

THE  
DOCTRINE  
OF  
THE NEW JERUSALEM,  
ON THE SUBJECT OF  
FAITH.

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TRANSLATED FROM THE LATIN OF  
EMANUEL SWEDENBORG,

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**Doctrine**  
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THE NEW JERUSALEM  
ON THE SUBJECT OF  
**F A I T H.**

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I. THAT FAITH IS AN INTERNAL ACKNOWLEDGMENT\* OF  
TRUTH.

1. **T**HE idea attached to the term Faith, at the present day is this: that it consists in thinking a thing to be so, because it is taught by the Church, and because it does not fall within the scope of the understanding. For it is usual with those who inculcate it to say, You must believe, and not doubt. If you answer, I do not comprehend it, you are told, that that is the very circumstance which makes a doctrine an object of faith. Thus the faith of the present day is a

\* The English word *acknowledgment*, which is generally taken in the sense of confession, does not exactly answer to the Latin *agnitio*, but is used for want of an expression that more fully conveys the meaning of the original. The word *recognition* would convey the sense more precisely, did not the particle *re* denote repetition or renewal. However, when the word *internal*, as above, is prefixed to the word *acknowledgment*, the meaning is rendered sufficiently clear; because it determines it to denote *an act of the mind, by which a sentiment is seen to be true, and is on that account admitted and believed.*

faith in what is not known, and may be called a blind faith. And as being the dictate of one person abiding in the mind of another, it is an historical faith [or a faith that depends on the authority of the relater.] That this is not spiritual faith, will be seen in what follows.

2. Genuine faith, however, is an acknowledgment that a thing is so, because it is true. For he who is in genuine faith thinks and speaks to this effect: "This is true; and therefore I believe it." For faith is the assurance with which we embrace that which is true; and that which is true is the proper object of faith. A person of this character also, if he does not comprehend a sentiment, and see its truth, will say, "I do not know whether this is true or not; therefore I do not yet believe it: how can I believe what I do not comprehend? perhaps it may be false."

3. But the common language is, that nobody can comprehend things of a spiritual or theological nature, because they transcend our natural faculties. Spiritual truths, however, are as capable of being comprehended as natural truths: and when the comprehension of them is not altogether clear, still, when they are advanced, they fall so far within the perception of the hearer, that he can discern whether they are truths or not; especially if he is a person who is affected with truths. This I have been convinced of by much experience. Opportunities have been given me of conversing with the ignorant, the dull, the stupid; and also with persons who had been born within the church, and had heard something of the Lord, of faith and of charity, but were nevertheless in falses and in evils. In my conversation I spoke of arcana of wisdom; and they comprehended them all, and acknowledged their truth: but they were then in that light of understanding which is proper to every man, and at the same time in the glory of being thought intelligent. But this occurred in my intercourse with spirits. Many who were present were convinced by the experiment, that spiritual

things may be comprehended as well as natural things; that is, when they are heard or read; for it is more difficult for a man to discover them by unassisted reflection. The reason that spiritual things admit of being comprehended, is, because man, as to his understanding, is capable of being elevated into the light of heaven: in which light no other objects appear but such as are spiritual, which are truths of faith: for the light of heaven is spiritual light.

4. Hence now it is that they who are in the spiritual affection of truth, enjoy an internal acknowledgment of it. As the angels are in that affection, they totally reject the tenet, That the understanding ought to be kept in subjection to faith: for they say, "How can you believe a thing, when you do not see whether it is true or not?" And if any one affirms that what he advances must be believed for all that; they reply, "Dost thou think thyself a God that I am to believe thee? or that I am mad, that I should believe an assertion in which I do not see any truth? If I must believe it, cause me to see it." The dogmatizer is thus constrained to retire. Indeed, the wisdom of the angels consists solely in this, that what they think, they see and comprehend.

