

## REDEMPTION

As Explained by Swedenborg and Lorber<sup>1</sup>

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Redemption is the »Second Creation« (GEJ<sup>3</sup> VII.23.4) or - as Swedenborg says - »a new creation of the angelic heaven and the church« (TCR 640). Through the grand act of salvation the unchangeable God has so to speak created himself a new. For He has taken on men's human nature and sanctified it through His love. Therefore, Jesus Christ, or God-Man is the *nova creatio Dei* (new creation of God). From this source a new heaven and a new earth go forth - a new creation for the angels and for us here on earth. »Behold, I make all things new.« (Rev. 21.5)

Salvation is the actual purpose of God's incarnation. Indeed, the name Jesus proclaims this. For the angel of the Lord said to Joseph, »You shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.« (Matt. 1.21) And later Jesus again and again described salvation is being His mission, for example in John, »God did not send His Son in the world to judge the world, but that through Him the world might be saved.« (John 3.17)

Only God Himself could bring about salvation. For neither Swedenborg or Lorber is there a Son living from eternity with God, who became man, but it was God Himself, the God called JHWH (Jehovah) in the Old Testament. Swedenborg and Lorber show this using the Old Testament. Swedenborg's shows that Jehovah of the Old Testament is continually called »Lord« in the New. This proves for him that the »Lord« is none other than Jehovah Himself: »By the Lord the Redeemer we mean Jehovah in the Human ... The name Lord is used and not Jehovah, because the Jehovah of the Old Testament is called the Lord in the New. Swedenborg demonstrates this in two places, only one of which I will cite here. »'Hear, O Israel, *Jehovah* our God is one *Jehovah*; you shall love *Jehovah* God with your whole heart and your whole soul.' Deut. 6:4, 5. But in Mark: 'The *Lord* our God is one *Lord*; you shall love the *Lord* your God with your whole heart and your whole soul.' Mark 12:29, 30.« (TCR 81) It is evident from Lorber's writings too that »Jehovah had taken on the flesh of man on this earth« (GEJ IX.85.4), and that thereby »the Lord Himself« has come into the world« (GEJ I.166.10). In volume seven of »Das große Evangelium« (The Great Gospel) Lorber quotes eight places from the prophets (mostly Isaiah) showing that of the »Messiah« (Christ), »was

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<sup>3</sup> GEJ = »Das große Evangelium Johannis« (The Great Gospel of John).

called Jehovah« (GEJ VII.27.12). This ancient Christian truth, that in Jesus the Father Himself has come (Johannine theology!) was nevertheless soon lost, because the concept of the Son was not understood. The »Son« originally meant simply »the human through which God sent himself into the world« (TCR 92ff). The idea of a Son from eternity came only later. It is highly significant that in both Swedenborg and Lorber the doctrine of salvation is developed from the foundation of primitive Christianity - Jesus is Lord (Jehovah).

### **Three Aspects of Redemption**

In Swedenborg and Lorber the work of salvation is summarized from three aspects. For the sake of showing the whole doctrine, it will do well to proceed from these three aspects, which will serve as an outline.

SWEDENBORG: »Redemption itself was a subjugation<sup>4</sup> of the hells, a restoration of order in the heavens, and by means of these a preparation for a new spiritual church.« (TCR 115)

LORBER: »As regards what the work of My redemption means and is, I say to you: first, it is the very greatest work of eternal love since thereby, I, the Supreme of All, in all the fullness of My love and in the infinite fullness of My divinity became man - yes, and what is more, a brother to you all. I took the whole mass of the world's sin on My shoulders and thus purified the earth from the old curse of God's inviolable holiness. Second, redemption is the subjugation of the hells to the power of My love, which previously stood only in the power of the raging angry divinity and so were distant from My love, which however is the most fearful weapon against hell, since it is its starkest opposite, by which it is driven back into an infinite depth at the mere reverent mention of My name. Thirdly, it is the opening of the gates of heaven and eternal life and it is the true guide into these, for it not only reconciles you again with the holiness and God, but also shows you how he must be brought low by the world in order that you may desire to be raised up by God. It shows you further how, from love to Me and your brethren, to bear all ridicule, suffering and persecution with the greatest patience, meekness, and surrender of your will - yes, it teaches you to take your friends by the hand and conquer your enemy with the Divine love in your heart. (»Die Erlösung« [Redemption], in HiG<sup>5</sup> III, p. 18)

The common features and the individual outlines of both texts are immediately evident. Redemption is the subjugation of the hells. One notes that the formulations of both texts are the same. Lorber, however, has

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<sup>4</sup> »Subjugation.« Following the German translation of Friedemann Horn, the author prefers this translation of subjugare, which literally means »to put under the yoke.«

<sup>5</sup> HiG = »Himmelsgaben« (Gifts from Heaven).

added »under the power of My love;« but this is included in Swedenborg's discussion of the matter. Redemption's range includes heaven and earth. Swedenborg makes a connection with the promise of a new heaven and a new earth (Isa. 65.17; Rev. 21.1). In Lorber this is expressed in the words: redemption is »the opening of the gates of heaven and eternal life and it is the true guide into these.« For behind the gates opens a new heaven; and a guide to this is the new spiritual church of which Swedenborg spoke. Thus, the texts easily allow themselves to be united. Lorber's first point can be found again in Swedenborg too. We read in Lorber: »Redemption is the very greatest work of eternal love since thereby, I, the Supreme of All, in all the fullness of My love and in the infinite fullness of My divinity became man - yes, and what is more, a brother to you all. I took the whole mass of the world's sin on My shoulders and thus purified the earth from the old curse of God's inviolable holiness.« In Swedenborg's works, this is »glorification.« It is at the same time the reconciliation of God with mankind in the person of Jesus Christ. Of this we will speak later. The basic systems of Swedenborg and Lorber are thus surprisingly similar.

