worship practice that is carried out on earth and have an effect in heaven contradict that teaching? But we can know for certain that there is no contradiction. How can we know this? Because otherwise there would be no justification for any kind of worship. Worship is done in freedom, not by some kind of forced influx from the spiritual world. In the next chapter of this dissertation we will see that freedom is an essential element in any worship.

Another reason that supports the apparent upward effect is what is taught about the Word. When people read the Word there is an effect in heaven, which is described as an unfolding of the inner meaning “before the angels” (De Verbo 14.6). This effect is likewise discussed later in this dissertation, in the chapter on the Word.

Is holiness independent of people?

We have just seen that holiness can exist when people are in external worship and at the same time closed to any internal meaning. We have also seen that this still depends on the attendant spirits and angels with those people (AC 8588.6). Finally, we have the core teaching that holiness only

comes from the Lord and so requires something that can receive His inflowing presence. In the light of this, does it still make sense to ask if there can be holiness when no people are present?



From ancient times people have regarded certain places as sacred. Examples are Crater Lake in Oregon (*see picture*), or Stonehenge in England. Still, without people to be the receptacles of the Lord's life and light, these places cannot be holy. This also explains why a tourist visiting a place that is famous

for its sacredness more often than not feels nothing. That same tourist may then at another time feel an overwhelming sense of sacredness in a place that is not famous for anything.

The book *Divine Providence* addresses this directly when it states that people originally considered places and objects as sacred “to recall to mind the sacred things which the objects symbolized” (DP 255.2). It was only later that people began to worship these places and objects in themselves, which was a form of idolatry. They had forgotten that they “represented and so symbolized sacred things [only] by virtue of their correspondences” (DP 255.3).

Likewise, in *Arcana Coelestia* 639.2, quoted earlier, Solomon's Temple is “of itself ... in no sense holy.” The real holiness is in the representation, in the connection. The object embodies the spiritual in the natural. In that sense the object is required, and only in that sense is the object holy.

Is the Bible holy as a physical book?

We don't have a Tabernacle anymore, but we do have a book that we call the Holy Bible. To bridge the centuries we can therefore ask whether the book in itself is holy.

Unless the ark and the construction of it with all its details meant some secret of the Church, the Word would not be the Word of the Lord but some dead piece of literature....
(AC 639.2)

Since the Word is constructed to contain the spiritual sense in every detail (AC 9349), the passage above says that the Word is **not** some dead piece of literature, in other words, that it is holy. Still, the core truth is that nothing is holy other than the Lord.

The Word has in it the Lord alone. Still, no one senses or perceives the Divine life in the Word but one who, when reading it, is impelled by a spiritual affection for truth. (AR 200.1)

The book does not impart its holiness to the reader, unless “the good of love and charity is present” (AC 10355.5). Our motives, states and affections allow us to see the Lord in the Word, or not. One area where this becomes particularly relevant is in the Holy Supper, which we will look at next.

Holy Supper and correspondences

True Christian Religion 698 relates the science of correspondences with the Holy Supper. We have already seen this same connection when looking at the holiness of the Tabernacle and Solomon's Temple. The holiness of the sacrament of the Holy Supper derives from the correspondence of natural things with spiritual ones (TCR 701.1). It is only this special connection that makes the Holy Supper holy, not its form, ritual, or the bread and the wine itself.

A further requirement to be fulfilled, one that “turns outward [ritualistic] holiness into inward [real] holiness” (TCR 701.4, my annotation) is understanding and seeing the spiritual sense of the sacrament. There is an appearance of holiness in performing external rituals; but there is real holiness when a person's mind is open to see the spiritual realities connected with the rituals. The ability to see these realities is given to us by the disclosure of the spiritual sense of the Word (TCR 702).

In *True Christian Religion* 711 the conclusion is stated, in strong terms, that the Lord Himself is present in the Holy Supper, His Divine good in the bread, and His Divine truth in the wine. It is this presence that confers a benefit on the person who partakes. The benefit is the reception of wisdom and the reception of love, and in this way the person becomes linked to the Lord (TCR 718).

How is the Lord present in the bread and the wine? Another way to phrase this question is: are the bread and the wine themselves holy? Fortunately we find a very clear answer to this in *Apocalypse Revealed*:

A person who has the Lord in view and practices repentance is conjoined with the Lord and introduced into heaven by means of that most holy [sacrament]. ... The bread and wine do not bring this to pass, **nor is there anything holy in them**, but material bread and heavenly bread correspond one to the other, also material wine and heavenly wine.... Resulting from this there is a conjunction of the Lord with the person, and of the person with the Lord, not with the bread and wine, **but with the love and faith of the person** who practices repentance; and conjunction with the Lord is also introduction into heaven.’
(AR 224.13)

This confirms once more that the holiness, or presence of the Lord, comes through correspondence and is not a quality of the material objects themselves.

Holy objects in the Old Testament

The conclusion at this point is that this is true for all physical objects to which holiness is ascribed. Bread and wine are not holy in themselves, nor was the furniture in the Tabernacle, nor the Ark of the Covenant, nor the Temple of Solomon, nor the chancel in the cathedral in Bryn Athyn, nor the physical printed book that we call the Holy Bible.



But I feel it is necessary to make one qualification. The literal sense of the Old Testament describes places (e.g. the Holy of Holies) and objects (e.g. the Ark) as having intrinsic holiness, so much so that people were forbidden to touch them on pain of

death.⁹ In fact, death would come immediately and miraculously (AE 700.11), and not through human law and punishment (e.g. Lev. 10:1). So even though we now understand that holiness exists through correspondence with heaven and the Lord, in the stories of the **literal** sense of the Word it also had an external reality and effect.¹⁰ The miracles and events described in the Old Testament are not only mental, correspondential constructs: they also really happened.

With the teachings of the Writings as our tool, we run the risk of substituting the literal sense of the stories with the internal sense, and in that way dismissing the parts in Scripture that are unusual to our 21st century minds. But we cannot dismiss the literal sense of the Word, since “Divine Truth, in the sense of the letter of the Word, is in its fullness, in its holiness, and in its power” (SS 37). The bottom line of faith is that the literal sense of the Word is true.¹¹ This includes the descriptions of the effects of holy objects and places.

This leaves us with a contradiction. Objects are not holy **and** they are holy, at least in Old Testament times. I am not able to resolve this contradiction, not without going off into weakly supported speculation.¹² The Writings contain an unquestioned assumption of truthful historicity of Old Testament miraculous events from Genesis 12 onward (AC 1540). There are only one or two exceptions that are called “prophetical” and therefore did not literally happen, like the sun standing still for Joshua (AR 53.6). At the same time the Writings contain deep and thorough

⁹ Ex. 19:12 (do not touch Mount Sinai), 28:35 (must wear correct garments in the Tabernacle); Lev. 16:2 (do not come close to the Ark); Numbers 4:15 (sons of Kohath must not touch any holy thing); 2 Sam. 6:6-7 (Uzzah touched the Ark and died).

¹⁰ Concerning factual historicity see AR 53.6; AE 514.7; AC 1678.4, and others.

¹¹ The passage that confirms this attitude is found in the *Arcana Coelestia*: “It says that God should be feared because He is able to destroy body and soul in Gehenna [Mt. 10:28], when in fact He destroys no one; **but it is still a truth**. Therefore it must not be dispensed with, that is, denied, because if it is denied, faith in the Word perishes. And if that perishes a person cannot have any spiritual life within himself?” (AC 9033.1).

¹² The speculation I am thinking of here touches upon the abrogation of representatives (AC 9349.2, 10637; AR 474.3; TCR 786), suggesting a special state of affairs in heaven and on earth before the First Advent. This might explain why objects and places once were holy and now no longer are to the same degree, in parallel with miracles and the power of representatives.

explanations of the interaction of the spiritual world with the natural, and the unfolding of the spiritual sense from the literal. These explanations mention that the literal and the spiritual senses can appear opposite to each other (AC 3425.1), but that this nevertheless does not invalidate the literal sense:

It seems as though the literal sense disappears or dies through the internal sense; **but the contrary is the reality**. It does not disappear, still less does it die; rather it receives life through the internal sense. (AC 8943)

The conclusion is that the Writings themselves contain the abovementioned paradox. I am therefore going to let it stand as is.

Holy Supper and its effects

Taking up the thread of the Holy Supper, we notice that certain passages specify that the effects or benefits of partaking in the Holy Supper are different for different people.

Conjunction with the Lord, through the sacrament of the Supper, takes place only with those who are in the good of love to, and of faith in, the Lord from the Lord. With such there is conjunction through the Holy Supper; with the rest, there is **presence**, but not **conjunction**. (HD 213)

Therefore the holiness of the sacrament can be a presence as well as a conjunction, where the latter is also phrased as “being introduced to heaven” or heaven being opened (TCR 719). The same

words occur when speaking of the Word: “The power of the Word ... is the power to open heaven, whereby ... conjunction [is] effected” (AE 1086.6). Another perspective on this difference is given in *Conjugal Love*: “To approach Him makes presence, but to live according to His precepts makes conjunction” (CL 341).

We find here a distinction between these terms. Conjunction is closer and more encompassing than presence. However, I do want to point out that this is only a perspective and not an absolute definition of terms. In many places the Writings use the terms “conjunction and presence” as virtual synonyms (AC 9378, 9379, 9371, 10021; TCR 268; HH 199; De Verbo 17; CL 171).

We will spend more time investigating what conjunction is specifically, and what presence is specifically, in a later chapter. But first we will look shortly at certain other qualities of holiness.

Holiness linked to spheres

Holiness is something that can be received. Another way to think of this is holiness as something that flows out of, pours forth or proceeds. This consideration finds resonance in the teachings about **spheres**. Let’s look at some of these teachings here.

The divinity proceeding from the Lord is called a sphere, because it comes out of Him, surrounds Him and fills both the spiritual and natural worlds.... Every emanation from an object... is named a sphere; as for instance the sphere of light and heat coming from the sun and surrounding it, the sphere of life coming from a person and surrounding him....
(CL 386)

The really interesting terminology used here is, in Latin: *Divinum a Domino procedens*, or the Divine proceeding from the Lord. Where do the Writings use the exact same phrases? When talking about the Holy Spirit. So there we have the link with holiness. “The Holy Spirit is the Divine which proceeds out of the Lord” (TCR 167). The Latin is identical here as just quoted from *Conjugal Love*.

There is ... a sphere continuously radiated by the Lord, which raises all to heaven; this fills the whole of both the spiritual and natural worlds. It is like a strong current in the ocean, which invisibly draws a ship along. (TCR 652)

The word translated as “radiated” is the same as “proceeding.” A sphere is something that proceeds, and so is the Holy Spirit. This further consolidates a connection between holiness and spheres. A strong statement to that effect is found in the *Nine Questions*:

The Holy Spirit is the same as the Divine sphere if by this is meant the Divine love and Divine wisdom, which two proceed from Jehovah the Lord from the sun of the angelic heaven... (Q. 5)¹³

Since spheres are described in dynamic terms, using analogies like currents in the ocean, this highlights once more the dynamic nature of holiness. It is not static, it is not a thing, it is not unchanging.

¹³ Instead of quoting the rest of the passages that use similar phrasing, here is a short list of references: AE 392.1; Athanasian Creed 191; AC 6490, 9407.13, 10188.3).

[key phrase] Holiness is dynamic, not static.

Everything organic that grows, our minds, and life itself: these are dynamic, too. How does holiness relate to these?

Relation between holiness and our life

There is a relationship between the spirit of the Lord, which is called the Holy Spirit, and a person's spirit. It may be obvious, but let's state it anyway: the Lord's spirit is holy, but a person's spirit is not on its own described as holy. To understand how the Lord's spirit relates to our spirit will shed light on holiness as something that can affect our life.

The passage that deals with this extensively is *Arcana Coelestia* 9818, a long paragraph with 28 subsections, which is rare for the *Arcana*. A person's spirit is defined as "goodness and truth inscribed on the understanding part of a person's mind" (AC 9818.3). In contrast the spirit of the Lord is described as "Divine Truth emanating from His Divine Good" (*ibid.*). And these two relate as follows: "When this Divine Truth flows in and is received by a person it is the Spirit of truth, Spirit of God, and Holy Spirit" (*ibid.*). An even stronger expression of this truth: "A person, a spirit, and an angel ... are holy in the measure that they receive the Lord" (AC 9820.3). It is seen from this that holiness **comes about in the process of Divine Truth flowing in and being received.**

[key phrase] Holiness occurs when Divine Truth is received.

The question needs to be asked here: isn't a person more than his understanding part? A person is will and understanding, both of which form his spirit and thus his life (HD 35; AC 644, 2930). However, in the passage we are looking at now (AC 9818), much emphasis is placed on the understanding, frequently equating spirit/understanding with "the actual life of a person" (AC 9818.8, 9818.10). The reason that the understanding is emphasized is because today we are all spiritual people, in which there is a separation of the understanding and the will part of the mind (AC 641, 9818.1). Celestial people, like those who once belonged to the Most Ancient Church, had a united will and understanding (AC 8118). But for us the only way that we can enter eternal life is through the understanding part of our minds, which is where reformation starts, even if regeneration certainly also has to come to involve the will also (TCR 571, 587).

