

CHRISTIANITY

THE

LOGIC OF CREATION

BY

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"THE CHURCH OF CHRIST NOT AN ECCLESIASTICISM," ETC.

"Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas,  
Atque metus omnes et inexorabile fatum  
Subjecit pedibus, strepitumque Acherontis avari."

VIRGIL.

LONDON

WILLIAM WHITE, 36 BLOOMSBURY STREET

1857

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## PREFACE.

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THE following Letters were actually written to a friend in London, and are published at his suggestion. They are themselves but a preface to a larger discourse upon the same theme, which the writer hopes some day to accomplish. Christianity was the revelation of an utterly unsuspected life of God within the strictest limits of human nature; and, like all true revelation of spiritual things, was an inverse form of its own interior substance. For this is the distinction between revelation, properly so called, and information, that the one constitutes an inverted image of the truth, the other a direct image; or that the one is symbolic and speaks mainly to the soul, while the other is purely statistical and addresses chiefly the senses. Hence it is that revelation has always shielded and fostered human freedom, while mere information is sure to crush it. None of the sects exhibit so servile a temper as those who pretend to the most authoritative information about spiritual things. Look at the Swedenborgians, for example. And *Mediumship*, as it is called, is growing to be the aspiration and profession of thousands, who are

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not ashamed to depose their proper human force and faculty, in order to become the unresisting puppets of a remorseless spiritual jugglery.

The life which Christ revealed has of course always been operative in the unseen depths of human experience, or in what we call the spiritual world. But it is now becoming, if not sensibly, at all events scientifically, discernible in the astonishing phenomena of man's æsthetic or spontaneous action. This is the momentous lesson with which all history is fraught: yet none are so utterly inattentive to it as our ecclesiastics and politicians, who, of all living persons, should be the most interested to give it diligent heed and furtherance. The theory of their eminent place binds them fairly to interpret history: if they persistently fail to do this, it is only because history has escaped from their keeping, and is transacting itself in far more hopeful and veracious quarters. Only the craziest scaffolding of ecclesiastical and political routine still hides from our gaze the majestic human house God has been silently building up from the beginning: doubtless some sharp revolutionary jolt will ere long prostrate that crazy scaffolding, and bring us face to face with the kindly and eternal reality.

Paris, July 1, 1857.

## LETTER I.

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*Paris, Sept. 17th, 1856.*

MY DEAR W.

I AM obliged to you for the pamphlets in relation to the doctrine of Christ's glorification; but it is very clear to me that the disputants have no just conception of the spiritual scope of Christianity. They appear both alike immersed in the clouds of the letter, and obviously regard Christianity as concerned—even as to its spiritual contents—only with certain *personal* facts about Christ. The letter of revelation is of course constituted by those facts: but unless I am greatly deceived, our disputants view its substance or spirit as somehow subject to the same limitation. If I should ask them what the Lord is according to the spiritual sense of the word, I fear that they would feel logically bound to answer that "He is a finite person like you or me, only inconceivably elevated and glorious, existing in the spiritual world as a monarch exists in his kingdom, and thence ruling the natural world."

But this is a total misconception of the true

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state of the case. Viewed literally, the Lord was an historic person, the most finite and dejected of men. Viewed spiritually, however, he is the life of universal man, existing nowhere but in the individual soul conjoined with God. To the spiritual apprehension the Lord is not a finite historic person, capable of being outwardly discriminated from other persons: He is the infinite Divine love and wisdom in union with every soul of man. *He has no existence or personality apart from such union.* You Swedenborgians are wont to talk of the glorification of the human nature in the Christ, as of certain phenomena which transpired within the *spatial* limits of Christ's body, and remain permanently confined to those limits throughout eternity, thus practically turning the Christ into a mere miracle, or Divine *tour de force*, fit for Barnum's museum of curiosities. I am persuaded that nothing more baldly sensual exists out of Heathendom, than much of this prevalent orthodox lore. Swedenborg tells us with all his might that *time, space and person*, are unreal existences: that real existence is of an intensely human quality, being made up exclusively of affection, and of thought derived from that affection: and yet his reputed followers go on to cogitate the spiritual world as compounded of space, time, and person, precisely as if he had never uttered a word upon the subject. "*Not any person*," says Swedenborg, "*named in the Word is perceived in heaven*, but

instead thereof the thing which is represented by that person."—*A. C.*, 5225. "There are three things," he says, "which perish from the literal sense of the Word, while the spiritual sense is evolving, namely whatsoever pertains to *time*, to *space*, and to *person*. The conception of time and space perishes, because these things are peculiar to nature, and spiritual thought is not determined to person, because a view to person in discourse contracts or limits the thought, and doth not render it unlimited: whereas what is extended and unlimited in discourse gives it universality, and fits it to express things innumerable and ineffable. Angelic discourse, especially that of the celestial angels, is of this character, being comparatively unlimited, and hence it connects itself with the infinite and eternal, or the *Divine* of the Lord."—*A. C.*, 5253. See also 5287, 5434.

Yours truly,

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## LETTER II.

Paris, Sept. 29th, 1856.

MY DEAR W.

YOU ask me to be a little more explicit in stating my views of New Church truth. I am not aware that there is anything recondite in my views. Ever since I knew Swedenborg's books I have of course been put upon my guard against my naturally sensuous and irrational views of creation. No doubt one learns wisdom slowly, but I may truly say that I no longer incline to regard creation as a physical act of God, and have ceased attributing to Him material modes of being. I feel, indeed, a hearty disrelish of the popular cant which, while professing to maintain the *spiritual* contents of the Scriptures, perpetually degrades the Divine creation, redemption, and providence, into mere historic problems like the French Revolution or the Battle of Waterloo. If the design of the New Testament be to give us historical information, no book was ever more undivinely constructed. *Robinson Crusoe* is a masterpiece of skill beside it, and the American *spüks* and table-

tippers, though their talk be only of the dreariest millinery and mud of things, are yet more luminous than evangelists and apostles. No doubt all spiritual truth falls at last into the historic plane, in order that it may become cognizable in that disguise to unspiritual or natural eyes. And the Divine creation, redemption, and providence, obey of course this universal law. But how base must we deem the intelligence, which insists upon viewing the spiritual truth as identical with its historic ultimatum! How base, in other words, must we consider that spiritual state which regards a *Divine* operation as observing *strictly personal limits, or shutting itself up to the experience of an individual bosom*. Thus I have often been checked, in speaking of the Incarnation as a scientific verity, by the suggestion that "the Incarnation took place only in the Christ, and could be true therefore only of his experience."

But those who talk in this way, under the impression that they are honouring the Lord, might much more profitably employ their energies in "whistling jigs to a milestone." Depend upon it, the milestone will up and dance, long before any angel will be caught in that foolish trap. It is a trap, and nothing more. The idea is that in honouring Christ personally we honour Him spiritually, and so shall get to be honoured by Him. There is no persuasion more puerile. We honour Christ spiritually only by forgetting every personal