Of course, both texts have their unique profile. Swedenborg's presentation is characterized above all by His view of the life of the spiritual world and his insight that the spiritual world is the world from which everything on earth originates. Swedenborg therefore first speaks of the consequences of redemption to hell and heaven, thus to the spiritual world, and then turns to what occurred on earth. There, in consequence of the formation of the new heaven, a new, that is, a spiritual Christianity will rise. Swedenborg is totally the seer of the spiritual reality; his penetrating vision saw that redemption comes from the depths of the spiritual world - the effects of which process we on earth will only experience at some future day. Swedenborg's presentation is therefore characterized by the fact that it covers three kingdoms of existence, hell, heaven, and earth.

With Lorber, the crucial point lies in a different area. The introductory statement indicates this clearly: »Redemption is the very greatest of all the works of eternal love.« The emphasis lies on love. Accordingly, the »subjugation of hell« is broadened with the addition of the words »under the power of My love;« and the text concludes »with the Divine love in your hearts.« This weight given to love is characteristic of Lorber's works. Second, the dualism of divinity and love is striking. In order to understand it, one must be acquainted with the opening chapter of »Haushaltung Gottes« (God's Housekeeping). There divinity is differentiated from love. We read: »From eternity divinity was the power penetrating all the infinity of infinity and was and will be Infinity Itself. In the midst of its Deep I was from eternity the love and life itself in it.« (HGt<sup>6</sup> I.5.2) This is reminiscent of Swedenborg's differentiation of esse (being) from essentia

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<sup>6</sup> HGt = »Haushaltung Gottes« (God's Housekeeping).

(essence). All of salvation depends on - as the following chapters of Housekeeping and Lorber's pamphlet »The Weak« show - this differentiation within the Divine. I cannot afford to follow out this line of inquiry here - although it would be rewarding. Third and finally, Lorber's understanding of matter plays a role in his conception of the work of redemption. For what he means by the purification of the earth »from the old curse of God's inviolable holiness« (cf. HGt I.9.20) is that the essential being in matter (i.e., the life in material bodies) is no longer a hinder to attaining the state of pure spirit (heaven). »According to the old order, no one come into heaven who had once been put into matter« (GEJ IV.109.4). This is now no longer the case. In addition, in Lorber the »subjugation of hell« refers not only to the hell in the other world but also throughout has a meaning applying very much to this world. »The body ... is ... hell in a narrow a sense; the material substance of all worlds is hell in the broadest sense, under whose control man is as a result of His having a body.« (GEJ II.210.8) The concept of matter (matter = condemned spirit) belongs to a special area of the revelation made through Lorber.

As this overview shows, Swedenborg and Lorber have an understanding of redemption that is essentially the same for them both, and yet the two revelations have each their own character. In Swedenborg the emphasis lies on his view and vision of the spiritual world; in Lorber the understanding has broadened to increase the entire material world, which is not found thus in Swedenborg. We will see that in this way different ways of viewing the work of redemption are possible, which more completely comprehend this great secret than would be possible for each individual revelation by itself. Redemption, as the »greatest of all works,« includes both heaven and earth. With the help of Swedenborg and Lorber, we can somewhat more clearly grasp both aspects.

Redemption is deliverance from a danger and is fundamentally defined as such by Swedenborg: »To redeem means to liberate from damnation, to deliver from eternal death, to rescue from hell, and to release from the hand of the devil the captive and the bound« (TCR 118). Or in Lorber's words: the Lord has come into the world, »in order to release you from the yoke of Satan and its eternal destruction« (GEJ I.166.10). Therefore, he who speaks of redemption must first of all identify the darkness - that darkness from which only the Divine light redeems us, in the incomparable word's of Isaiah: »The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light, upon those who lived in the shadow of death a light has shined« (Isa. 9.1). The incidents of possession in Jesus time were not mythological legends, which need to be de-mythologized, but real encroachments of spirits from hell. The coming of the king of God manifested itself in Jesus power over the devil, for Jesus' said: »But if I drive out demons through the finger of god, than the kingdom of God has come upon you« (Luke 11.20). Thus, redemption involves power over all

that is demonic. This was the conviction of early Christianity: there, Christ's act of salvation came to be understood as »a battle between God and the Devil. Jesus had broken the Devil's chains, put the hells under foot<sup>7</sup> and freed mankind from death, and shown that the way to resurrection was by following Him.«<sup>8</sup> This must be very clearly pointed out because in traditional Christian theology satisfaction has increasingly come into foreground - the bloody sacrifice and atonement to an angry God. In this, Swedenborg and Lorber stand closer to Greek thought in their differing conceptions. In the words of Michael Schmaus: »While in Western theology ... since Anselm of Canterbury, the death on the Cross has been understood more as making satisfaction, as restoration of God's violated honor, as atonement for the offense done to God, Greek theology has explained it more as a victory of God over Satan.«<sup>9</sup> This is precisely Swedenborg's and Lorber's standpoint.

SWEDENBORG: »Redemption itself was the subjugation of the hells« (TCR 115).