This is connected with holiness in the following way: "Divine Truth, from which heavenly life comes to a person, is the Holy Spirit" (AC 9818.17). And also: "That holy influence present with a person, emanating from the Lord through angels and spirits, whether in a discernible manner or an indiscernible one, is the Holy Spirit..." (AC 9818.14). In other words, that something which flows in from the Lord, which is received in a person's spirit, and which is then present with a person, is called holy.

[key phrase] Holiness is a quality of the influence from the Lord into our spirit.

This chapter has been a deliberate exploration through various corners of the Writings and the teachings. There are many sides to holiness. We are now going to deal with some of the major themes that have started to emerge, in a more systematic manner.

The whole of the next chapter focuses on one aspect of our life that, perhaps unexpectedly, is sacred. That aspect is freedom.

Chapter Three: The Sacredness of freedom

Introduction

We value our freedom. We insist upon being left free to chose whatever we want, go wherever we want, and believe whatever we want. Clearly wanting, or love, lies at the basis of freedom.

All freedom is a matter of love, even to the point that love and freedom are the same thing.

Since love is our life, freedom is also essential to our life. (DP 73.2)

We feel very protective of our freedom. As it happens the Lord feels the same way: “The Lord protects our freedom the way we protect the pupil of our eye” (DP 97).



The First Amendment to the American Constitution insists that people have a right to freedom of religion, speech, press, and assembly. By declaring that “Congress shall make no law” it declares freedom to be a higher authority than the government itself.¹⁴ The reason the Heavenly Doctrines were published in England and Holland was the much greater freedom of religion in those

countries, as compared to Sweden, the home country of Swedenborg. Freedom itself is a

¹⁴ The text of the Bill of Rights says: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble...”

transparent thing. We don't see it or feel it. But when something threatens to take it away our reaction can be very forceful. Suddenly nothing on earth matters more. It is as if all the angels of heaven rally to the cause. This is because our life and our love and our freedom are all the same thing, as expressed in the quote from *Divine Providence* just above.

Freedom and rationality

Despite all this, including freedom in the discussion of holiness may instinctively seem an odd choice. We may not particularly experience our freedom as holy, nor our ability to think and make choices. We experience these abilities as common, daily, and ordinary. Yet, not only are freedom and rationality mentioned in the first law of Divine Providence (DP 71), they are singled out and emphasized as sacred things (DP 96). We will therefore look at the place of freedom and rationality, and what makes them holy.

Rationality

Before launching into this, it is a fact that the chapter on this topic in *Divine Providence* focuses more on freedom than on rationality, to the extent that it would be legitimate here to first define what we understand by rationality. *Divine Love and Wisdom* 425.1 states that the function of rationality is to know the difference between good and evil, as well as between true and false. Rationality is used to know and understand the means by which to come into a good life. This means that rationality is here viewed in functional terms, more as an ability than a piece of machinery, more a sphere of activity than an organ. That is also how I will use it in the following.

Interestingly, the Writings mention that **animals and objects** in a way also have freedom.

God introduced freedom, not only to every human being, but also to every animal, and indeed an analogous faculty even to inanimate objects. (TCR 491.1)

However, what is meant here is a certain responsiveness to the surroundings. Animals and inanimate objects lack rationality, i.e. lack the ability to distinguish good from evil, and therefore cannot even know what they are doing and why. Yet, clearly, a bird flitting from branch to branch is free. It is not a pre-programmed machine. It makes reactive, though not rational, choices about which branches to fly to. Nevertheless, the freedom and rationality that human beings enjoy is radically different. Let's now look at the way this is so.

The main passage that makes the link to holiness is:

The Lord protects these two abilities untouched within us and as things that are **sacred** through the whole course of his divine providence. (DP 96.1)

The two abilities mentioned are freedom and rationality. The attribute of sacredness is given in the Latin as *ut sanctas*, literally “as sacred things.” This is therefore not a poetic comparison, because then the word *sicut* (“as if”) would have been used.

Divine Providence goes on to mention three reasons why these are sacred. These reasons turn out to be quite simple and down-to-earth:

[1] Without these two abilities there, we would have no discernment [understanding] or volition [will] and would therefore not be **human**.

[2] Another is that without these two abilities we could not be united to the Lord and therefore could not be reformed and **regenerated**.

[3] Then too, without these two abilities we would not have **immortality** or eternal life.

(DP 96, connotations and numbering are mine)

So... humanity, regeneration, and immortality. In the core statements given at the beginning of this dissertation we have a simple and solid handhold for understanding what holiness is. Only the Lord is holy and the Divine that emanates from Him. Yet here we are in the middle of human life, which in appearance can be far removed from what is holy. How does the Divine emanating from the Lord find expression and embodiment here? In the three aspects of humanity, regeneration, and immortality. Let's look at them one by one.

Humanity

When we say we are **human** we mean that we have a will and an understanding. This is more essential than talking about the design of the human body. The body is called "an obedient servant" (DP 124.2), whereas "the will and the understanding ... make up a person's spirit" (TCR 397.3). What is meant by the will? "The ... basis of our will is our ability to intend as though we were doing so ourselves" (DP 96.2). The will is the power behind our every action and thought, and it is the one thing we identify with as being "us." The will is not abstract; it is the very strong feeling that we are individuals. Children can have a strong will long before their rationality is active.

In the fact that we feel our will to be our own, lies our freedom. If someone limits our will, we no longer feel free. When we don't feel free, it is as if life comes to a stop, and nothing matters anymore.

The Writings say that our will is constantly given to us by the Lord. The thing that feels most personal to us is at the same time the thing that spiritually isn't ours at all. Much the same can be said about the understanding. How does our humanity get defined by the will and the understanding?

Since the **will** is a vessel for love... and the **understanding** is a vessel for wisdom... it follows that **we are** all our own love and our own wisdom.... Humans are not human on any other basis; and nothing else in us is human. (TCR 263)

When we get down to the foundation of what it means to be human beings, we refer to our will and our understanding. We are human beings by being "created in the image of God... [and by] continually [being] given the ability to understand and to will" (TCR 389.6). We are what we love, and we are what we think on the basis of that love. A **person** is an apparently autonomous entity consisting of loves, memories, opinions, skills, and so on. "No one has any 'self' as people usually understand the word 'self.' It is only a kind of attribute" (DP 309.1).

The will relates to the gift of freedom, since we have free will. The understanding relates to the gift of rationality. We are human because we have free will and the power of reasoning. It is 100% necessary that we have these two gifts, since this is at the heart of the creation of all life. When *True*

Christian Religion describes the essence of God’s love in the chapter on God the Creator, the first¹⁵ thing is: “His love consists of three things, namely, to love others outside of Himself...” (TCR 43.1). Outside of God means being in freedom.

[key phrase] A thing is sacred if it makes us human, and therefore our freedom and rationality are sacred.

Regeneration

The next item on the list is **regeneration**, or rather, regeneration as a result of being joined to the Lord (DP 96.5). Without this joining there is no regeneration, since only the Lord has the power to lift us up. Regeneration depends on our ability to see right from wrong, to understand what is true and what is not, and to then choose a path forward based on this knowledge (DP 85). Our freedom and rationality are described as the places where “the Lord dwells within us” (DP 96.5). By dwelling within us He conjoins Himself with us. This is the second part of the essence of God’s love, given in the same part of *True Christian Religion* already cited just above: “His wanting to be one with [others outside Himself]” (TCR 43.1).

Later in the same book it says:

The gift of freedom is the source of a person’s ability to reciprocate, **so that he can link himself with the Lord** or with the devil. (TCR 371.2)

¹⁵ TCR 43.1 mentions three aspects of God’s love: “[1] His loving others who are outside of [God], [2] His wanting to be one with

The Lord can only be one with us if the door is open and the evils that by heredity are in us, have been put aside (DP 83.1). By ourselves we have little or no will power against evil. By ourselves we don't know the difference between good and evil, since they both can feel good. This is why reformation and regeneration are needed. This requires choice and a path to walk. Nothing becomes part of our lives unless we choose it freely and accept it and believe in it. "Our sense of who we are and our freedom are integral to each other" (DP 78.1). Therefore, the new person that gets born through regeneration must be free, and only what gets accepted and done in freedom actually sticks (AC 4031.4; HD 276).

It is therefore a **holy** law of the Divine providence that internal freedom should in no way be violated; for by that freedom the Lord enters into man ... and by it leads ... him into heaven.... (AE 1155.4)

[key phrase] A thing is sacred if it allows the Lord to be conjoined with us, and so our freedom and rationality are sacred.

Immortality

The third item on the list is **immortality**. This refers to our spirit, not our natural body. Our spirit is already immortal, regardless whether we are good or evil (DP 96.7, 324.3, 324.8). Our will and understanding, whose nature and essential activity at heart are freedom and rationality, are directly from the Lord and so cannot die. They link us to the Lord, and through the actions and responses

them, and [3] His blessing them." These will each be linked to humanity, regeneration, and immortality, in that sequence.

of our life we reciprocate that union, and are reformed. A reformed and regenerated human being is given eternal life, which means more than just not being able to die. It also means living in a happy state:

Everyone is created **to live forever in a blessed state**. This is a logical consequence, since the One who wants us to live forever wants us to live in a blessed state as well. Otherwise, what would eternal life be? (DP 324.6)

This is the third part of the essence of God's love, given in *True Christian Religion*: "His blessing them from Himself" (TCR 43.1). So eternal life and immortality are not the same thing. Evil people are immortal, but they are not blessed. The Lord can only bless us if we are free to choose whatever we want and have the rational ability to figure out what we want, and why.

There is a lovely description of what this eternal life is like in *Heaven and Hell*:

[They] seem to themselves to have awakened from sleep ... like people who have come from darkness into light. They are actually thinking from heaven's light... Heaven is flowing into their thoughts and affections with a profound feeling of blessedness and pleasure that they had never known before. This is because they are in touch with heaven's angels.....They are also acknowledging and worshiping [the Lord] in **freedom**, since freedom is a matter of our deeper affection. In this way they move away from an outward **holiness** and into inner **holiness** that is the essence of real worship. (HH 506.1)

This passage makes the connection to holiness, and so gives us the third key phrase:

[key phrase] A thing is sacred if it gives us eternal life, and so our freedom and rationality are sacred.

Sacredness in life

Our humanity, regeneration, and immortality are expressions and gifts from the Lord. They have been shown to be elements without which life is meaningless. They are where holiness can be found even in ordinary things. The meaning and purpose of human life cannot be found in our own minds or achievements; they can only be found in the Lord who created all. This leads us back to the source. The criterion for holiness is the presence of the Lord, for “the Lord alone is holy and therefore that alone is holy which emanates from Him” (AC 10276.1). Humanity, regeneration, and immortality are where the Lord is present in us.

A key element that has been mentioned again and again in the foregoing is the conjunction of the Lord with us and of us with the Lord. Therefore, the next chapter will lay out what the Writings teach about conjunction.

Chapter Four: Conjunction and presence

Introduction

This chapter will explore the meaning of the terms “conjunction” and “presence,” in what way they are different, and in what way they relate to holiness. To start with I need to point out again that these are not technical terms. The Writings use them on a sliding scale. This scale looks something like this, from most intense to least intense:

1. union (AC 2021)
2. conjunction (AC 3514; AR 55)
3. adjunction (DP 58; AR 160)
4. presence (CL 341)
5. reception (DLW 66)

It is not useful here to investigate in detail how these terms differentiate, since their meanings often overlap. For the sake of the current investigation, I will consider the first three (union, conjunction, and adjunction) loosely as overlapped by the term “conjunction,” the last two (presence, reception) by “presence.”

Conjunction

The term “conjunction” is used in a wide variety of contexts in the Writings. It seems to be a description of a process. This becomes clear when looking at creation. Creation is not a one-time event, but something that goes on moment by moment (DP 3; DLW 152; AC 1432). The creation process is described as resting on “the conjunction of both the Human and the Divine essences with His kingdom in the heavens and on the earth” (AC 1432). Therefore, conjunction is dynamic, rather than static, just like creation is.

The Latin word *conjunctio* can be translated in different ways: connection, link, bond, joining, communion, have affinity with. It is also set in connection with inflow, as in the following fragment:

A person **feels that to be his own** which inflows from the Lord; and **by this means conjunction is effected**. The union of the Lord and man takes place by means of influx, as a force acting into its organ. There is adjunction, and there is communication. (Marr Index 2:24; cf. CL 122)

A person feels the Lord flowing into him, and this manifests itself as belonging to the person himself. Remember the earlier discussion of freedom, which we take totally for granted and which yet is not ours. By the feeling of ownership conjunction is established. The ownership is not an obstacle. Because the inflow feels to us as if it is us and ours, we are conjoined with the Lord. We are aware of what is ours, but not necessarily of the conjunction.

