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Surpassing Cognitive Barriers to Receive Heavenly Illumination

Guang Bin Liu writes:

When the 18th-century Swedish scholar Emanuel Swedenborg declared he was commissioned by the Lord to reveal the hidden spiritual sense of the Holy Scripture, the world responded with cold indifference and mockery. People claimed it was merely a "subjective distortion of the Word based on personal whim," questioning how one man's words could surpass a millennium of consensus, and even dismissed it as groundless speculation. While such

reactions seem to defend the purity of truth, they actually expose profound flaws in human cognition: our habit of measuring the unknown by the known, judging the internal by the external, and dismissing the individual by the majority. Without self-reflection, humanity will remain shackled by these cognitive limitations, unable to enter higher levels of spiritual understanding.

I. The Roots of Rejection: The Triple Chains of Cognitive Delusion

The human rejection of the spiritual sense of the Bible does not necessarily stem from the falsity of the truth itself, but often from the limitations of our methods of understanding and spiritual inertia. Specifically, three cognitive delusions obscure our spiritual vision:

The Prison of the Senses: Humans naturally rely on physical senses and external experience to judge truth. While this empiricism is effective in natural science, it falls short in the spiritual realm. People habitually measure everything by the laws of the material world, treating the visible as "real" and the invisible as "illusory". Because the spiritual landscapes and internal meanings described by Swedenborg cannot be verified by external senses, they are easily dismissed as "personal imagination". However, just as the naked eye cannot see ultraviolet light, how can one glimpse heavenly mysteries if the spiritual eye is not opened? Basing the truth of the Word solely on material evidence is like trying to measure emotion with a ruler—it never touches the essence.

The Tyranny of Consensus: There is a deep-seated psychological tendency to use "public consensus" as the yardstick for truth, assuming that if the majority has not accepted something, it must be unreliable. When the majority holds to a certain interpretation, any dissenting minority is naturally labeled a "heretic". This mindset—"What can one person's word count for?"—is one of the greatest traps in the history of human knowledge. History repeatedly proves that the acceptance of truth often lags far behind its revelation. Copernicus was once "one person"; Galileo was once "one person". Truth is never true because the majority approves, nor is it a fallacy because only a few persist in it. If numbers were the criteria, many prophetic messages would have been deemed invalid in their time.

The Laziness of Reason: People often claim that the internal sense is just a personal interpretation lacking persuasive power. However, deeply studying Swedenborg's works requires time, mental effort, and an open mind. Unfortunately, very few are willing to invest that patience. Most judge based on the initial feeling of "strangeness," mistakenly equating "I don't understand" with "this is unbelievable". This psychological defense mechanism stems from a fear of the unknown. People prefer to cling to familiar literal interpretations rather than enter the spiritual realm which requires thinking, discernment, and the updating of concepts. Consequently, any explanation that transcends existing theological frameworks is labeled "distortion" before it is ever seriously examined. This "shallow observation and quick judgment" is a primary obstacle to understanding truth. Without depth, how can one judge? Without climbing, how can one know the view from the summit?

II. The Reality of Spiritual Sense: A Harmony of Reason and Revelation

What is the spiritual sense of the Bible? It is not a private interpretation, but the source of living water hidden beneath the literal words. Just as a walnut must be cracked to reach the kernel, the literal words are the shell, and the spiritual sense is the core; the words are the vessel, and the spiritual sense is the living water. True persuasiveness lies not in whether an explanation comes from the majority, but in whether it is internally consistent, aligned with the overall spirit of the Bible, and reflective of the harmonious order of heavenly character.

Deep study of Swedenborg reveals that his system is not a collection of random guesses, but is built upon strict "correspondences": a stable and universal connection between natural things and spiritual realities. This structural explanation reflects logical consistency rather than arbitrary imagination. More importantly, these internal meanings consistently point toward the unity of love and wisdom and the order of the kingdom of heaven. This consistency is, in itself, a vital proof of its authenticity.

The spiritual sense of the Word possesses an inherent objectivity. This is reflected in whether the description is "logical, consistent with the original intent of the Bible, and the nature of heaven". The depth of truth lies not in its outward conformity to popular perception, but in its internal self-consistency. What Swedenborg reveals is the continuous, consistent spiritual truth of the biblical books as they appear in the spiritual world—truth concerning the eternal connection between God and humanity and the path to salvation for every soul.

Regrettably, most lack this depth of rational exploration. They refuse to invest the energy to study the internal mechanisms—how these doctrines clarify human nature, spiritual causality, and the way to connect with the Divine from an internal dimension. Just as light must pass through a transparent medium to reveal color, spiritual truth must pass through human reflection to manifest its power. To refuse to understand is, in effect, to refuse to let reason touch the spiritual domain.

III. Exhortation: Opening Spiritual Thinking to Receive Heavenly Light

If one acknowledges the limitations of their own cognitive methods, a humble attitude of seeking knowledge emerges: not rushing to negate or blindly accept, but investigating with a prayerful heart, a rational eye, and enduring patience. Receiving spiritual truth is not based on cleverness alone, but requires the opening of the heart and the transformation of life.

Opening spiritual thinking first means moving beyond a purely literal understanding and recognizing that the Word has deeper layers. This does not ask one to abandon reason, but to use a deeper reason to explore the light behind the words. Like appreciating a painting, one must see beyond lines and colors to perceive the mood and spirit; reading the Bible requires going through the words to touch the eternal Heavenly Truth.

Secondly, it means being willing to let reason receive illumination rather than letting reason become a barrier to it. We must transcend shallow "appearance-based" cognition and acknowledge that human reason has the capacity to perceive beyond the material level. When we set aside prejudice and humbly study Swedenborg's explanations of the Word, we find the internal logic to be far more reasonable and rigorous than the surface suggests.

Finally, it means verifying the truths read through the practice of life—because true heavenly teaching must show a renewing power in a person's love and actions. Swedenborg's works are not intended to replace the Bible, but to guide people deeper into it; they do not promote personal opinions, but witness to the truth that has existed since the beginning of creation.

Conclusion

Encouraging the world to open their spiritual thinking is not for the sake of being "different," but to return to the source. When we lay down the arrogance of "I already know" and escape the blind following of "everyone says so," we may find that the problem is not that revelation lacks persuasiveness, but that we have not yet listened with enough humility and patience.

May we transcend the prison of the senses, the tyranny of consensus, and the laziness of reason. With open spiritual thinking, may we receive the light from heaven—for only then can we move from "observing" to "seeing," from "hearing about" to "knowing," and from the darkness of rejection to the light of reception.

Guang Bin Liu, a member of the Brisbane Church