LORBER: »I tell you what the work of My redemption means and is ... it is second the subjugation of hell under the power of My love«<sup>10</sup> (»Die Erlösung,« in HiG III, p. 18). »Redemption ... consists ... in My having become Man, whereby the overweighing power of hell has been completely broken and conquered« (GEJ VI.239.5). I Myself had to descend into matter with the fullness of My being »in order to break through the old but necessary judgment, and thereby put a check upon the self-made hell, which will thus now never break through, as was happening up to that point. I, the most holy, had to clothe Myself with the unholiness of human, or created weakness,<sup>11</sup> in order to conquer them as a stronger hero.« (GEJ VI 240.3)

Although Swedenborg and Lorber both speak of the »subjugation of hell(s),« each of course has his own the points of view that are important to him. For Swedenborg hell is a reality that belongs to the other world. For Lorber it also has a meaning in this world. Swedenborg stresses temptation above all else; victory over the powers of hell can be one only through temptations: »The subjugation of the hells ... was effected by means of temptations admitted into His Human, and by continual victories« (AC 10828). For Lorber, on the other hand, this thought does not come so much into the foreground, because in »Das große Evangelium« he recounts chiefly outer events. The temptations, however, are inner experiences. Swedenborg, expositor of the inner meaning [of the

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<sup>7</sup> Swedenborg and Lorber speak of the subjugation of the hells.

<sup>8</sup> Hans Lietzmann, »Geschichte der alten Kirche«, 1953, vol. II, p. 118.

<sup>9</sup> Michael Schmaus, »Katholische Dogmatik«, II/2, 1955 p. 320.

<sup>10</sup> In GEJ III.25.7 it also says that God is in a »battle of subjugation« with Satan.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Lorber's Text »Der Schwache« (The Weak One).

Scriptures], naturally knows and tells more about these. What is special in Lorber is the description of the connection between hell and matter (the world). We read: »The world and hell are exactly one, as soul and body are one« (GEJ IV.240.6). »The body ... is ... hell in the narrow a sense; the matter composing all worlds, however, is hell in the broadest sense, into which man has placed as a result of his having a body.« (GEJ II.210.8). For this reason the subjugation of hell, which reached its climax on the Cross, is understood not only as victory over the power of Death in the spiritual world, but also as the victory of spirit over Matter; whereas before Easter it was the spirit's prison, now it is the way to the highest heaven, for God Himself has prepared the way.

The individual viewpoints of Swedenborg and Lorber present no contradictions. For when it was revealed through Lorber that matter is as it were a hell, this does not then say the creation is evil; on the contrary, it is »good before God« (GEJ V.230.1); however it can unfold an evil effect upon men: »Evil, as regards its effects, has reference only to human beings, because as regards the soul and even partially the flesh, when being awakened from death, they are destined to unite themselves eternally with the pure and positive spirit flowing from God, without thereby losing any of their freedom or independence.« (GEJ V.230.1) These considerations are not foreign to Swedenborg either. His exposition of the Fall demonstrates this (Gen.3). The serpent there means »the sensuous part of man« (AC 194). This is basically what is said by Lorber - man's nature when oriented to the world can be evil as to its effects. Moreover, Swedenborg writes: »Those who receive the world, and not heaven also, receive hell« (HH 313). Thus, the world can have an evil effect on man; it is simply the power of self-control coming into man through the heavenly powers that prevents the world from leading man astray into a »worldly« life. According to Swedenborg too there is a certain connection between the world and hell. On this account, once people had been led astray by the serpent (Gen. 3), they could only be saved by God in the form of a serpent (cf. Num. 21.9, and John 3.14).

Conversely, neither is the thought of temptation absent in Lorber. The most striking text in this regard is perhaps that found in »Jesu Jugend« (Jesus' Youth)

LORBER: How then, did Jesus, the Lord, live from His twelfth to His thirtieth year? He constantly and intensely felt the omnipotent Divinity in Himself. He knew in His soul that all that infinity comprises is and eternally must be subject to His slightest suggestion. In addition, in His soul he had the strongest urged to control everyone. Pride, the lust for power, utter freedom, a taste for a life of luxury, a desire for women, and more such - thus even anger - were His soul's chief weaknesses. However, from His will in His soul, He battled against these truly powerful and deadly carnal and worldly motivations in His soul. Pride He humbled fleet with poverty; however, what a harsh remedy for Him to whom all belong

to, and yet for whom it was not allowable to call anything »mine!« The lust for power he subdued through dutifulness totally willing to perform those things, which like all human beings in comparison with Him, were as nothing. His eternal supreme freedom he assaulted, even though it was intensely infinitely difficult, by surrendering His human nature to the lowest work, like a slave-worker. He battled the strongest urge for luxury, indeed by fasting frequently - of necessity and of His free will. His desire for women He not infrequently battled by heavy work, by a lean diet, by prayer and by associating with wise men ... Further, since He saw through men's evil with a glance, saw their tricks and hypocrisy, their cunning and self-interest, it is also understandable that He was readily irritable and very easily could take offense and become angry; but then His Divine mind was calmed by His love and thereupon followed mercy. Thus, His life was simply conducted in the most strenuous self-denial, in order to restore the corrupted eternal order. From it, however, one can easily see how Jesus as a person passed these eighteen years of His life in continual trials of temptation and battles.« (JJ<sup>12</sup> 299.1 ff)

This account is quite in line with Swedenborg's. For he clearly said that the Lord's temptations were permitted to occur from »earliest youth to last hour in the world.« (AC 1690)

The hells could be subjugated only by His assumption of a human nature. For only the human could be tempted. Swedenborg's thought is as follows: »The Lord's life, from His earliest childhood even to the last hour of His life in the world, was continual temptation and continual victory« (AC 2795). Swedenborg bases this on the circumstance that it is only in human beings that spirits from hell and from heaven are present together. This means that a battle between heaven and hell can occur only in man. Therefore, when God wanted to subjugate the powers of hell, He had to seek out the battleground, that is, He had to become man. That becoming man was the prerequisite for God's being able to do this the battle emerges also from Lorber's writings. In »Das große Evangelium« Lorber presents and passages from the Old Testament that show this precisely.