A natural analogy that demonstrates how inflow and conjunction, though separate concepts, can appear to be the same is the earth's rotation. At the equator the earth rotates at a speed of approximately 1000 miles per hour. We know from other situations that acceleration and deceleration can clearly be felt, like when a car speeds up. But when the speed is constant (inflow) we don't feel it anymore, we are one with the speed and it feels absent (conjunction).

At this point a question can be asked: is the experience of holiness a result of a partial and growing consciousness of this conjunction? We will return to this question later, in the section on "Holiness and conjunction."

Affections as the basis for conjunction

A feature that gets highlighted is that conjunction happens through good, and not through truth alone. Here follow a series of passages that show how affection and love are the main ingredient in conjunction:

Wherever conjunction exists there has to be a **conjoiing** agency, which is exclusively **love and charity**. (AC 904.2)

The essence of all **love** consists in **conjunction**. (DLW 47)

It is even true to go so far as to say that conjunction is what love or good itself is, as in the following passage:

The good ... **consisted in** being joined to Jehovah or the Lord, which came about through their [i.e. the people of Israel] choosing Him, to serve Him. (AC 4197.3)

The passage below indicates that our very life or ruling loves are the basis for constant communication and conjunction with others:

Everyone in heaven has a **communication** of life, which we can call an extension, into the surrounding angelic communities in accord with the amount and quality of his or her **good**: 8794, 8797.... We are **united** and separated according to our dominant **affections**: 4111. (HH 203.4, the numbers referred to are from the *Arcana*)

This leads further to the understanding that we connect to what we love, particularly if this moves us into action:

When someone [in the spiritual world] thinks about another with a desire to speak with him, the other becomes immediately present.... The like occurs when someone thinks about another out of an **affection of love** for him, but this latter **affection** brings about their **conjunction**, while the former brings about only the other's **presence**. (DP 29)

This is virtually a law of the spiritual world and of heaven, a law of love. We can call it a law because it applies to everyone and everything. It particularly also governs our spiritual relationship with the Lord:

Through his **affection** a person can become **conjoined with** them [things not seen by the senses] and therefore to heaven, indeed to the Lord Himself. (AC 4363.3)

And with that we can now ascertain how holiness comes into play when looking at conjunction.

Holiness and conjunction

The Writings relate holiness and conjunction in this way:

Those who have an entirely **holy** conception of the Lord and who at the same time have a true knowledge of and affections for what is good and true ... have been **joined to** the Lord as to His Divine Rational. (AC 4211.3)

From these lines we can extract the following conclusion: holiness is a quality of the state of our affections and thoughts. And it is also true that this quality can be more internal or less internal. In other words we have to move away from the idea of holiness as caused by an external circumstance.

[key phrase] Holiness is a quality of the state of our affections and thoughts.

To link this back to the external practice of the Holy Supper, we can now see that the internal affection in the person is the deciding factor that makes the ritual holy or not:

In the Holy Supper too ‘eating’ means **making one’s own** - ‘the bread’ being celestial love and ‘the wine’ spiritual love - so much so that while it is being eaten by a person **in a state of holiness** nothing else is perceived in heaven. (AC 4211.1)

The conclusion that holiness is a quality of the state of our affections and thoughts is one to bear in mind throughout what follows. That ends this foray into the meanings of the term “conjunction.” Now we will focus on “presence.”

Presence

In itself the word “presence” can be taken as a straightforward descriptive term, meaning nearness or immediacy. In addition to this, however, the word has an interesting Hebrew equivalent in פָּנִים, or *panim*, Strong number 6440. *Panim* means faces. It gets translated as: face, before, in the sight of, or in the presence of. In the Old Testament the word occurs 2,100 times, and most frequently implies the presence of God (Gen. 3:8; Ex. 33:14; Ps. 68:8)¹⁶. In the meaning of “face,” the word can indicate an attitude of reverence (to fall on one’s face), an expanse (the face of the earth), or the totality of a person’s being. The expression “face to face,” as in “Jacob called the name of the place Peniel¹⁷: ‘For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.’ (Gen. 32:30),” indicates intimate communication with God. As a descriptive term it does not imply conjunction, as the spatial translation of “before” demonstrates. However, *panim* can imply power, or the effects of the presence of God. This shows up in Deuteronomy 5:4-5, where Moses says:

¹⁶ *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words* – Stephen D. Renn.

¹⁷ The name Peniel itself means: the faces of God (AC 4298).

Yahweh spoke with you face to **face** in the mount from amidst the fire,

I stood between Yahweh and you in that period, to tell you the word of Yahweh. For you feared the **face** of the fire, and never ascended the mount. (Dt. 5:4-5, ARTB translation)

In the attempt to present these concepts, admittedly using the English language to describe meanings from Latin and Hebrew, an immediate intuitive difference becomes visible in the flavor and tone of meaning between “conjunction,” dealt with in the previous section, and “presence.” Conjunction feels like a fuzzy, almost philosophical term, whereas presence is physical, and not head-based. Conjunction appears extensively in the Writings, but almost never in the Old Testament.

Let’s now look at how the Writings talk about presence.

It is in love that the Lord is **present**, and to the extent that a person has **love** the Lord is **present**. (AC 904.3)

The Lord is ... **present** with everyone, for from no other source does **life** flow. (AC 2706)

When the Lord is **present** His very presence arranges everything into **order**. (AC 5703.2)

The Lord is **present** with everyone in the **Word**. (AR 217)

The key words in these quotes are: **love, life, order, the Word**. All of these are given to a person, as opposed to being the result of effort or an improved quality of thinking. So presence is something given, not earned. In *True Christian Religion* presence is used for the universal presence of

the Lord that everyone externally is blessed by (TCR 719.2). This is then contrasted with a more internal presence that also opens heaven for a person, which sounds closer to conjunction. Proving once more the fluidity of these terms, the word “conjunction” itself is actually not mentioned in that passage (TCR 719).

Another obvious meaning of presence that I don't want to pass by is the First Advent of the Lord. There He was literally present on earth with people. The same is true of the appearances of Jehovah in the Old Testament, as for instance to the people of Israel on Mount Sinai (AC 8792). Presence has a physical aspect to it.

The reason why ‘the glory’ means **the presence and the advent** of the Lord is that in the highest sense ‘glory’ is the Divine Truth which emanates from the Lord. (AC 8427.1)

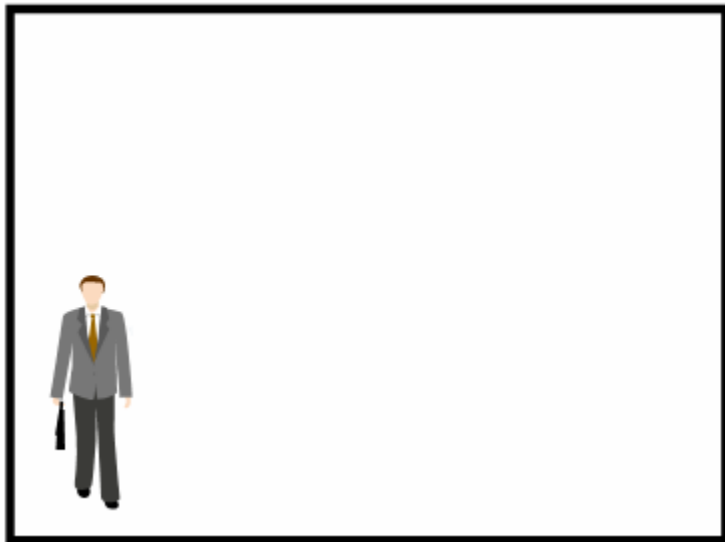
In this *Arcana* passage presence and advent are repeatedly used as pairs, suggesting close overlap in meaning. Not just that, but the phrase “Divine truth emanating (i.e. *procedens*) from the Lord” turns up here, and this is the exact phrase used to describe the Holy Spirit (TCR 138).

Presence and omnipresence

Rev. Stephen D. Cole wrote a paper (presented to the Council of the Clergy in 2003) called *The Presence of the Lord and Holy Fear*, in which he looked into the question of where and when the Lord can be said to be present. The main question proposed in this paper is: is the Lord present

everywhere at all times, or can the Lord be said to be more present at specific places at specific times (like in the Holy Supper sacrament)?

The paper leads the reader through some very intricate and interesting cogitations. What I conclude from it is to some extent different from the conclusions arrived at by Stephen Cole. When asking this kind of question about the presence of the Lord, we unwittingly impose upon ourselves a construct of reality. A construct is something artificial. We do this through the use of language. Language tends to want to make distinctions, even when no such distinction exists. Sometimes that's the only way we can even talk about a topic.



For example: does a wave in the sea consist of water and foam when it breaks in the surf? Sure, there is water and there is foam. But the wave is the wave. It is only because of using words that the distinction appears. If we were just watching the wave or experience it crashing over us no

such distinction would be made. Another example: imagine a room with a person in it. The person is present in the room. This is a fact. But the person is standing in the left bottom corner: so is he “more present” in this corner as compared to e.g. the top right corner? Now, this is philosophical. No one would actually ever ask such a question. The person is present in the room. If you want to find him and tap him on the shoulder you will have to go, in this case, to the left bottom corner of the room.

The same is true for the Lord. He is omnipresent in all things at all times (DLW 7.1). But if you want to find Him you will have to go to a church, or the Tabernacle, or read the Word, or take part in a Holy Supper ceremony.

This is what I feel is primary in the understanding of the presence of the Lord, and, as we have seen, holiness comes from the Lord alone. Anything further may quickly become philosophical speculation, removed from reality, and removed from the Sacred.

Inevitable flexibility of English translations

In the appendix to Rev. Cole's paper the author inserts a caution against relying on the English translations too much. The word "presence" is sometimes used when the Latin does **not** have *praesentia*. This brings up the disconnect that abstract language can create in our minds. Presence is not a well-definable or measurable thing. In a way it's like life itself: we know when it's there and we know when it's not there, but we don't know what it is exactly.

Therefore, when talking about translations, it does not matter greatly if the translator uses that term to describe aspects of the Lord's working, even if the term is absent in the Latin, or vice versa. Take the often-used word *apud* in the Latin, which means: within, among, present in or with, contained in. Taking the phrase *Ecclesiam apud hominem* (AC 10357), one translation (Elliott) says, the church present in a person, while another (Potts) says, the church with man. The latter is literally more accurate, but really means the same as the former. As Rev. Cole notes, this only becomes an issue when getting too entangled in technical terms, trying to understand the universe,

the Lord, and His many faces and relationships with us and with angels and the whole of heaven. Words do sometimes fall short in this respect...

Swedenborg's Latin has many passages that read like shorthand¹⁸. When this is the case a list of concepts is shortly indicated with key words, without any attempt to elaborate or explain in depth. This is not carelessness, but conciseness. Words still have precision and are carefully chosen, they just don't carry the weight of meaning in themselves, but rely on a train of thought and on context. This is much like the way Swedenborg often indicates the flow of the internal sense (AC 2343.1). The following quote is about the internal sense, but is just as true when applied to the Writings (or in fact any book):

The nature of ... actual train of thought cannot begin to reveal itself when each word is explained separately; for in that case **each is seen in isolation** from the rest and the continuity of meaning is lost. (AC 2343.2)

In context, the usage or non-usage of specific words becomes of secondary significance to the flow of thought expressed. It is therefore not productive to pin special meaning to the usage of the word *praesentia*, when other expressions, like *apud*, mean the same thing.

A paper that likewise attempts to loosen up the dogmatic approach to language is *Swedenborg's Use of Language* by W. R. Woofenden, 1985. The paper weighs a terminologist's and a contextualist's approach against each other, coming out decidedly in favor of the latter.

¹⁸ For example, AC 6827.1. This contains a typical mini-summary of teachings, quick pointers to provide a background before launching into specific context explanations. Also: large parts of NJHD are in a kind of short-hand.

The Divine in us

During the research into conjunction and presence, I became aware of a controversy that has existed between the General Church and the Lord's New Church around the year 1940 involving, among other things, this topic of conjunction. I feel it is appropriate to devote a little space to this in this paper for the following reason. **Holiness is not a cold subject, devoid of heart and emotion.** Of course, no religious topic is that, although some are more philosophical than others. Considerations of holiness, or the Sacred, hold within them awe, respect, compassion, bliss and reverence. This is close to the heart of religion, the church, and the relationship between human beings and the Lord. Having just looked at the terms "conjunction" and "presence," I wonder if there are further aspects that can be highlighted, to do better justice to what is holy. This is where the already mentioned controversy comes in.

In 1940, before resigning from the General Church, Rev. Philip Nathaniel Odhner gave an address to the Council of the Clergy, which was published one year later under the title *The Conjunction of the Lord with Men*. Let's briefly summarize the main thesis. There is a relationship between the Lord and a person. The Lord is infinite, a person is finite. True conjunction of a person with the Lord means that the person contains something of the Lord within himself; the finite containing something of the infinite. "That which is infinite can appear as if man's own" (Ph. N. Odhner, 1941, page 4). Further, relevant to the present dissertation is the assertion that this infinite is something that a person can be conscious of (Ph. N. Odhner, 1941, page 5). This is in short the thesis of the booklet, which presents itself as carefully reasoned and supported by many passages from the Writings.