5. There is a spiritual idea of which few people have any knowledge, which enters by influx into the minds of those who are in the affection of truth, and dictates interiorly, that the thing which they are hearing or reading, is true or not true. In this idea they are, who read the Word in illumination from the Lord. To be in illumination is nothing more than to be in a perception, and thence in an internal acknowledgment, that in a manner responds, as the ideas are presented, "This is true: and this." They who are in this illumination are they who are said to be taught of Jehovah, (Isaiah liv. 13, John vi. 45:) and of whom it is said in Jeremiah, "*Behold the days come, that I will make a new covenant: the covenant shall be this; I will put my law in the midst of them, and write it in their hearts; and they*

*shall no more teach a man his companion, or a man his brother, saying, Know ye Jehovah; for they shall all know Me.”* (xxx. 31, 33, 34.)

6. From these considerations it is plain, that faith and truth are a one.\* This also is the reason that the ancients, who were accustomed to think of truth from affection, much more than the moderns, instead of faith used the word truth: and for the same reason, in the Hebrew language, truth and faith are expressed by one and the same word, namely *Amuna* or *Amen*.

7. The reason why faith is mentioned by the Lord in the evangelists and in the Revelation, is, because the Jews did not believe it to be true, that the Lord was the Messiah foretold by the prophets: and where truth is not believed, there faith is mentioned.† But still it is one thing to have faith and believe in the Lord, and another thing to have faith in, or believe, any man. The difference shall be explained below.

\* It appears necessary to translate the author's expression *unum*, here and wherever else it occurs in the same construction, *a one*, and not simply *one*, to guard against the error of supposing that the two things spoken of are the same. Thus when the author says that faith and truth, or the will and the understanding, or charity and faith, are *a one*, he does not mean that they are the same, but that they form so entire a union together as not to be capable of existing in a separate state, though they may be distinctly thought of. Thus, in the instance above, faith is not truth itself, but is the internal acknowledgment or recognition of it; and these ought so constantly to go together, as to form an inseparable one. For truth is nothing to man, and has no real abode in his mind, till it is united with faith, or till it is inwardly recognized by him, and his faith again is of no advantage to him, except so far as it has truth for its object. To be anything to man, faith and truth must be united; in which case they still are distinct in themselves, and thus are not *the same*, yet being incapable of separation, they form *a one*. This may be illustrated by the numerous substances in nature which unite by affinities, and cannot afterwards be separated but by a chemical process.

† Because faith signifies the acknowledgment of truth, which ought to be believed as a matter of religious duty, and which may be believed if people do not obstinately shut their eyes against the light of the Holy Word.

8. Faith separated from truth entered and invaded the church together with the dominion of popery, because the chief security of that religion was ignorance of the truth. For which reason also they forbade the reading of the Word: otherwise they could not have been worshipped as deities, nor their saints invoked, nor idolatry introduced to such an extent, as that their carcases, bones, and sepulchres should be thought holy, and be converted into sources of lucre. Hence it is plain what enormous falsities a blind faith is capable of producing.

9. A blind faith continued also afterwards among many of the Protestants, owing to their separating faith from charity: for they who do this cannot but be in ignorance of the truth, and will give the name of faith to the mere thought that a thing is so, without having any internal acknowledgment that it is. Among these also, ignorance is the security of their tenets; for so long as ignorance reigns, with the persuasion that things of a theological nature are too high for the understanding, they can talk without being contradicted; and others suppose their notions are true, and that they understand them themselves [though their hearers cannot.]

10. "The Lord said to Thomas, *Because thou hast seen Me, Thomas, thou hast believed; blessed are they who do not see, and yet believe,*" (John xx. 29:) by which is not meant a faith separate from the internal acknowledgment of truth, but that they are blessed who do not see the Lord with their eyes, as Thomas did, and yet believe in his existence: for this is seen by the light of truth from the Word.

11. Since the internal acknowledgment of truth is faith, and faith and truth are a one, as was observed above, n. 2, 4, 5, 6, it follows that an external acknowledgment without an internal acknowledgment is not faith; and also, that a persuasion of what is false is not faith. An external acknowledgment without an internal acknowledgment is a faith in what is not known; and faith in what is not known is only science, which