LORBER: »Redemption, however, consists in My becoming man, whereby the power of the old hell, which was so overweighing, was entirely broken and conquered. Such an act was foretold by the prophet Isaiah when in chap. 63, vs. 139 he said: »Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? glorious in his apparel, traveling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine vat? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger righteousness, and trample them (the hells) in My fury (the highest order of Divine wisdom);

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<sup>12</sup> JJ = »Jugend Jesu« (Jesus' Youth).

and the battle shall be sprinkled upon My garments (of doctrine and faith's truth).<sup>13</sup> For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of My redeemed is come. Mine own arm the human of the Lord brought salvation unto me. I will bring down their hells' strength to the earth. He said, Surely they are My people, children (lead astray by hell): so he was their Saviour ... « [Additional passages follow, with a brief exposition and the summarizing observation:] There are a number of more places in which it is stated that I chiefly came into this world in the flesh to check forever the encroachment of hell, which had become too powerful.» (GEJ VI.239.5-9 and 30)

It is interesting to compare this exposition with that of Swedenborg's on the same passage. The fundamental statement is fully identical: the human of the Lord battled and obtained victory hell. According to Swedenborg, from Isa. 63.1-5 we can know that »the Lord alone and from Himself fought against the hells and overcame them« (AC 8273). From Lorber's text one learns that »arm« means the Lord's human. We find the same conception in Swedenborg: »In the Word His [God's] human is called the arm of Jehovah (Isa. 40.10f; 53.1) « (TCR 84). The victory over hell was a victory not only for mankind on earth, but also for the angels. Swedenborg and Lorber also agree on this not unimportant point.

SWEDENBORG: »Without that redemption no man could have been saved, nor could the angels have continued in a state of integrity« (TCR 118).

LORBER: »Their [the hellish spirits] imagination goes so far that they could lead even the angels astray; and I came to earth in the flesh chiefly on this account, to put a check on the hells forever which they never will be able to overpower.« (GEJ VI.239.1).

### **The New Heaven and the New Church**

The victory over the hells was the necessary pre-condition for the new creation. Up to this time, the prophecy about the new heaven and the new earth (Isa. 65.17; Rev. 21.1) has been taken literally and applied to the material universe. However, heaven is not the heaven visible over our heads, but the realm of reality in which the angels live; and the earth is not the earth under our feet, but is a picture of the foundation of our spiritual existence. I have presented these ideas in detail in »Die Gotteslehre aus den Himmeln: Swedenborg and Lorber über das Neue Jerusalem«<sup>14</sup> (The Divine Doctrine from Heaven: Swedenborg and Lorber on the New Jerusalem) and so must not repeat them here. The following quotation only illustrates once more that salvation according to Swedenborg and Lorber was also a new ordering of heaven and earth.

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<sup>13</sup> Swedenborg: »The truths of faith themselves are compared to garments« (AC 1073).

<sup>14</sup> See »Das Wort« 6, 1997, 371-382.

SWEDENBORG: »Redemption itself was ... a restoration of order in the heavens, and thus the preparation for a new spiritual church. (TCR 115) »A redemption is being affected by founding a new heaven and establishing a new church.« (TCR 182)

LORBER: »What ... the work of My redemption means, I will tell you: ... it is thirdly the opening of the gates of heaven and eternal life, and it is the true guide to it ... « (»Die Erlösung« in HiG III, p. 18) »The entire order of the old heaven together with it have perished, and a new order and a new heaven are now being made on the foundation of the matter that I have blessed; and all of creation, as also this earth must take on a new structure. The old order prescribed that no one who had once been set into material substance could come into heaven; from this time onward no one can truly come into the highest and purest heaven who has not, just as I, worked through the way of matter and the flesh.« (GEJ IV.109.3f)

### **The Glorification of the Lord**

Swedenborg makes a difference between redemption and [the Lord's] glorification. This is why the glorification is missing from his above summary of the work of redemption. There it says simply: »Redemption consists in the ordering of the heavens and thus in the preparation of a new spiritual church« (TCR 115). To differentiate these two processes Swedenborg writes:

SWEDENBORG: »There are two things for which the Lord came into the world, and by means of which He saved men and angels, namely, redemption and the glorification of His Human. These two are distinct from each other; and yet in reference to salvation they make one. It has been shown in the preceding sections what the work of redemption was, namely, that it was a combat against the hells, a subjugation of the hells, and a restoration of order in the heavens. But glorification is the uniting of the Lord's Human with the Divine of His Father. This was effected gradually, and was completed through the passion of the cross.« (TCR 126) Therefore one can assign two purposes to the incarnation: »The Lord from eternity, who is Jehovah, came into the world to subjugate the hells [redemption] and to glorify His Human« (TCR 2).