According to Ph. N. Odhner the General Church was in disagreement with these views. The reasoning given being that infinite things get received and adjust themselves to the receiver, and become thereby finite. This is indeed a valid conclusion, based upon passages like *Divine Wisdom* 4 and *Divine Providence* 3, which make it clear that there can be no proportional relationship between what is infinite and what is finite. Furthermore, the Writings always very carefully make a distinction between the Divine and that part in human beings that receives the Divine, or belongs to the Divine, or is the dwelling place of the Divine.

It is by means of this internal [man] that the Lord is united to a person. The heaven itself that is nearest to the Lord consists of these human internals, but being above even the inmost angelic heaven these internals therefore **belong to** the Lord Himself. In this way the entire human race is directly present **beneath** the eyes of the Lord. (AC 1999.3; also HH 39)

These inward aspects of men [i.e. the internals] possess **no life in themselves** but are **recipient forms** of the Lord's life. (AC 1999.4)

So we have two standpoints. These, unfortunately, became polarized and interfered with the charitable relationship between New Church people. This controversy had played a part in the split between the General Church and the Lord's New Church. In the years after the split certain problematic conclusions were drawn on the basis of the views in Ph. N. Odhner's booklet. One of these was the issue of church leaders being able to claim personal enlightenment. This would, it was felt, potentially enable them to trump the authority of the Word. But this is not pertinent to the topic of holiness.

What **is** pertinent is an unfortunate side-effect of the polarized standpoint that insists that we cannot have anything Divine in us. This puts the Lord at great distance from mere human beings. And this not just from the standpoint of our inherent evil tendencies, but as part of the very order of creation. The state of holiness then becomes remote. Yet, sensing the Lord's nearness to us, and His presence in us, is what we call "the Sacred." This is not remote. Our connection and relationship with the Lord cannot be remote if it is sacred.

[key phrase] Holiness is experienced when we sense the Lord's nearness to us and His presence in us.

Consciousness of the Divine in us

Directly following on this is the question to what extent we, as finite human beings, **can be aware** of the infinite Lord in us. This will directly relate to the conscious awareness of holiness or holy states.

What comes from the Lord to man must be received by a person; and it cannot be received **unless he is conscious of it**, that is, as if of himself. This reciprocation is a necessity to reformation. (AE 971.2)

The Latin is uncomplicated here, using *conscio*, which means: to be aware of. This can be taken as a straightforward answer to the question posed. So regardless of whether we somehow receive infinite things in us or not, whatever it is that we do receive from the Lord we are conscious of as

if it were our own. This is fundamentally the definition of the Latin phrase *sicut a se*, as if from self. This is the paradox: it is in those things that seem to be our own, that the Lord is present.

It is by virtue of these two abilities [i.e. will and understanding, or freedom and rationality] that we can be united to the Lord.... Since these abilities are given us by the Lord and we are not to claim them as our own, we are not to claim anything divine as our own either, though something divine can be attached to us **so that it seems to be ours**. (DP 285.2)

So our freedom of will and our ability to reason are the primary faculties of our minds that we would naturally call “ours.” If anything is ours this is it. What is ours we are conscious of. We are conscious of freedom and rationality in our daily choices and our ability to think and generally be aware of our surroundings and ourselves. Yet, the teaching says that these very things, freedom and rationality, because of their high value, are the Lord’s. They do not feel as if they are the Lord’s. Can we be at all conscious of their origin?

Heaven and Hell 30-33 summarize the teaching that the human mind has been created to mirror the pattern of heaven. This pattern is a divine design and is described as having three levels, celestial-spiritual-natural. These levels of our minds can be opened. As an example, here is how the celestial level is described:

The people whose third level has been **opened** are in the central heaven.... People who are actually affected by divine true gifts and let them **directly** into their lives — into their **intentions** and therefore into **act** — are in the central or third heaven. (HH 33)

The passage goes on to say that people in the second heaven let divine gifts “into their memory and from there into their understanding” (HH 33). Both of these descriptions indicate an awareness of a level of the mind being open. The celestial angel is able to apply truth directly (HH 26); the spiritual angel needs to process it through his or her understanding and then applies it. It is stated that angels are intelligent and happy about their closeness to the Lord, and therefore conscious of it:

All perfection increases as we move inward... because more inward things are closer to the Lord and intrinsically purer.... Angelic perfection consists of intelligence, wisdom, love, and everything good, with happiness as their result. It **does not consist in happiness without these former qualities**, since happiness without them is merely superficial, with no depth. (HH 34; cf. AE 802.5)

In order to tie all the foregoing together, referencing freedom, rationality, as well as consciousness, the following lines from *Divine Providence* are quoted:

By means of [freedom and rationality] a person is able to think within him about those things which with the senses of his body he perceives around him, and to **think on a higher level** about those things which he is thinking below. For everyone can say, “This is what I have thought, and this is what I now think,” or, “This is what I have willed and this is what I now will,” likewise, “I understand this to be so,” “I love this because it is as it is,” and so on. It is apparent, therefore, that the human being thinks also **on a level above his thought** and sees it as though below him. He has this ability from **rationality and freedom**. (DP 75.2)

Our ability to be conscious is an inevitable result of the gifts of freedom and reason. Because of these gifts we are able to look around, in the world as well as in our thoughts, and be conscious of the fact. Nevertheless, even though this is true, we are still not conscious of the Divine in us. The Divine is always higher than our minds, which is according to the order of creation. This process is by analogy like taking a step backward or upward and looking down, so that we can be aware of what we see down there, yet not of what is looking. “Divine operation frequently takes place without a person being aware of it, but he is conscious of the effects” (AE 802.5). On the other hand, the angels do have a perception of this Divine operation, in varying degrees of perfection (AC 2891). More will be said about consciousness in the later chapter on Applications, when looking at reflection and introspection.

Reinstating presence and conjunction

Building on the interesting teachings presented above, I do want to admit that the Writings generally make a simple distinction between conjunction and presence. Their meaning is certainly not blurred. To be true to the way these terms are taught, on the next page is a table listing a few of the real distinctions given:

Presence	Conjunction
“Wisdom brings about presence” “	“and love brings about conjunction” (DP 91.2).
Understanding.	Will.
“Faith makes the Divine of the Lord to be present”	“and love conjoins” (AE 815.6)
Believe in the Word, obedience.	Practice repentance and believe in the Lord (AR 219).
Being acquainted with the Lord, having knowledge, moved by concepts about Him.	Acknowledgment of God, moved by an affection of love to acknowledge Him (DP 326).
Truths of faith.	The good of charity together with faith (TCR 725).
Approach	Worship from affection (AC 3574).
Religion	Love and wisdom resulting from this religion (D. Wis 8)
Going to the Lord	Living according to His commandments (CL 341.2)

This distinction is not one, however, of holiness being absent or present. Holiness is there in both cases. The closer the Lord, the greater the holiness that is experienced.

This concludes the chapter on “presence” and “conjunction.” Next we will consider the thing that is instrumental in us even having any conception of holiness, namely the Word.

Chapter Five: The Word

Introduction

Of all things that we know and can connect the idea of holiness to, one stands out. One item is still today, in a world that hardly ever uses the word “holy” anymore with respect, habitually called holy. This is the Word, the Holy Bible, the Sacred Scriptures. The one book that still, unseen, tops the bestseller lists. The book of which it is estimated that as many printed copies are in existence on earth as there are people.¹⁹

So right away, we need to ask, why is the Word holy? How is it holy? How does that holiness relate to worship, regeneration, and the church? What makes the Word holy? And how do we understand the Word in relation to the Lord, who is the source of holiness? These questions will be dealt with now.

Holiness of the Word

A first link between holiness and the Word is found in *De Verbo*:

When a person reads the Word and considers it **holy**, then its natural meaning becomes spiritual in the second heaven and celestial in the third. (De Verbo 2)

¹⁹ <http://www.infopedia.com/worlds-best-selling-books.php>

What does it mean **to consider the Word holy**? Very simply it means to consider that the Word is God's Word, and to read it with an attitude and a respect appropriate to that belief. "The Word is from God, is Divinely inspired, and is therefore holy" (SS 1). This answer seems almost too simple, yet it is what the Writings pragmatically declare. This simple approach nevertheless has the effect of the natural meaning becoming "spiritual in the second heaven and celestial in the third" (De Verbo 2). This process is elsewhere described as a kind of instantaneous unfolding of the inner senses (SS 63). Furthermore, this unfolding is instrumental in a person's association with angels of the spiritual and celestial kingdom.

So on the one hand holiness is here described as an **attitude**, very simple and easy to see. On the other hand there is a follow-up **experience**, as described here:

By actual experience it has been granted me to know that the Word, as to the sense of its Letter, is the Divine medium of conjunction with the Lord and with heaven. (SS 64)

A similar experience, although much less defined than Swedenborg's, can be attested to by most people who love the Word and read it with respect. Reading the Word, or hearing it read, can give the almost overwhelming sense of multiple meanings being implied, all folded into one another. What would be the source of this experience of holiness in this case: the higher levels of meaning or the nearness of angels? Or does this maybe amount to one and the same thing?

The following sentence indicates that the experience, through the reading of the Word, comes from association and conjunction: "The Word alone, since by it there is conjunction with the Lord and association with angels, contains spirit and life" (SS 69).

[key phrase] The Word is the medium of association and conjunction. In the experience is something of the Lord Himself. This is the source of the holiness, to the extent that this is experienced. To say this even more succinctly, the Word is the link between us and the Lord, and when this connection is felt it is in a general sense experienced as holiness.

General and specific

To follow on this, it is striking that paragraph 4 of *De Verbo* never mentions holiness, when yet its title is “The **Holiness** of the Word in Every Syllable and Tip of a Stroke.” Instead, the paragraph goes into specific details about the Hebrew language, how each letter and each dot means something for the angels of the third heaven. Even the pronunciation of single consonants matters.

So at a **general** level we can have an understanding that the Word is holy. At a more **specific** level, we want to know what this holiness is made of. Where is it specifically? Holiness is in the meaning of the words, letters, sounds and images of the Word. Without that meaning, there wouldn't be anything holy.

So next we are going to look at the different **levels of meaning**, or senses, in the Word.

The spiritual sense

The Word is not holy because of the literal sense (SS 5). The literal sense is holy, too, but is so through correspondence with the spiritual sense, not on its own or by its own cause. A spiritual sense exists in each thing mentioned in the Word; each image or story corresponds, including the words and parables that the Lord Himself spoke when on earth. It is this spiritual sense that gives the Word a “Divine holiness” (SS 17.2, cf. 4).

[key phrase] The Word is holy because of its spiritual sense.

Trees, degrees and simulations

Does this mean that the literal sense of the Word plays a minor role only? Something to be discarded as quickly as possible in the attempt to get to the real meaning and holiness of God’s Word?



I would like to relate, at this point, an interesting fact about trees. This was told me some years ago by a pensioned forester in Sweden. He talked about how people sometimes carve their names into the bark of a tree, and how lovers carve a heart around those names. He said that this certainly damages the tree, but not seriously. It will recover and heal the wound. Likewise, a homeowner will occasionally cut off entire branches from a tree, to protect the house or the electricity

cables. Again, this damages the tree, but it can handle the loss of its branches. Take the Senator cypress tree in Longwood, Florida (*see picture above*). It is 118 feet tall and 3500 years old. It consists of almost nothing but a huge trunk, having lost most of its branches long ago to lightning strikes. But the tree is still alive. The old forester then said that there is one thing that you must never do to a tree. Never make a circular cut in the bark all the way around the outside of the tree. This will kill the tree. The sap will no longer be able to rise and fall.

The Writings call the literal sense the basis, containant, and support of the inner senses (SS 27). Just like a tree needs an intact bark, though not necessarily a perfect one, so does the Word need a literal sense. The literal sense is not perfect, it is rugged, uneven, and perplexing at times. Yet it is the covering for the spiritual and celestial senses from which the holiness of the Word flows. The bark, just like the literal sense, is not an external covering that can conceivably be removed. It holds its life together.

This truth is expressed in surprisingly strong terms in the *Doctrine of the Sacred Scripture*: “Divine Truth, in the sense of the letter of the Word, is in its **fullness**, in its **holiness**, and in its **power**” (SS 37). This does not contradict what we noted just above about the literal sense (SS 5), but it does reveal more of the mystery that we are dealing with in the Word. The celestial and spiritual senses are said to be present at the same time in the natural sense. This refers to the way creation is ordered.

First of all, creation has a **successive** order, in which everything gradually increases or decreases, and succeeds from other things. The colors of a sunrise gradually changing is an example of this,

implying that the complete blackness of night and the light of day are only different from each other in a successive order, or by continuous degree (HH 38).

Secondly, creation has a **simultaneous** order, which is not gradual. Here discrete degrees of existence are enveloped within each other without direct access to each other (SS 38, 65; DLW 184). It is in this latter way that the celestial and spiritual senses are said to “be together” (SS 37) with the literal sense in the Word.

