

one of that class who sees the growing evils of luxury, and possibly overestimates the importance of the gilded youth to the country. It will do no harm, at any rate, to have the jeunesse doree preached to, however little they may heed.

XXXX

#### THE RELATION OF SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT TO SPIRITUAL REGENERATION.

Prepared for and read at a meeting of the New Church "Round Table," held in connection with the eighty-third annual convention of the Church of the New Jerusalem (Swedenborgian), at the Kenwood Parish church, Chicago, June 30, 1903. By Louis F. Post.

If individual regeneration consisted in selfishly trying to save one's own soul from eternal misery, social environment might be excluded from the field of religious concern. The individual problem of escaping some dreadful doom of the damned would be absorbing enough, perhaps, without confusing it with the complications of social laws and institutions. But personal salvation "by the skin of your teeth," is as far away as possible from any true idea of regeneration. In no sense whatever is regeneration analogous to a hair-breadth escape or a lucky rescue. It is a process of orderly growth.

This growth is, indeed, an individual matter. Everyone is confronted with an alternative which distinguishes his manhood from his animalhood—the alternative, namely, of spiritually living forever or spiritually dying forever; and it must be determined by each for himself. Nobody can choose for any of us. Parents cannot give us eternal life as distinguished from eternal death, nor can companions confer it upon us. Pastors cannot put us into that narrow path; church organizations cannot snatch us as brands from a burning; laws and institutions cannot lift us out of the slough of despond. No social environment can turn us away from the darkness that is death and toward the light that is life everlasting. Between the disorderly spiritual process of eternally dying, and the orderly spiritual process of eternally living, the choice must be individually made. It is in the strictest possible sense individual; and genuinely to make this individual choice in favor of spiritual living as against spiritual dying, is to enter upon that process of orderly spiritual growth which we call regeneration. Primarily, therefore, the human requisite for regeneration is alto-

gether a matter of individual volition.

But while it is true enough that the process of regeneration rests throughout upon individual volition, is it not questionable, at least, whether it is affected in its development by the impulses of the individual's life alone? May we not fairly ask whether this growth, like any other growth, may not be retarded, distorted or promoted by influences of an entirely different character from those which determine the individual choice? When we consider the philosophy of the greater man—the solidarity, that is, as well as the individuality, of men—which involves, both here and hereafter, an intimate interrelationship between each individual and the mass of individuals, how is it possible to escape the inference that the processes of individual regeneration are affected not only by the individual life but also by the social life? To me, it seems, at any rate, that the limitations of social environment are as truly matters of spiritual concern to the regenerating man as are his personal limitations of heredity and habit. In his spiritual pilgrimage, they confront him, not only as obstacles to be individually overcome, but also as evils to be socially put aside.

Social environment is to be understood, of course, as the body of laws and institutions that regulates the conduct of individuals as members of civil society. It cannot govern their motives; but it can and does in greater or less degree govern the conduct in which they embody their motives. The slave, for illustration, though he may have angelic motives (which constitute the human requisite for individual regeneration), is "cribbed, cabined and confined" by a devilish social environment that interferes with his developing angelic substance into its best angelic form. While it may be freely conceded that even the most oppressed of men, though their degradation be unspeakable, have all the angelic potentialities, how can we deny that it is impossible for them in this world to realize those potentialities in actual experience? They are like the death-bed repentant, who may be regenerate or may be self-deceived. They may be truly repentant, as was the crucified thief, or only badly scared, as—

When the devil was sick, the devil a monk would be;  
But when the devil got well, the devil a monk was he.

Choice of good instead of evil, if made in a social environment which prevents

or obstructs conduct in accordance with the choice, may be spurious.