The glorification was the process whereby the man Jesus of Nazareth became completely divine. »Das große Evangelium« knows this thought, too:

LORBER: »I will now ... while still in this world ... transform this human into My original Divine and so then return to My God who is in Me.« (GEJ VI.231.6) LEOPOLD ENGEL<sup>15</sup>: »Therefore after the departure of

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<sup>15</sup> In the following, I refer several times to Vol. XI of »Das große Evangelium« (The Great Gospel), although it was not received by Jacob Lorber, but by Leopold Engel. This change in the receiver of the revelation brought about several changes

Judas I said, 'Now is the Son of Man made radiant, and God is made radiant in Him. If God be made radiant in Him, God shall also render Him radiant in Himself, and shall straightway render him radiant!'<sup>16</sup> [John 13.31] Thus this means: the Son of Man will truly become the Son of God, and the Father will soon unite Himself to Him for all eternity.« (GEJ XI.71)<sup>17</sup> Thinking of the passion line before him, the Lord said, »Behold, what is going on in My soul will never be experienced by any man, for now the Son is ascending to become the Son of God« (GEJ XI.46, p. 116). The period of seclusion in Ephraim (cf. John 11.54) served the Lord to »prepare His earthly man for the difficult time ahead of and to make it ready for its transformation into the eternal, and unchanging Christ.« (GEJ XI.47, p. 118). By 'distinguishing the Son from the Father', the Lord wanted to express, before Easter, that [His] body was not yet made radiant, but still belonged to the earth.« (GEJ XI.48, p. 122)

The union of the Divine and the human in Jesus Christ is such as can also be expressed in »Das große Evangelium« by a picture of a bridge. »A way ... must be shown, a bridge must be thrown up, over which it is possible to reach spirit from matter!« »However, redemption lies in this, that this way which leads directly to God is now open, and in that this way has been realized by Jesus the Son of Man, who thereby became the Son of God.« (GEJ XI.75) Jesus is thus the bridge from Divinity to humanity and vice versa.<sup>18</sup>

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that it would be very interesting to investigate in detail, with regard also to gaining a deeper understanding of how revelations take place and what conditions play a role. In this study however, I cannot do this, and therefore I regard Vol. XI as belonging to the Great Gospel, although Leopold Engel is quoted here after Jacob Lorber.

<sup>16</sup> »Make radiant« and »glorify« are both translations of the Johannine word *doxazein*. [Engel here uses *verklären* 'make radiant' instead of the usual *verherrlichen* 'glorify.' Trans.]

<sup>17</sup> Swedenborg has unfolded this passage from the Gospel of John several times a quite similar fashion: »Here glorification is predicated both of God the Father and of the Son ... for it is said, »God is glorified in Him,« and »shall glorify Him in Himself.« Evidently this means being united.« (TCR 128) By glorification therefore - as with Lorber - is meant the same as by union.

<sup>18</sup> This successful bridging of matter to spirit, accomplished in Jesus Christ, meant at the same time that there is now a way from the perfect fulfillment of the old creation (paradise or regeneration of the soul; cf. GEJ III.34.15) to that of the new creation (heaven or regeneration of the spirit). Therefore Zorel's spiritual guide can say: »My friend, this will not long be a heaven, but will be paradise. Until now no mortal could come into heaven, for until now no bridge had been built.« (GEJ IV.53.4) It was first when salvation and the glorification had taken place that a bridge was made between paradise and heaven. And it was for this reason than Jesus himself could say: »By following the old order, no one who had once been placed in matter, could come into heaven; from now on no one will come to Me in

Swedenborg's Christology of the glorification goes back to the Gospel of John. There glorification is used in a very specific sense. This in turn rests on the Old Testament concept of the glory of Jehovah (Ex. 24.16, Isa 40.5, 60.1, etc.). By this is meant, according to Swedenborg, the gleam of the Divine sun, or the Divine truth (AC 8267, 8427, 5922). To glorify or make radiant means, therefore: to become like the Divine light. And since this light eternally goes forth from the fire of love, and love and wisdom in God are one, to glorify therefore means: to merge into the fire of love. Swedenborg writes: »to glorify is to make Divine.« (NJ 294) This means that the man Jesus became the image of Divine love and Divine wisdom. However, this process could only happen in stages. There is reason for it being said in John: »And the Word (Wisdom) became flesh.« At first love held itself back, so to speak. Or put in another way, a certain separation between love and wisdom occurred. Let us consider what this means. In God love and wisdom are a one: but for the purpose of becoming human wisdom must be loosed from the womb of love. Therefore the glorification could only proceed in stages. That means Jesus changed himself first into the image of the Divine wisdom (fulfilled the Law), in order to unite this then with the Divine love. That God as the eternal word of wisdom became Man, the aged Rael could know, even in Jesus lifetime, from an ancient Egyptians saying: »The spirit of wisdom descends, sent from Eternal Love, and spreads abroad the brightest light.« (GEJ XI.20, p. 54) Swedenborg alludes to the successive union of the human essence with the Divine when he writes: »the Lord's glorification proceeded from truth to the good of truth« (AC 4538).