The term in Latin for “being together” is *sunt simul*, which has distinct overtones of time, and therefore of process. In other words, the pages of the book do not contain an inner sense, but in the process of a person reading those pages the inner sense becomes present.

Another interesting understanding that can be drawn from this is considering the literal Word to be a **simulation** of the celestial and spiritual senses. What’s a simulation? In software engineering a simulation is a program that models in some accessible or graphic way a process that cannot be perceived directly. This is used either for the purpose of study (e.g. simulating the solar system), or for the purpose of interacting with a system in a safe environment (e.g. simulating a Harpoon missile). It is easy to see the study part where the Word is concerned. But the interacting part is there too, in the way of visualizing Divine truths in safe stories. The stories are safe in the sense that they leave the reader free to interpret them any way he wants, and even deny that they mean anything. Divine truth needs this cloaking in order to be received by humans or angels (AC 7270.2). “Truth that goes forth directly from the Divine cannot be heard by anyone, not even by any angel” (AC 6982). So in this way the literal Word is an accommodation of Divine truth, for our safety, our study, and our enlightenment. In case the reader thinks that drawing an analogy with

modern software simulations is taking the Writings too far out of context, I would like to refer to *Arcana Coelestia* 1871, where Swedenborg draws an analogy of the Word with the anamorphoscope



(*see picture*). Here the literal sense of the Word is described as presenting “itself before the Lord as the image of a human being in which and by means of which heaven is represented in its entirety, not as it is in fact but as the Lord **would like it to be**” (AC 1871).

On the other hand, using the analogy of a simulation might convey a false impression, of the literal sense not being the real thing. The Writings deny this again and again. The literal sense **is the real thing**. “The real holiness of the Word resides in its literal meaning,” and even: “the literal meaning is **holier** than the other meanings, which are internal” (De Verbo 5.1). And so what we’ll look at next is the role and power of ultimates.

Ultimates

Returning to the **[key phrase]** used above, concerning the Word being a medium of conjunction, we find the following further qualification:

Conjunction with heaven and through heaven with the Lord is effected not by the spiritual meaning alone, **but by the meaning of the letter**. The reason is that the Lord’s Divine influx through the Word takes place from first things through last things. (De Verbo 5.4)

Last things or ultimates (in Latin, *ultima*) do not mean last things in time. The word “ultimate” also is not used with the modern connotation of “extreme,” or “super.” In the Writings the term “ultimate” is used to mean: most external, most material, lowest, furthest out from the Divine. A relevant example of this here would be heaven and earth. Heaven is internal, higher, while earth is external, lower. They exist at different levels, which do not have direct communication with each other. The angels of heaven do not talk to people on earth, nor the reverse. The connection is one of correspondence. Earth serves as an ultimate or a boundary for heaven, just like the skin of the body is a boundary for the internal organs.

However, the connection is very intimate. The two levels cannot exist independently of one another. One is inside the other. The same is true for the meanings of the Word:

The **spiritual** or internal meaning of the Word is nothing else than the sense **of the letter** unfolded according to correspondences; for it teaches the spiritual which is perceived by angels in the heavens, while man in the world is thinking in a natural way of that which he reads in the Word. (De Verbo 7.2)

Meaning, or sense, is presented as a dynamic quantity, because it unfolds. It depends on the reader, the listener and the angels, all interacting. This accounts for multiple meanings and multiple levels of meaning. We could compare this with water contained in a bottle, but that is not an accurate picture of the internal sense inside the literal sense. The bottle can be separated from the water. The quote from *De Verbo* immediately above talks about an unfolding, a perceiving, a thinking, a reading. Active verbs are used to describe the relationship.

Another way to understand the term “ultimate” is by looking at Jacob’s pillar in the book of Genesis. Jacob erects this pillar after having had the dream of the stairway to heaven. “The meaning of a pillar [is] a **holy boundary**, and thus the ultimate of order” (AC 4090). In Latin, the words for holy boundary are *sanctus terminus*: something that serves as a terminator or end-point for the holy. In electrical signal transmission through a cable, terminators are used to prevent interference back into the cable. So the signal needs to come to a rest, not just for it to be received, but for its stability and quality. The literal sense is that terminator.

Finally, we will consider an example from human psychology (AC 9824.3). Human beings have **will** or intention. Out of this come **thoughts** that clothe the intention, justify it, order it, and organize knowledge from memory to remember it. Then comes **action** that embodies and contains all that went before. The action is the outermost, the lowest, yet is in some ways the most real, the only visible evidence of will and thought. So the action counts, more than any thought or intention.

That which is last and lowest ... is held to be holier than the inner things, because it is there that the holiness of the inner things exists in its fullness. (AC 9824.3)

Our actions terminate our will and our thoughts and make them real.

Correspondences

The way this terminating, literal level of the Word is connected with its higher levels is through correspondences. We need to say something about this in order to gain a better understanding of the role of ultimates.

First, what correspondence is. The whole natural world corresponds to the spiritual world, and not merely the natural world in general, but also every particular of it; and as a consequence everything in the natural world that springs from the spiritual world is called a correspondent. It must be understood that **the natural world springs from and has permanent existence from the spiritual world**, precisely like an effect from its effecting cause. (HH 89)

So correspondences describe a certain kind of causal relationship between the spiritual world and the natural world. This is not the pool-table kind of cause, where one ball bounces against another and sets something in motion. It is rather a cause-effect through distinct levels of creation. The same relationship exists between the inner levels of meaning in the Word and the literal sense.

Here is an example to illustrate this. A **stone**, i.e. the material object, corresponds to an entity in the spiritual world. That does not mean there are stones in the spiritual world (there may be, but that is not the point here). It does mean that there is something in the spiritual world, an aspect of the life of the Lord, that is best expressed by a stone. The nature of the stone, its qualities, its density, correspond to that aspect or function of life in the spiritual world; in this case an aspect of “truth,” since a stone corresponds to truth (AC 1298). Truth has hardness, weight, reliability, grittiness, and patterns. Truth can contain or lead to blessings, like a stone can contain precious

metals like gold and silver. Some truth is like granite, some truth is like bricks. The stone is dead, but **corresponds** to something that is alive. Another perspective is to say that truth is **represented** by a stone. So representation is focusing on the external, the thing or symbol itself.

Correspondence is focusing on the living spiritual connection. The literal sense of the Word does not contain stones, it contains language, expressing stories, names, images and symbols. Each of these represent something of the Divine, and has meaning and power by corresponding to aspects of the Divine.

The basis of faith

This leads us straight back to the quote given earlier: “Divine Truth, in the sense of the letter of the Word, is in its fullness, in its holiness, and in its power” (SS 37). The Word is holy because it is from the Lord. We can see the Lord in the Word, and this happens through the process of correspondence that exists between the literal sense and the spiritual sense. This correspondence happens in our minds, involving both our affections and our understanding:

All influx from the Lord takes place by enlightenment of the understanding, and by an affection for truth, and through this affection into the understanding. (DP 321.3)

So in a real way it can be said that our faith rests on the literal sense of the Word. In fact, the Writings state that our regeneration, salvation and eternal life are intimately tied to upholding the literal sense as truth and regarding it as holy:

Therefore [the literal sense of the Word] must not be dispensed with, that is, denied, because if it is denied, faith in the Word perishes. And if that perishes a person cannot have any spiritual life within himself. (AC 9033.1)

It is said that people in heaven who regard the Word as holy have jewels appearing on their heads. “Jewels ... symbolize the Word’s Divine truths in its literal sense. ... The literal sense is made translucent by its spiritual and celestial senses, as jewels are by light” (AR 823). Jewels may be beautiful because of their colors and how they refract the light, but their worldly value and use still lies in the fact that they are jewels, not in the light or the colors. This image nevertheless demonstrates how tightly both worlds are connected. This is emphasized again in *Apocalypse Explained*:

Divine truth is what is called holy. But **it is not holy before it is in its ultimate**; and its ultimate is the Word in the literal sense; therefore, the Divine truth there is holy, and may be called the sanctuary. The reason is, that that sense [i.e. the literal sense] contains and includes all the sanctities of heaven and the church. (AE 1088.2)

Ultimates are essential. We live in a world of ultimates. This is according to order. Ultimates, instead of being lowest, furthest removed from the Divine and so least essential, are called the whole and what makes sure the interior things of life don’t cease to exist (AC 10044.2). This is also called a microcosm, in the sense that “the external man is a world in the least form” (AC 6057.1). Ultimates are Hamlet’s nutshell: “I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself a king of infinite space” (*Shakespeare* – Hamlet, act 2, scene 2).

In the New Church there is a further aspect of ultimates that is at the heart of our faith. This is the glorification process of the Lord, which we will consider next.

The first and the last

The Lord calls Himself “the First and the **Last**” (Rev. 1:11), “last” being another word for ultimate. “The Word became **flesh** and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory” ²⁰(John 1:14), “flesh” again being another word for ultimate. This quote from John 1 confirms that the holiness of the Word became visible in ultimates when the Lord walked the earth.

The Lord from eternity or Jehovah came into the world and put on the clothing of a human nature there in outermost form in order to be present in first and last things at the same time, and therefore from the first things to govern the whole world **through the last things**. (DP 124.4.)

The basic teaching of the First Advent is that the Lord came into this world of ultimates to carry out a job, redemption, that could not be carried out from or through heaven. This job entailed “the conquest of the hells, the ordering of the heavens and the establishment of a new church” (TCR 115.2). The Lord as the Divine could not put the hells in order, because such a battle would only mean the destruction of hell and all people there. “Therefore He assumed an infirm human . . . into which He admitted temptations” (HD 302). The infirm human was weak, like everyone else’s, and this allowed there to be a struggle with hell in such a way that the judgment of hell, and the separation of good from evil, did not destroy the people there.

When the Lord had overcome hell in ultimates, He then “completely transformed his physical human level all the way to its limits, [in that] He, unlike anyone else, rose from death with his whole body” (DLW 221). “The Lord glorified His Human even as to its ultimates. The ultimates are called bones and flesh” (AC 10044.10). This transformation process that the Lord went through, and which has its parallel in our reformation and regeneration, changed something about the Word’s literal sense. It got to have a power it may not have had before. The Lord used the letter of the Word to fight against hell, and that same letter now has the power to do that for us.

It is by means of the truths in a person that the Lord has the power to save him; for a person is reformed and regenerated and is at the same time taken out of hell and introduced into heaven, **by means of truths from the sense of the letter of the Word.**

This power the Lord took upon Himself, even as to His Divine Human, after He had fulfilled all things of the Word down to its **ultimates**. (SS 49.1)

The phrase “that the Scripture might be fulfilled” occurs some 40 times in the Gospels. The Greek word is πληρώω, *pleroo*, which means: to make replete, (literally) to cram, fill up, fulfill, make full. Normally we interpret this to mean that the Lord enacted the prophecies of the Old Testament and so fulfilled them, made them come true. That understanding is valid. The passage from *Sacred Scriptures* suggests a further meaning, namely literally filling the words of the Old Testament with Divine meaning and power, like water filling a cup. And by that act the meaning was then forever available to anyone who read the Word.

²⁰ As an aside: the term “glory” is used in the Writings paired with holiness, holiness indicating a celestial level, glory a spiritual one

This leads us again back to the **[key phrase]** arrived at earlier: The Word is a medium of association and conjunction. “The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life” (John 6:63). There is life in them, because the Lord is in them. There is spirit in them, because, taking this phrase literally, there are spirits and angels in them, as we shall see next.

Angels

First, the teaching has revealed that each person is joined to good and evil spirits all the time.

Everybody has at least two angels with him through whom he has communication with heaven, and two evil spirits through whom he has communication with hell. (AC 986.2; see also AC 1277, 2379, 6600; and many others)

We are not aware of this, at least not in our thoughts or consciousness. Even though we can see our own thoughts, and even though these thoughts do come out of our affections, still we cannot see their source in the spiritual world.

A person does not know anything about them [angels and spirits], because the state of spirits and angels is spiritual, and that of people is natural. These two states are associated together solely by means of correspondences, and **association by means of correspondences causes them to be together in affections** but not in thoughts. (AR 943.2)

Not only do we have what can be called personal spirits and angels around us, but these are themselves part of larger communities and again connected to other communities. “A person’s thought, and also that of spirits and of angels, radiates into many societies in the spiritual world” (AC 6600.1).