When it is not spurious, the circumstances are nevertheless spiritually unwholesome. Freedom to exercise choice is normally necessary to growth in regenerative strength. Even if the individual whose choice is genuine does surmount all the abnormal difficulties of his social environment and go on living his spiritual life to its celestial heights, what about the spiritual life of those of us who tolerate, apologize for, and even foster a spiritually unwholesome social environment? Suppose the slave does manage to thrive spiritually in spite of his slavery, shall that count one in the regeneration of the proslavery citizen who conserves the institution of slavery in order to profit by it? Is any one blameless who helps to perpetuate unjust laws, even when the victims of the social injustice do succeed nevertheless in fully living regenerate lives? We should not think so if the question related to physical instead of spiritual unwholesomeness. Even if babies with strong constitutions did live through diphtheria, and grow lusty, we should none the less pass judgment of condemnation upon ourselves if we tolerated the communal propagation of diphtheretic germs. How, then, can we expect to escape our own judgment of condemnation when the germs are those of spiritual disease? How can we ourselves be fully in process of individual regeneration if we conserve social institutions and laws that place limitations upon the regenerative potentialities of even the humblest of our brethren? It is not enough that a slave, for example, grows in grace even unto completeness, in spite of the slavery which limits his conduct by the caprice or the greed of a master. Every responsible member of the community who would also grow in grace, must exert his influence in the community to remove the evil institution of slavery. How can any man be making the most of his individual regenerative experience if he does nothing to abolish unjust institutions? Is not that obligation as truly individual as the obligation to uproot his own evil habits?

Let us make no mistake. It is impossible for any influential member of the community—and every writer, speaker, thinker, or gossip, as well as every voter, is an influential member of his community—it is impossible for any such to escape spiritual responsibility for civic inaction where

institutional injustice exists. Above all things, let us beware of making in the forum of our conscience any such plea as that the greater the spiritual difficulties overcome, the greater the spiritual reward, and, therefore, that the regenerative slave, or other regenerative victim of institutional injustice, really has an advantage over those whose lives have been cast in a social environment less conducive to enforced cultivation of spiritual energy. There is a sense in which it may be true, even spiritually, that the harder the struggle the greater the prize. It may be true when the difficulties are unavoidable. But shall we, therefore, take credit for placing or keeping obstructive social environments in the way of the spiritual growth of our brethren? Would there not be something sadly absurd about that? Should we not be just a little like the riddle maker at the minstrels who described the stork as something that stands on one leg and looks like a bird; but added that it barks like a dog—not because storks do bark like dogs, for they don't, but so as to make the riddle harder to guess? It is not our function, let us bear in mind, to make the spiritual life of anyone harder to live. It is not our right to render doubtful the genuineness of the regenerative choice by making it difficult or impossible fully to embody it in conduct. It is our function, it is our spiritual duty, to adapt our social environment naturally to the nurture of every good motive that stirs the soul of man, and not to the blight of any. Let us never forget that he who offends the least of these little ones—who hurts even the smallest grain of good motive in the the humblest manger of the mind—that "it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."

The truth is, however, that all are injured spiritually by an unjust social environment. It checks individual freedom; and under divine order individual freedom is the only soil in which the regenerative process can take root and blossom. It fosters individual love of dominion; and under divine order love of dominion is death everlasting. All of us are poisoned with the miasma of institutional injustice—those who support or ignore it, in common with those whom it is intended to wrong. As the rich family on the broad and beautiful avenue suffers from physical diseases that originate in the pest-breeding slums

into which industrial maladjustments drive their brethren, so are the beneficiaries as well as the victims of all unjust social environment spiritually infected with the hellish effluvia it generates. Master and slave, lord and serf, the monopolists of God's earthly bounties and the disinherited multitude, the idle rich and the industrious poor, the ragged hobo who begs a little and is held in contempt, and the hobo in velvet and fine linen who extorts much and is honored accordingly—all are spiritually involved in the iniquity of social maladjustments.

With each victim individual regeneration is possible. That is true enough. But it is a regeneration that cannot in this world reach the maturity and strength that would be possible if social environments were orderly and social institutions just.

For this orderliness and this justice each individual is in some degree responsible, because, as we have already observed, each individual can to some extent exert an influence in determining the communal character of his community. Even the non-voter, however humble, may influence public opinion; the voter's responsibility is greater yet. Consequently individual regeneration implies more than the good motives and good conduct which relate only to private affairs. It also involves good motives and good conduct with reference to the life of the community as a whole.