Since »glorification« and »to make Divine« mean the same thing, it is clear that Jesus began his way as a human being. First - as Lorber once said - he had to »earn the glory of God.« The following quotation [of Jesus' words] from Lorber attests to this impressively: »Like any other ordinary human being I had to begin by first believing in God, and then by all imaginable self-denial I increasingly also had to acquire a stronger and stronger love for Him, and bit by bit became truly fully subject to the Divine« (JJ Vorrede 1). »To grasp the matter rightly, one must not completely regard Jesus only as God; but one must picture Him as a man in whom the sole eternal Divinity incarcerated himself, apparently inactive in the same way as the [divine] spirit is incarcerated in the nature of every man.« (JJ 298.4-5). »This scarcely 30 year-old son of the carpenter Joseph carried on his trade in outward respects completely as a man and not as God. The Divine Itself entered into Him only occasionally, in proportion

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the highest and the purest heaven who has not as I gone through the way of matter and the flesh. » (GEJ IV.109.4). »Be comforted, for it is for this that I have come into the world! Until now a well-paved way has been lacking, and heaven was separated from earth; however, now a straight and solid way has been paved, and heaven will be joined to earth ... « (GEJ II.133.2) Regarding the concept »bridge« cf. also GEJ I.81.10.

as he caused it flow into Him through His actions; but the divinity did not come into view apart from actions.« (Sch.<sup>19</sup> 8.9) Swedenborg too stressed that Jesus, »as to his human was a child like all other children, a boy like all other boys, and so on.« (TCR 89)

Through the process of glorification the invisible became a God who is visible and thereby a God with whom one can be joined. Therefore Jesus said, »He who has seen Me, has seen the Father« (John 14.9), and the, »I and the Father are one« (John 10.30). This means, in Jesus Christ the invisible God has become accessible to us. Because of this Early Christianity confessed, »He [Jesus Christ] is the image of the invisible god« (Col. 1.15). Swedenborg and Lorber have given this teaching fresh power.

SWEDENBORG: »They still do not know that the one God who is invisible came into the world and assumed a Human, not only that He might redeem men, but also that He might become visible, that thereby conjunction with man might become possible.« (TCR 786) »Man should not approach God the Father directly, because He is invisible and therefore inaccessible, and conjunction with Him is impossible; and this is why He Himself came into the world, and made Himself visible and accessible, and conjunction with Him possible« (TCR 538) »Jehovah God, who is called the Creator and the Father, descended and assumed a Human in order that He might be approached by man and be conjoined to man.« (TCR 107)

LORBER: »From all eternity on I indeed possessed in Myself all power and glory. Nevertheless I was not a God visible or comprehensible to any created being ... But from now on I am a visible God to all men and angels, and have given them a basis for life that is fully perfect, eternal, responsibly fully free and consequently fully genuine; and precisely herein lies My own greater glorification, and thus also yours.« (GEJ III.57.14)

ENGEL: »The invisible became visible only in Jesus, and this union of the two in the human form made possible the approach of the created to the Creator, the merging of matter into spirit, to turn back of the consequences of sin that had risen over the wall dividing spirit from matter (GEJ IX.75).

### **The Interpretation of the Cross**

Since the time of Paul, the Cross has stood at the center of Christianity. Paul tied redemption to Christ's death and resurrection. The concentration on the Cross began with Paul. This is not surprising, for Paul had to look backwards in interpreting the life of Jesus, and in this retrospective view, the Cross struck him as serving as a hermeneutic key. It appeared otherwise to the eyewitness and companion of Jesus, John. For him the cross is to be understood only as one component of Jesus' life. The Cross is the elevation of Jesus (John 3.14; 8.28; 12.34), where the crucifixion

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<sup>19</sup> Sch. = »Schrifttexterklärungen« (Explanations of Texts from the Holy Scripture)

signifies the union with the Father in heaven. Jesus aspired to this union, however, throughout His entire life. »My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me« (John 4.34). The Cross is simply the high point of His development. Tying into the Johannine tradition, Swedenborg and Lorber refine the definition of the Cross.

SWEDENBORG: »The passion on the cross was not redemption« (TCR 126ff). »The belief that the passion of the cross was redemption itself is the fundamental error of the church« (TCR 132). »Redemption and the passion of the cross are two different things« (TCR 581).

LORBER: »Truly, men need not at all lay hands on My flesh, and yet they would receive eternal life for their souls ...« (GEJ VII.51.3, cf. also GEJ VIII.149.5-9). ENGEL: »The death of Jesus is the confirmation of unquestioning obedience. It would not have been necessary« (GEJ XI.75).

Swedenborg interprets the cross as temptation and therefore as a means to the union with the Father (the primitive, originating Divine). He writes: »The passion of the cross was not redemption, but the last temptation which the Lord, as the greatest Prophet, endured, and was the means whereby His Human was glorified, that is, whereby it was united with the Divine of the Father.« »Temptations are attacks against what man loves« (AC 6090). The love of the Divine was »the love for the whole human race« (AC 1690), that is, it was the Divine love - in Jesus' words - »the Father.« When the Son of Man Himself on the cross again resolutely chose this love, the Father (the eternal Divine being) united Himself utterly and completely with Jesus. The Son of Man became truly the Son of God; He was taken up in divina essentia (into the Divine being). This miracle was brought about through temptations; they were »means of union« (AC 4961); the cross as the final temptation was the final phase of union. For Lorber, too, the cross was the high point of deification.