Now, how does this tie in with the Word? Here is a curious story that Swedenborg tells about an experiment he once carried out:

When I read the Word through from the first chapter in Isaiah to the last chapter in Malachi and the Psalms of David, and I kept thinking about their spiritual meaning, I was given a clear perception that every verse communicates with some community in heaven, and therefore the whole Word communicates with the entirety of heaven. (TCR 272)

Swedenborg had abilities that are not given to us.²¹ However, the extraordinary conclusion that we might draw from this passage is that we can extend our association with angels way beyond those that are currently with us. This happens when we read the Word. By analogy, when we step outside the house after a spell of rain, and make the transition from a stuffy living room to the fresh, fragrant outdoors, we become acutely aware of the impressions we get from the new surroundings. The same happens when we again enter the house. Now we become acutely aware of its stuffiness, compared to outside. So when we read the Word and are, unconsciously, connected to new and different communities in heaven, we can sometimes experience an inkling of this and notice it in our state and our affections. The correspondences of the Word cause the spiritual state of the

²¹ This is a **d**escriptive statement, not a **p**rescriptive one. It describes a fact, but it does not describe the Divine order or design of creation. “The human being was ... created by the Lord ... to be able, while living in the body, to speak with spirits and angels” (AC 69; DLW 257.2; SE 722, 1587; HH 250).

angels and our own natural state “to be together in affections” (AR 943.2). This experience we describe with the term “holiness.” We do experience the Word as holy. If we didn’t it would not speak to us, nor move us.

The doctrine of the *Sacred Scripture* supports this conclusion in the following passage:

There is association with angels by means of the sense of the Letter because within that sense there are the spiritual and the celestial senses, and the angels are in those senses.... These senses are unfolded from the natural sense of the Word, which is the sense of the Letter.... This unfolding is instantaneous, and thus also is a person’s association [with angels]. (SS 63; see also De Verbo 22)

In the section above, called “Holiness of the Word,” we have already contrasted holiness in the **approach** to the Word and holiness as an **experience**. *Arcana Coelestia* 3735.2 starts out saying a person must approach the Word “in a holy state” (Potts) or “with holiness of mind” (Elliott).²² But it ends by saying:

Holiness of mind at that time **is the product of** the influx of celestial and spiritual thoughts and affections such as exist with angels. (AC 3735.2)

This reverses the direction, creating a kind of chicken-egg paradox. Do we have to have holiness inside us before reading the Word? Or does reading the Word create the holy state? Just like a

²² Latin: *in sancto est*. Literally: “he is in a holy thing.”

chicken never worries about which came first, we shouldn't either. Life has a backward and forward dynamic. It is like climbing up a chimney, pushing both against the left wall and the right.

To sum up, the following essential aspect of holiness can now be given:

[key phrase] When reading or hearing the Word we are connected, through correspondences, with angels in heavenly communities. This connection flows into our affections, and is experienced by us as holiness.

In other words, just as we earlier concluded that holiness comes from the presence of the Lord, at another level holiness comes from the presence of angels.

The marriage of good and truth

At the end of this chapter on the Word we need to pull the many threads of understanding together. This is done by now looking at another core teaching on the nature of the Word. In the Word we have a text in which the presence of the Lord is immediate. The Lord is the source of holiness.

In the Word everything is holy, and this holiness comes from the heavenly marriage, which is the marriage of goodness and truth. This being so, heaven is present within the Word, and so too is the Lord, the All in all of heaven — present so fully that **He is the Word**.

(AC 5502)

This gives a deeper understanding of the correspondential nature of the Word: it contains itself a marriage of the highest and the lowest, of the Lord and the church in us (CL 64), of everything that is good with everything that is true.

This is coming full circle. The Word as a medium of conjunction, through correspondences, ultimates and the presence of angels, actually representing the Lord Himself, so much so that in its holiness the Word is the Lord with us.

[key phrase] The holiness of the Word is the Lord with us.

Throughout this dissertation so far I have been emphasizing aspects of the teachings on holiness that relate to life and experience. We can regard the Word, or the Holy Supper, just to give two examples, as holy from tradition or because we have been told to. But for it to become of real value it must connect to experience. This is what the next chapter zooms in on.

Chapter Six: Applications

Introduction

In the motivation for choosing the Sacred as the theme, there was present the realization that holiness, in the end, is not an academic subject. It concerns life and religion and our regeneration. Any experience of the Sacred is not for the purpose of comfort or entertainment, but for the growing of each person closer to the Lord. This growth is called regeneration.

In this chapter, we will investigate the Sacred in practical applications.

The One Life

In the Writings can be found many minor teachings, the so-called tool doctrines, like the teachings on levels and discrete degrees, or the teachings on correspondences. One of these, usually not considered a teaching by itself, is emphasized by Wilson Van Dusen²³ in a paper he wrote not long before his death. This teaching is found clearly and repeatedly all throughout the Writings and can be summarized as follows: “There is one only fountain of life, from which all live both in heaven and in the world. This life is from the Lord alone” (HD 278). Apart from the many references given in this paragraph from the *New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrines*, the same teaching is found in: DLW 78, 111; BE 119.3; AR 29.1; and other places. It could be argued to belong under the general doctrines of the Lord, or to be a particular formulation of the doctrine of influx.

²³ Van Dusen, Wilson, *THE SAME SUPREME DOCTRINE IN SWEDENBORG, HINDUISM, AND BUDDHISM*, 2003.

One of the descriptions of holiness, as we have seen, connects it to the presence of the Lord. This is where the teaching of the One Life comes in. The Writings regularly tell about angels and what they are like:

No one in all of heaven is holy, **other than the Lord**, and angels being called holy is due to the holiness of the Lord, who is Holiness Itself. (SE 2133)

When the angels flowed into my own feelings I sensed clearly **the presence of the Lord**, a sign that they are in the Lord's life. (AC 6469)

The marvelous conclusion from this is that holiness is everywhere and in all things, even inanimate objects (DLW 80). The Lord is the only Holy One and His presence is everywhere. It is true that statements like this need qualifications in order to avoid worship of objects or of nature.

Nevertheless, the Writings make it clear that the distance between the Lord and heaven, and consequently between the Lord and us, is an appearance (DLW 113). Appearances of truth are useful and acceptable, "but when they are accepted as actual truths, which happens when people affirm them, then apparent truths become falsities and misconceptions" (DLW 108). What determines the validity of an appearance is our reception of Divine love and wisdom (DLW 110). All appearances are true to some degree, but as more wisdom is received they can change, sometimes changing the understanding to what looks like the opposite.

How does the teaching of the One Life help make holiness more applicable? Van Dusen's inclination was towards mysticism, understood here to be a way of communion with the Divine.

His variety of mysticism was down-to-earth, though, as can be seen from the following fragment.

This also illustrates a possible answer to the question about applicability just asked:

So where can one always look upon God? **By looking deeply at your innermost.** This is beyond the human form with arms and legs. It is in the innermost where we can't help but be human. This is the kind of image we can look at eternally and forever discover more. Think of all the novels you have read, all the different human incidents in your life, and all the films, and all your friends. We have experienced ourselves and others in countless ways, and these are just a part of what is to be human. (Van Dusen, 2003, page 12)

The One Life teaching says that the Lord flows into our interiors at all times. Therefore, looking within will bring a person closer to the Lord. This is not different from certain words directly found in the Gospels:

He ... said, "The kingdom of God does not come with signs to be observed; nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:20-21)

Repentance

Since the kingdom of God is within us, we need to understand what the Writings say about looking within. Generally the teachings do not spend much time focusing on introspection, reflection, meditation, or self-analysis. But they do treat of these practices, sometimes under other names.

The main teaching touching upon this subject is the one concerning repentance, and specifically the self-examination that must precede it:

There must be repentance from sins in order that a person may be saved.... Repentance consists in not willing evils because they are contrary to God, **in examining oneself once or twice a year**, in seeing one's evils, confessing them before the Lord, imploring help, desisting from them, and beginning a new life. (TCR 621; see also TCR 525, 534; DP 278; AR 224.6)

According to this passage self-examination should not be a daily practice. This alone makes it different from the looking within that is implied by meditating on the presence of the Lord or the influx of the One Life. Another difference is that self-examination is for the purpose of seeing the evils in ourselves, so that they may be shunned (DP 278). While this is a necessary step and pre-condition for regeneration, it is not what the present discussion of holiness focuses on. In the experience of the presence of the Lord, like in the Holy Supper, we are no longer fighting our evils. The presence of the Lord guarantees that they are, for the moment at least, not there.

What else do the Writings teach about looking within?

Introspection

We normally think of introspection as looking from the outer, conscious part of ourselves toward the inner, subconscious part. The interesting thing that immediately jumps out, when investigating the Writings on this topic, is that this assumption is wrong.

The spiritual world flows into the natural the way a cause flows into its effect. ... The inflow is from the spiritual world into the natural world and not from the natural world into the spiritual. (HH 567.2)

We cannot, therefore, look from the outside in, from the natural into the spiritual. The attempt to do so causes a kind of paralysis in the mind, just like looking at the head of the Medusa will turn the onlooker to stone. One way this paralysis of the mind can express itself, when focusing on introspection to the exclusion of everything else, is described in *Heaven and Hell*:

Some people ... while they lived in the world, renounced the world and gave themselves up to an almost solitary life, in order that by an abstraction of the thoughts from worldly things they might have opportunity for pious meditations, believing that thus they might enter the way to heaven. But these in the other life are of a sad disposition; ... they have no interest in others, and turn away from the duties of charity by which there is conjunction with heaven. (HH 360.1)

This is not the way to go. The hero Perseus managed to avoid being turned to stone by using a polished shield as a mirror. In other words, we need reflection.

Reflection

How do the Writings describe reflection? How does this differ from the modern view of the same process, which holds that it is a looking into one's own mind, to find what one thinks and feels?

Reflection does not belong to the person, but to that which inflows... reflection is given by the Lord. From no other source can it come. (SE 2221; cf. SE 3101)

First, this says that we do not reflect on ourselves, not automatically. Daily experience actually does confirm this: most of the time we go on about our lives without the acute self-awareness that is a signpost of reflection. Various passages tell of the phenomenon of people in the next life who do not realize they are in the next life, until reflection is granted them (SD 3101; HH 461.1; AC 185).

Second, this says that reflection is a process of influx, which comes from the Lord. The influx causes the reflection.

A striking alternative translation of *reflexione*, used by J. Durban Odhner, is reflex (SE 3991). This refers to our physical reflexes that keep us from hurting ourselves. In this context it is as if the body itself has a certain mindfulness. However, that is not the kind of reflection that we are interested in here. We want to understand more about reflection that makes us aware of the relationship we have with the Lord.

About the way in which the influx bringing enlightenment operates.... A person whose internal has been opened also perceives [the Word] on a spiritual level, **though he is not**

conscious of doing so while he lives in the world because his spiritual thought flows into his natural thought in the external man and manifests itself within this. Nevertheless that interior thought is what enlightens and is the channel through which influx from the Lord operates. (AC 10551.5)

We notice a certain evasive quality about reflection. A person can perceive things in the spirit without even knowing he does. We are not unconscious in this process, though. We notice the end result of the influx in the thoughts and experiences that we have in the natural world. These terminate the influx and it becomes noticeable there. “To the extent that a person accepts influx from God he is said to come near before Him” (AC 8439). It is in end results, in actions, in uses, that we draw near the Lord:

Influx goes down into the ultimate of order, that is, into the ultimate of nature, which all Divine influx heads towards. The man in whom Divine influx thus advances may be called ‘a road of heaven.’ (AC 8439)

These words show that the influx from the Divine is more than a mere mechanical process. Receiving influx, which brings about reflection, is also coming into the presence of the Lord. Consequently, reflection is directly connected with regeneration:

When [spirits] are brought into a state of reflection, they are brought into a state of better life, for then for the first time they are able to know themselves, and know more truly what they are. (SE 736)

Reflection, like regeneration, has a passive quality. Regeneration is, in Latin, almost always used in the grammatical form of a passive verb, *regeneratur* (AC 5376, and many others). We are being regenerated by the Lord; we are not the agent. With reflection, likewise, the tendency is that we are brought into another state, or that influx causes reflection. “Reflection is given” (SE 737). The tie-in with regeneration is further highlighted here:

It is of the utmost importance ... to learn truths. Without spiritual knowledge, there can be no reflection, thus no reformation. (SE 737, cf. 739)

This says that the life of religion, which starts with the acquisition of truths from the Word, is a prerequisite for reflection and for the improvement of life.

Further teachings on reflection

Doing a search on the term *reflexione* yields most hits from the *Spiritual Experiences*, which was an unpublished and partly pre-*Arcana* work, and not much from the works after the *Arcana*. A guess as to why this is might be that other, better words were used later to describe the same thing. For example, perception, or, as already mentioned, influx.

A passage that paints an intriguing picture of reflection, although without mentioning the term, is this:

It is not the eye which sees but his spirit by means of the eye.... It is very similar with this interior sight ... of the spirit. This too does not see of itself but from a sight more interior

still, which is that of the rational. Nor again does the rational see of itself, but there is a sight more interior still, which is that of the internal man.... Yet not even this internal man sees of itself; it is the Lord who does so by means of the internal man. He Alone sees, since He Alone has life and enables man to see, and to seem to himself to see of himself. Such is the situation with **influx**. (AC 1954)

The progression given here is rather like a moving backward, instead of a moving forward. We might tend to think of reflection as something like an investigation, taking a closer look. But here the picture is one of taking a few steps back, moving toward the interior, and seeing more and more of the truth. Seeing moves from sensory impressions back to the spirit, then back to the rational mind, then back to the internal man, and finally back to the Lord. This is so, because of influx, which is what the quoted passage (i.e. AC 1954) really deals with. So when we see, it is, in the end, the Lord who sees. That's an awe-inspiring thought.

Enlightenment

In connection with this it is worthwhile to also take a short look at enlightenment. We saw, in a quote above (AC 10551.5), that enlightenment is the result of influx. A common cultural and historical understanding of enlightenment readily equates it with holiness. A holy person is an enlightened person. An enlightened person is classically depicted with a halo above the head, like saints are: "In the spiritual world ... with people in a state of enlightenment from the Lord [enlightenment was visible] as a luminous aura about the head" (DP 169).

How does enlightenment relate to holiness in the Writings? A first look at this brings out an emphasis on light, not surprisingly (AC 3138, 3458). Light corresponds to truth. “The understanding is enlightened by spiritual light” (DP 166). However, often this emphasis is qualified with a dependency on loving the truth, being able to receive the goodness of the Lord. The enlightenment is then the result, not the cause. “The Lord flows into the good of a person, and from that good enlightens him in truths” (AE 235.4). A similar statement is found here: “Enlightenment . . . in the natural man comes from good, yet does so by way of truth” (AC 3102.2). It is clear from these and other passages that enlightenment concerns the whole person, not just the intellect. Faith must be backed up by charity, and truth by love.

Holiness is not even seen unless there is a certain enlightenment given by the Lord: “People who lead an angelic life, and no one else, are enlightened by the Lord and see the holy things of the Word” (AC 9086.3). The enlightenment is tied in with the quality of the life they lead. Another passage identifies that source in this way: “The Holy Spirit is the same as the Lord and is the very truth that is the source of our enlightenment” (DLW 149). This says that our enlightenment is a direct result of the workings of the Holy Spirit.

As always it is not quite possible to pin down what comes first and what comes second. Does enlightenment enable a state of holiness? Or does holiness cause enlightenment? It is the same question as asking whether good or truth come first. The two are intertwined. It also depends on the state of regeneration of a person how these two relate (AC 3726.1).

Another clear connection with holiness is made in *Apocalypse Revealed*: “That person is called holy (or a saint) who has enlightenment in Divine truths through conjunction with the Lord. For the

Lord alone is holy” (AR 852). Here a fluid overlap in meaning between the terms “holy,” “enlightenment” and “conjunction” can be seen.

The basic truth that is repeated again and again is that enlightenment is given, it comes from the Lord. Light is received according to the quality and attitude of the receiver. Light is received, not achieved. It comes from the Lord, not from ourselves. The notion of becoming enlightened leads directly to the idea of sainthood, or becoming holy.

Becoming holy

The history of the Catholic Church has given an absurd meaning to the term “saint.” These are supposed to be people that deserve worship, sometimes alongside the Lord Jesus Christ, and sometimes even above Him, as is the case with the Virgin Mary. This is pure idolatry (AR 800; AC 7272.3). Yet, when looking through the Old Testament it is surprising how often the word “saint” occurs. Here are two examples:

Gather My **saints** together to Me, Those who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice.

(Psalm 50:5)

The **saints** of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever. (Daniel 7:18)

Clearly, the word does not mean the same thing here as history has turned it into. What is the true meaning of sainthood, then?

Apocalypse Explained gives the following explanation: “Those who are in the Lord’s spiritual kingdom are called, in the Word, saints” (AE 325.1). The prayers of the saints mentioned in Revelation mean: “worship from spiritual good” (AE 325.1). This worship is done through “sacrifice and burnt offering ... [which mean the] purification and regeneration of the internal man” (AC 10042.9). Therefore, a saint is nothing other than a person that is being regenerated. So at the end of this dissertation we come to holiness as it applies to people, to ourselves.

The Lord alone is holy, and therefore a person is holy to the extent that he or she is guided by the Lord.

‘And men of holiness shall you be to Me’ means a state of life then composed of good.

This is clear from the meaning of ‘men of holiness’ as those who are led by the Lord, for the Divine which emanates from the Lord is holiness itself. (AC 9229.1)

[key phrase] A person is holy to the extent that he or she is guided by the Lord.
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Being led by the Lord means to allow the Lord’s goodness to fill and guide our actions, and His truths to inform and direct our thoughts. This is not automatic, because we are not born knowing the Lord’s truths, nor able to connect to the Lord’s goodness in an immediate way. It may, in fact, take many years of living before that can become a reality. Certainly a person must be rational in order to be able to accept the Lord’s instruction freely and consciously (AC 1893.1, 2504.2, 2657.5). The main thing that allows the Lord to be received in a person is the removal or shunning of evils. This takes self-examination, self-compulsion, and repentance (TCR 330, 530, 534; DP

147). Reception of the Lord leads to conjunction with Him (SE 5945), and a state of conjunction with the Lord is a state of holiness, as we have seen above in the chapter on conjunction. “Those who receive Divine Truth emanating from the Lord in faith and life are said to be ‘made holy in the truth’” (AC 9229.2).

Time

Receiving the Divine and being able to have some notion of it leads us to consider time. The truths we learn from the Writings about the nature of space and time provide some measure of enlightenment to our rationality. Divinity is outside of space and time. But this does not mean we cannot grasp it. *Divine Providence* points out in very clear language that our experience of time, just to focus on that one for the moment, totally depends on our emotional state:

Take the course of your thinking over ten or twelve hours — is it not true that this span of time can seem like one or two hours and can also seem like one or two days? It depends on the emotional state that underlies the thinking. (DP 49)

When we like something, time flies. When we are bored or suffering, time crawls. So we already have the experience of something that is outside of time and space, namely our very thoughts and emotions.

On a deeper level, we are able to “think ... about the Lord nontemporally and nonspatially” (DP 51). The more notions of time and space are removed from our thought, the more we are able to “understand Divine omnipresence and omniscience” (DP 51). This teaching highlights an aspect of

the experience of holiness, namely that when it's there it is in no rush. It doesn't have a schedule to keep. It is always there. Our own state may vary and change, holiness doesn't. This makes sense now. Holiness, as an experience of the presence of the Lord, is outside of time and space.

[key phrase] The experience of holiness, being the experience of the presence of the Lord, is outside of time and space.

Next we will look at another part of human experience that touches upon the Sacred, namely affections.

Affections of holiness

We have established that holiness is the Divine which emanates from the Lord. Holiness touches our affections. This now goes without saying. Let's look at what the Writings teach about affections of holiness.

A person can see within the general whole [of the internal sense of the Word] the order that holds the particular features together, though he sees it according to his own essential nature. **That order is the holiness which stirs his affections.** (AC 3438.3)

The Latin here for “stir the affections” is *afficio*, which means “cause a change in,” “affect,” and “exert influence.” The simplest retranslation therefore would be: “Order is the holiness which affects him” (*ordo est sanctum quod afficit*). The reason for highlighting this verb is not to launch into a

discussion of affections and their doctrinal meaning. Rather, I want to highlight that holiness, in this passage at least, is treated of as an active influence that affects us. There often is the unspoken assumption in the Writings, when talking about holiness, that it is something a person can feel (AE 832.1; AC 4031. 3, 4153, 2190; HH 506.1).

In the passage quoted here (AC 3438.3) a perception of order, i.e. how particular details of the Word fit into a general whole, creates the sense or experience of holiness. To make the point further that holiness belongs to the affections, more than to the intellect, the following passages are cited here.

[The Word's] Divinity is ... unfolded before angels, who, on account of the spiritual things disclosed in that way, are affected by the holiness in it... [this] **sense of holiness** ... is communicated to the person. (De Verbo 6.1)

The angels perceive from [the Word] Divine things, and thereby are affected with holy feelings that are communicated to the person who reads the Word with **affection**, whence he also **feels the holiness**. (AC 5275.2)

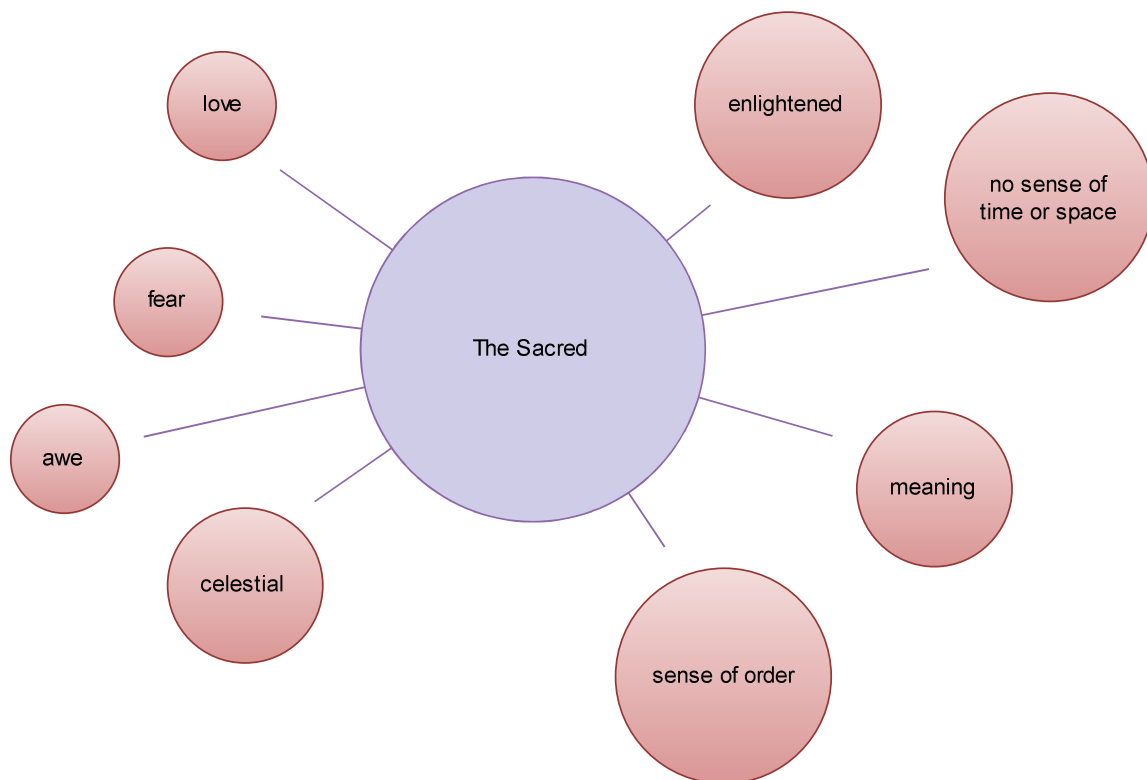
The source of the affection is the Lord, whose love constitutes heaven and affects the angels (HH 17). Their feelings are communicated to us.

All good is called **holy** from the fact that it is of **love**. (AC 2190)

Inner holiness ... is the essence of real worship. (HH 506.1)

Worship itself is nothing else than a particular activity that occurs because of the **celestial** within. (AC 1561)

From these passages, and others that are not quoted, the following diagram can be made that displays the kinds of feelings associated with the Sacred:



This is a dynamic constellation of feelings. Not all of them will be there at all times. Yet each one is some aspect of the presence of the Lord. One time when, for most of us, many of these feelings come into play is during prayer.

Prayer

The key statement concerning prayer is:

Regarded in itself prayer is talking to God. (AC 2535)

This means that we are permitted to use our freedom and rationality to talk to the Lord, the same freedom and rationality that are sacred gifts from the Lord (DP 96).

Everything that we have seen concerning holiness comes into play in prayer. Holiness is an awareness of the Lord's presence: "Prayer must be offered that God may be present" (TCR 126). Holiness is a state of communication: "Prayer is nothing other than communication" (AC 3285). External holiness in forms of worship invites the presence of the Lord: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there in the midst of them." (Matthew 18:20). The Word is holy because it communicates with heaven: "As often as I have recited the Lord's Prayer ... communication with some communities in heaven was consequently established" (AC 6476: also DP 256.2). Prayer addresses itself to the Lord by name: "The name of Jehovah God is in itself holy" (TCR 297, cf. 321; AE 949.3). Holiness is an essential of religion: "Charity is the holiness of faith" (AC 2923.1), which comes out in worship and prayer:

This [the prayers of the saints] symbolizes thoughts that are matters of faith springing from affections that are matters of charity in people who worship the Lord. (AR 278)

And always, the Lord alone is holy; so prayer that goes direct to the Lord and brings His presence creates a sphere of holiness. When people, as individuals or in a group, turn inwards toward the

Lord in prayer, the holiness is there instantly. “Such as the affection is such is the praying” (AE 325.3).

[key phrase] By turning to the Lord in prayer holiness comes.

What’s more, the *Arcana* points out that prayers said in a perturbed state, like a state of temptation “achieve nothing” (AC 8179.2). So the affections of holiness are as much a result of prayer as a necessary ingredient in approaching prayer:

If a person’s prayer springs from love and faith ... something like a revelation is present within his prayer which manifests itself in the affection of the one praying in the form of hope, comfort, or some inward joy. (AC 2535)

This is a similar dynamic as we have met above in the chapter on the Word in the section on angels, where holiness was seen to be both a result of influx and a prerequisite for approaching the Word.