LORBER: The »complete union of the fullness of divinity with the man Jesus« was »accomplished only through death on the cross« (JJ Vorrede 2). »However, I have surely not brought such life from God into the world from the womb! Its germ certainly lay in Me, but it first needed to be developed, which required nearly thirty years of time and effort. Now I stand before you here as perfected, and I can say to you ... that the spirit in Me is fully one with the Spirit of God ... This spirit [God in me] is indeed God, but not I as a more pure Son of Man; for as I have already said through much effort and practice - like any man - I had to acquire the status of God, and as such first then could be one with the spirit of God. Now I am now certainly one with Him in spirit, but not yet in body; however, I will also become totally one in this regard, but only after a great suffering and complete and deeply humbling self-abnegation of My soul.« (GEJ VI.90.11-12)

The deification of Christ's body also took place on the cross. The empty grave is proof that in principle it is possible to make matter Divine. This

viewpoint is presented especially in Lorber's work. However, according to Swedenborg too, the resurrection body somehow emerges from the previously material body of Christ. Matter, therefore, must be fundamentally capable of being made Divine. Nevertheless, in Swedenborg this thought cannot come into play very much because in his system the doctrine of discrete degrees prevails. Following this line of thought one must accept the idea that matter as the very lowest level of being can never become spiritual and absolutely not Divine. How then can the resurrection body be explained? Swedenborg's writings give no clear explanation of this. With Lorber, the starting point is different: »Matter is nothing other than judged spiritual substance« (GEJ IV.103.4). Thus while Swedenborg stressed separation by degrees or levels, one would say that with Lorber matter and spirit are only different visible forms or aggregate states of the same essential substance. I believe one must entertain both points of view so as not to become one-sided in this difficult question. Lorber, you see, can express the surge of the spirit of God into matter more clearly than Swedenborg.

LORBER: » ... Through this body I have taken on Myself all judgment and death, and this body must be given over to death for three days, that thereby your souls may continue to have eternal life! For this My body is the substitute for your souls. In order that your souls may live, My body must depart from life, and the life that has departed from it will come and be of eternal benefit to your souls. However, on the third day, My body, totally changed, will receive life again and the overflow of My spirit will surge into you and lead you into all truth.<sup>20</sup> In your hearts and in your souls you will be changed, like My body, first into such truth; and you yourselves will freely and unconditionally receive eternal life from the overflow of My spirit, and only thus will you be true children of God and live forever« (GEJ III.226 2-9). »I, as the sole bearer of all being and life must now redeem also that which through the firmness of My will had fallen into judgment and death; and through just the judgment and the death of this My flesh I must surge into the old judgment and the old death, in order to loose and release every shackle on My own Divine will, because the time is ripe; so that thereby every creature can pass from eternal death to free and independent life.« (GEJ V.247.5). For this reason I had to clothe Myself in matter, together with the judgment upon it, and had to break through it. In so doing I became the entrance into eternal life for all the fallen, if they wanted to pass through the portal into life. For this reason I am the door to life and life itself. He who does not enter through Me does not come into life in the light of eternal truth and freedom, but remains imprisoned in matter.« (GEJ III.35.10) ENGEL: »Know only that I came down to redeem mankind and this redemption

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<sup>20</sup> »When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth« (John 16.13).

will take place not only spiritually but also materially in the most gross sense ... because matter and spirit are connected, and what is first comes into being only from what is last! Spirit, however, desires to be submerged in what is first; accordingly, matter, in order to be saved, must be burst open to become spiritual again. And this is the redemption of form [the human form] ... « (GEJ XI.25)

These words say that there is a connection between the Cross and matter. It is based on the Lorberian concept of matter: »Matter is ... nothing else than judged ... spirit« (GEJ IV.103.4). Matter, judgment and death: these concepts belong together. For matter is the judged state of spirit; and everything of judgment is dead, because freedom belongs to life. Jesus' death paved the way to life for Creation which had collapsed into death. Of course, the terms death and life here do not mean simply biological death and biological life. True life is fellowship with the spirit of God the life. Through the Cross Jesus became »the door to life and life itself. He who does not enter through Me, cannot come to life ... « (GEJ VIII.35.10; cf. John 10.9). The similarity here to Johannine theology is to be noted. For the Jesus described by John has come to give life to the world; in the Johannine Scriptures life is the most important term for salvation. The body of Christ is the visible expression of God's penetration into domain of death, and in so doing of His giving life into the world from within to without. The body of Christ must »part with life, and the life it has left« (GEJ III.226.7) will come to the benefit of our souls. One feels reminded of the Johannine words: »Greater love has no one than this, that he lays down his life for his friends« (John 15.13). This laying down of life does not merely mean the death on the Cross, but explains it. The death of Christ becomes a sign that God has breathed out His life, that is, breathed life into the whole of creation.

Although redemption and the passion of the Cross are »two different things« (TCR 581) and thus Jesus' death was »not necessary« for the salvation of the human race (GEJ VIII.75), Christ's death - that the hells than attempted - had a deep meaning, namely, the glorification of the human or the complete union with the originating Divine of the father (cf. TCR 126). Jesus, God's anointed, before he ultimately said yes to the horrible suffering, actually stood before the choice of whether he wanted to be mankind's greatest prophet or the face of God, indeed God himself. When he stood on the Mt. of Olives and saw before him Jerusalem, the city of His suffering, Divinity separated itself from the Son of Man and presented him with the choice, »Will you as My son ascended into the Father ... or will you as the Son of Man belong to this human nature only and remain part of the world only? You can be a ruler of the world and remain a redeemer of the world; however, you can also be a guide to Me, who then leads into God's innermost heart, by ascending totally into Me and thereby becoming the ruler of life to all eternity. So then choose now, what lies before your eyes, what you would love to happen to you -

whether you want to take your way beside Me or within me, for the time for the final decision has come!« (GEJ XI.65)

Christianity has always known that Christ death was a free decision; but what does this mean? Swedenborg and Lorber agreed that the event on the Cross took place for the sake of glorification. Lorber, however, draws this line of thought out to its very end-point.