With that it has become time to draw this dissertation to a conclusion.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion and summary

In the introduction of this dissertation I wrote: “The search for the Holy is not a search for a physical thing. It is a search for a different state of life and experience. I want to establish how the Writings guide this search, and how they show where the meaning of life can be found.” In this concluding chapter I will show how this has been accomplished, using the key phrases that have been highlighted throughout the text.

The port of departure was acknowledging the source of holiness, which is the Lord.

[key phrase] The Divine which emanates from the Lord is holiness itself.

[key phrase] The Lord is the only Holy One.

This gave a solid point in the sea of teachings that offers many other ports of call. It was also the harbor to return to in case of stormy weather. One of the first stopping places on the journey was an exploration of external aspects of holiness, focusing on a number of different approach angles.

[key phrase] As to natural objects, holiness derives from the correspondence with the Lord and with heaven.

[key phrase] Holiness is dynamic, not static.

[key phrase] Holiness occurs when Divine Truth is received.

[key phrase] Holiness is a quality of the influence from the Lord into our spirit.

We encountered some exotic wares in these ports, but never lost sight of the Lord. Then we docked alongside the nature of being human.

[key phrase] A thing is sacred if it makes us human, and therefore our freedom and rationality are sacred.

[key phrase] A thing is sacred if it allows the Lord to be conjoined with us, and so our freedom and rationality are sacred.

[key phrase] A thing is sacred if it gives us eternal life, and so our freedom and rationality are sacred.

This was a safe haven with familiar doctrinal structures alongside the water front. Striking out for the open seas, we then looked at holiness as conjunction with the Lord.

[key phrase] Holiness is a quality of the state of our affections and thoughts.

[key phrase] Holiness is experienced when we sense the Lord's nearness to us and His presence in us.

We ran into a stormy controversy in trying to understand in what sense the Divine can be said to be in us. The sun broke through the clouds as it became clear that the experience of the Lord's presence is what we call holiness. We then dropped anchor and repaired at the enormously well-stocked port of the Word. The Word occupies the central place on these coasts, and we explored why it is holy.

[key phrase] The Word is the medium of association and conjunction. In the experience is something of the Lord Himself. This is the source of the holiness, to the extent that this is experienced. To say this even more succinctly, the Word is the link between us and the Lord, and when this connection is felt it is in a general sense experienced as holiness.

[key phrase] The Word is holy because of its spiritual sense.

[key phrase] When reading or hearing the Word we are connected, through correspondences, with angels in heavenly communities. This connection flows into our affections, and is experienced by us as holiness.

[key phrase] The holiness of the Word is the Lord with us.

From there on the winds were favorable. Our compass kept pointing north, to the Lord. The final ports of call displayed various relationships between holiness and our regeneration.

[key phrase] A person is holy to the extent that he or she is guided by the Lord.

[key phrase] The experience of holiness, being the experience of the presence of the Lord, is outside of time and space.

[key phrase] By turning to the Lord in prayer holiness comes.

With cargo holds full of goods we sailed back into our home town and concluded this journey.



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Reader Comments

Dissertation: The Sacred

Student: Stephen Muires

Primary Reader: Dean Andrew Dibb (Primary)

Date: 2011

General Comments:

Mr. Muires has produced an innovative dissertation. His central theme is “the Sacred”, in which he looks at where, how and why sacredness exists. In his introduction, Mr. Muires states that he is “interested in the experience of religion, not just the understanding of religion.” This is a valid point, for the understanding of a subject does not necessarily cause experience. Although it cannot be denied that in this dissertation, the experience is expressed by means of the understanding. Mr. Muires, however, is not looking for statements defining sacredness, but showing how and why sacredness exists in the Word and in the world around us.

Mr. Muires defines the structure of the dissertation, moving from external things, “holiness in objects” to internal things “to a becoming or growing in holiness”. What lies between these is a highly structured and, I think, well thought out process ranging from Biblically holy objects, he uses the Tabernacle as an illustration, to the sacredness of the marriage of good and truth in the Lord Himself as the “source of holiness.” Holiness does not lie in the object itself, but in the correspondence between the object and heavenly things, and in the final analysis is the Lord with us. In the final chapter “Applications”, Mr. Muires returns to his objective of showing that sacredness is not a theoretical concept but “concerns life and religion and our regeneration.” True sacredness exists in the individual who, by a life of repentance and regeneration become receptive of the Lord. Such a person then becomes infused with the Lord’s presence, and so becomes holy, not in his or her own right, but according to reception of the Lord.

In the introductory chapter, Mr. Muires limits the scope of this dissertation. He comments that the subject is too broad to cover every aspect of sacredness or holiness, identifying areas that he does not cover in the dissertation. These include: the Holy Land, marriage and the Sabbath. While this does not imply that these subjects are not holy and sacred, but that the limitations of the dissertation prevent them from being dealt with in depth. It is the opinion of this reader that he could have touched on conjugal love in his final section on “Application” and that would have been sufficient.

Each time Mr. Muires identifies a point that he considers worth keeping, he inserts them into the text in a box labeled “Key Phrase.” The purpose of these key phrases is not completely clear until, in the conclusion he draws together all the key phrases identified along the way. Using these key phrases as a foundation, he outlines his entire argument, beginning with the statement that “the Divine which emanates from the Lord is holiness itself,” He then defines holiness as being “not static”, occurring when Divine Truth is received, and thus is the quality of the Lord’s influence on

our spirits. This makes us human, conjoins us to the Lord and gives eternal life. Such is holiness with people. The Lord communicates this holiness to us by means of the Word, as we connect ourselves to the Lord by means of reading and living the Word.

-Particular Comments:

Mr. Muires does not define sacredness, but rather allows the concept to grow over the pages of the dissertation. It is important to note that throughout this dissertation Mr. Muires equates 'sacredness' and 'holiness' pointing out that they do not have a fixed meaning. Thus the terms shift from one context to another. He interprets this as indicating different levels of meaning. Thus taking the various uses of sacredness or holiness into account, makes it possible for a person to get a sort of collage—in this case a highly organized one—of the concept.

Mr. Muires uses “Key Phrases” to summarize the major points and to build a basis for his overall conclusion. These phrases “grew” on me over time. One quibble is that the identifying icon [key phrase] did not come out clearly in the copy. Perhaps it was in a color that did not print well. One suggestion would be to highlight the icon in bold so that it is clearer. The real value of these phrases, however, did not come until the final chapter.

This reader enjoyed and appreciated the reminders of the original Hebrew, Greek and Latin. Often the etymology of a word helps considerably to convey the meaning in more conceptual terms than simple English.

Specific Comments:

Analysis: Mr. Muires has done a good job of researching the texts of the Old and New Testaments and the Heavenly Doctrine. This research is evidenced by the frequent and accurate referencing to the Sacred Texts. In addition, while the direct quotations used in the dissertation are to the point, Mr. Muires highlights the points within the quotations to stress his meaning. It can also be mentioned at this point that Mr. Muires uses some very effective exposition of the etymology which greatly enriches his analysis.

Identification: Mr. Muires identifies the key ideas and leading principles in the subject of the sacred. His dissertation develops logically and smoothly from one point to the next. He notes the areas he is not going to cover, eg. Conjugal Love, the Tabernacle etc.

Connection: Mr. Muires connects the teachings and passages well in this dissertation. His pattern of working from external to internal holiness leads one on a well thought out journey through the subject. The logic of his organization is especially clear in the introductory and final chapters where he outlines the subject. Particularly clear is the conclusion which draws on all the various key phrases highlighted throughout the text, combining them into clearly expressed conclusion.

Breadth and Depth of Treatment: In this area, Mr. Muire show a great deal of breadth to his doctrine. He covers the waterfront in terms of tracing the concept of the sacred from external things to the internal. Part of the depth of the treatment of this subject is the way Mr. Muire looks both backwards and forwards across the dissertation to link subjects. Take Holy Supper for example. The initial treatment of the Holy supper is on page 25 yet the subject comes up again on pages 7, 29, 47, 52, 85, and there may be other places I missed. This recurring theme, and there are several besides this one, allows a topic to continue to be tied into the main topic, and the concept of the Holy Supper, for example, becomes clearer and deeper as the dissertation continues.

Organization of Ideas: Mr. Muire very logically and clearly organized the teachings of the Doctrines on the subject of Sacredness into a very readable dissertation.

Clarity of Written Expression: no one reading this dissertation would have any inkling that English is not Mr. Muire native language. He has mastered the language superbly. This dissertation is written in clear, concise English that engages the reader, and conveys complex concepts in a style that makes them readily available to the reader.

Use of Doctrinal quotations in text: Mr. Muire chooses quotes that are often pithy and always to the point. Having, for example dealt with the tabernacle at some length, he switches topics to the Word. Choosing AC 639.2 as a quotation he excerpts the sentence that reads “Unless the ark ... meant some secret of the Church, the Word would not be the Word... but some dead piece of literature...” Short, sharp and to the point! Many other quotations are similar in their pointedness.

Writing Mechanics: Spelling and grammar. Again Mr. Muire has mastered the English language. This dissertation is remarkably free of spelling, grammatical or punctuation issues. The citations are all according to Handbook standards.

Final Comments:

I have no hesitation in recommending that this dissertation has more than adequately fulfilled the requirements for the course Theology 695 – Dissertation. On these grounds I recommend that the dissertation be accepted as is.

Overall, I would say that the dissertation is well organized and well written. The author has a good command of the English language – he writes grammatically and expresses himself well, although there are occasional word choices or turns of phrase that hint that the author is not a native speaker of English (e.g. “explorative,” on p. 8, where the native speaker might more naturally use “exploratory.”)

The use of [key phrase] to identify major points is one that I have not seen before. It seems an effective, although perhaps a little heavy-handed way to identify the pieces in the argument that will be brought together in the conclusion. In the copy that I was reading, [key phrase] was printed in faint type. I’m guessing that in the electronic version, or one printed on a color printer this might jump out more. As it stands in my copy, the faintness is a little distracting.

Some specific strengths:

The correlation of the three essentials of love in TCR 43 with the three things provided by freedom and rationality in DP 96 seems very astute and usefully germane. The package is then tied up neatly by demonstrating that each of these three aspects is specifically called “holy.”

I also appreciated the chapter differentiating between presence and conjunction, especially the table at the end of the chapter.

The quantity and quality of the references to the underlying Hebrew, Greek, and Latin was generally impressive. Where these references were made, the handling of the original language seemed quite competent and brought out some good points (e.g. the treatment of *panim* on page 48.)

Some specific questions:

Although I would not necessarily expect a Theological School dissertation to do a thorough examination of the Latin of the passages it quotes, I am a little concerned that it is simply stated that the Latin word for holy is *sanctus* (p.7) when, in fact, there are two principal Latin words for holy, the other being *sacer*. In light of the discussion of terminology, simply ignoring the difference between the two might be excusable, at least if they seem to be used interchangeably. But they are given distinct definitions in Chadwick, and there is a significant literature in Indo-European linguistics and Catholic theology discussing the differences (which are said to correspond to the Greek distinction between *hagios* and *hieros*.) Again, I would not expect a Theological School dissertation to get into this literature, but I think it might have been useful to look a little more closely at the Latin of the Heavenly Doctrine underlying the title word of the study.

I find it also a little cavalier simply to say that “holy” and “sacred” will be used interchangeably, with no intended distinction. Why not just stick to one or the other? Or better yet, why not, as is often done, use “holy” for *sanctus* and “sacred” for *sacer*?

Reference is made on page 15 to euphemism, when I think what is meant is metonymy.

On page 67, I think I see confusion about the kinds of degrees, as it seems to suggest that successive order is continuous, rather than discrete. HH 38, which is referred to at that point, speaks of discrete vs. continuous degrees, but does not mention successive.

Later on the same page, a connection appears to be implied between simultaneous order and simulation. The degrees of the Word are both successive and simultaneous, but I think one starts to veer off on the wrong track if one begins to infer that the sense of the letter is a mere simulation of the spiritual and celestial degree, when in fact, it is a perfect correspondence with them.

A technical observation: more words are capitalized than would generally be in modern standard English. There might be an argument for this based on the usage of the Heavenly Doctrine, but then I would at least expect the usage to be more consistent (e.g. “Holy Sabbath” but “holy name of God,” p. 7)

Summing Up:

I find evidence of competent doctrine ability, with flashes of insight sprinkled throughout the study. I appreciated the vivid writing throughout, the use of examples and metaphor, particularly the extended metaphor of the conclusion.

The heart of the dissertation lies in the recognition that holiness is not a static or reified thing, but rather that it is a dynamic between God and man. This is the key in making the study more than a mere survey of the doctrine, rendering it a guidebook for the priest seeking to facilitate the experience of the presence of the sacred.

I have no hesitation in recommending this as a satisfactory fulfillment of the dissertation requirement.