### **The Demarcation against the Old Doctrine**

The old doctrine of redemption had focused too much on the angry God and the bloody Son. Swedenborg's describes this doctrine in the following words:

SWEDENBORG: »What at the present day more fills and crams the books of the orthodox, or what is more zealously taught and inculcated in the schools, or what is more frequently preached and proclaimed from the pulpit, than that God the Father, being angry with the human race, not only put it away from Himself, but also included it under a universal damnation, and thus excommunicated it; but being gracious, He persuaded or inspired His Son to descend and take upon Himself this determined damnation, and thus appease the anger of His Father; and that under no other conditions could the Father look with favor upon mankind? And further, that this was actually done by the Son; in that by taking upon Himself the damnation of the human race He suffered Himself to be scourged, to be spit upon, and finally crucified by the Jews as one »accursed of God« (Deut. 21:23); and after this had been done the Father was propitiated, and from love for His Son canceled the damnation, but only on behalf of those for whom the Son might intercede, and that the Son thus became a Mediator perpetually before His Father.« (TCR 132)

This is the doctrine of vicarious atonement (*satisfactio vicaria*); it was developed particularly by Anselm of Canterbury (1033/4-1109) in his major work *Cur deus homo*, and since the council of Trent has been the official doctrine of the Catholic Church. Swedenborg and Lorber, however, lay bare the faults of this theory. First, it perceives that the concept views the Father and the Son as two different persons. We have seen, however that Jehovah Himself became Man. Second, the biblical language about God's anger is taken so literally that atonement can even be defined as »repayment of a debt.«<sup>21</sup> But what if God cannot at all be angry? If the anger of God is only a metaphor? And this is actually the case: »Thus when you read of an angry God, by this you should then understand the eternally unchanging and fixed earnestness of His will; and in God this earnestness of will is certainly precisely the inner most core of

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<sup>21</sup> Ludwig Ott, »Grudriss der katholischen Dogmatik«, 1981, p. 225.

all-pure and all-powerful love« (GEJ IV.141.3)<sup>22</sup> Swedenborg too, emphasizes repeatedly that »Jehovah has no anger,« because He is »love itself« (AC 6997). Therefore, redemption cannot consist in the appeasement of an angry god, but only in the subjugation of hell.<sup>23</sup> And third and last, the doctrine of atonement puts the suffering on the Cross too much in the center. Swedenborg's says, however: »The belief that the passion of the cross was redemption itself is the fundamental error of the church; and this error, together with the error respecting three Divine persons from eternity, has perverted the whole church to such an extent that there is nothing spiritual left in it« (TCR 132). There is a connection between these two errors. For the doctrine that the Son can appease the anger of God the Father cannot but proceed from the doctrine of a Trinity (of three Divine persons!).

A striking difference from the Western tradition lies in the fact that redemption as explained by Swedenborg is of an ontological character and is not - as is customarily the case in the Western tradition - legalistic. Mankind's reconciliation with God as well as sin is thought of in the category of Being. Reconciliation is the merging of God with man in the person of Jesus Christ. He is the incarnated reconciliation of the two entities that had been separated up to that point - spirit and matter. In Him, creation is reconciled with its originating base. And further, matter (Lorber) or at the very least, being in sensuality (Swedenborg) is the visible and tangible expression of the fall away from God. However, since the glorification the essential being in matter is no longer an obstacle to the essential being in Christ. The infinite gap between sinful being and true being has been breached through Jesus Christ. All this clearly shows that the new revelation lays out the ontological doctrine of redemption. It stands closer to Greek theology than the Western theology familiar to us. For the »theology of the Early Fathers of the Greek church sees ... sin as above all a disturbance and confusion in the structure of being ... the occidental explanation sees in sin above all a disturbance of the structure of law.«<sup>24</sup>

### **Redemption and Regeneration**

Although Jesus Christ has redeemed us, we are not saved automatically. For His redemption is only a redemption in principle; that is, the prison door is indeed now opened, but no Divine power can draw us out against our will. What use is that recent freedom in principle if scarcely anyone

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. also GEJ IX.30.3 and HGt II.23.1 (»the things that have been created ... are the anger of God«).

<sup>23</sup> It is to be noted that Lorber, admittedly, can speak of redemption from the anger of the Deity. Nevertheless, this is not to be understood as naively as in the classical doctrine of redemption.

<sup>24</sup> Michael Schmaus, »Katholische Dogmatik« II/2, 1955, p. 357f.

makes use of it? Two-thousand years later, on the face of mankind still does not appear to be greatly redeemed. Yes, what is more, we are experiencing the reality that »the Lord is at this day bringing redemption to completion« (TCR 115). One must consequently clearly distinguished between redemption and regeneration (redemption of the individual).

SWEDENBORG: »It is not to be believed that by redemption once wrought in the world, all men had been thereby redeemed, but that the Lord is perpetually redeeming those who believe in Him and who obey His words« (TCR 579).

LORBER: »However, redemption will be true and effective for man, as the means designated for this are most carefully and faithfully used ... « (GEJ V.204.10).

The redemption of the individual is »the regeneration of the spirit« (»Die Erlösung,« HiG III, p. 9).