Just a suggestion here with reference to the individual's primary obligation to his community. That the individual members of a community are its guardians may be inferred upon a moment's reflection. Considered physically, is not the individual man a conscious organism of unconscious cells, while his community is an unconscious organism of conscious cells? Does not each individual man then occupy the place of a moral guardian over two kinds of morally irresponsible wards? On the one hand he is the moral guardian of the morally irresponsible cells that constitute his individual body. His spiritual life governs the behavior of that organism with reference to moral standards. On the other hand, then, isn't he the moral guardian, in cooperation with the other individual men of his community, of the unconscious and morally irresponsible organism that constitutes the body of their social life? Do not their respective spiritual lives govern the behavior of this organism with reference to

moral standards? Then upon them individually must rest in varying degrees the responsibility for unjust communal institutions.

Don't misunderstand me. The social body has no soul. Like the cells of the individual body, it is without a soul, without thought, without opinions. We talk about the public opinion of a community; but this is only a figure of speech, referring to a consensus of the individual opinions of the individual men who compose the community. In a similar figure of speech we often refer to the conscience of the community, meaning thereby not that the community has a conscience, but that there is a sort of ascertainable equilibrium of individual consciences, somewhat less sensitive than the best and more sensitive than the worst. Likewise, to save circumlocution, the community may be said to have a soul. But this can mean nothing more, of course, than that a communal effect is produced upon the laws and institutions of a community by the spiritual behavior of the individual souls that compose it. Whether this figure of speech be approved or not, there can be no dispute that individual souls can regulate communities in a spiritual sense, if justice is a spiritual idea; for they do regulate them, for good or evil, with reference to matters of institutional justice and injustice.

They cannot do that, however, except as they direct their influence toward things of public as distinguished from those of private concern. Institutional wrongs might still persist though all other wrongs had been rejected by every individual. It is quite possible to be absolutely righteous in all private transactions, yet absolutely unrighteous, and with an amazing unconsciousness of it, with reference to public laws and institutions. To resort again to slavery for an illustration, the old slaveholder of our Southern States was no less righteous in his personal relationships than anybody else; yet slavery persisted in his community, not because he or his neighbors were personally unrighteous beyond all other men, but because the perpetuation of slavery was not regarded even by the righteous as being a matter of spiritual concern. But can that individual regeneration which does not stimulate a sense of duty in the individual of a slave community to influence his community by direct effort to abolish the slavery institution—can that re-

generation be complete? It certainly can never release regenerate slaves from their unspiritual habits or servility, nor regenerate masters from their unspiritual habits of dominion. So long as the institution exists, it will tend to confirm those habits and so to check the regenerative process in both master and slave. And it is certain that the institution will continue to exist, unless violently overthrown, until the regenerate recognize more comprehensive spiritual obligations than those of a purely personal character.

The same considerations apply also to all other unrighteous social institutions, as well as to slavery. I have used slavery only for illustration. What I am urging is that the individual regeneration which induces a righteous life with reference only to distinctively personal concerns, is incomplete. To be complete, it must broaden out. It must relate itself as well to social institutions as to personal obligations. Not only must it affect each one's personal standards of right and wrong; it must in addition affect his attitude and conduct toward the institutional moral standards of his community. Every regenerate soul is under a spiritual obligation to contribute to the development of a communal character, the ideal of which shall be justice. This is as much an obligation of the regenerate individual as are any of his obligations of private concern. Since men make their own social environment, it must be true that every man stands, as an individual soul, in a relation of duty toward that environment. No one can ignore the obligation which requires him to persuade the community as well as himself to cease to do evil and learn to do well.

One hopes that the Congregationalist clergyman of Chicago who has advised the Baptists, being pretty flush, to buy out the other churches and consolidate them, is not in earnest. Christianity is already beyond the reach of the very poor. If we were to go much higher, the government would be forced, in order to protect the consumer, to seize and operate the churches, and that would be socialism.—Life.

There are tricks in all trades. A young writer who will be a financier one of these days "fired," as he phrased it, article after article into the various magazines and newspapers for weeks without an acceptance. Confident of

his ability to turn out as good rot as any published, he finally adopted this plan and it worked to his aggrandizement: On the northwest corner of each article he wrote something like this: "Rejected by Harper & Brothers, McClure's, the Cosmopolitan and Outing. Respectfully submitted to your superior judgment." The ingenuity of the idea caught in some quarters and he disposed of enough matter to buy a cottage on the installment plan.—N. Y. Press.

Jackson—If you are so anxious to visit the Pacific coast, why don't you go?

Johnson—Why, I can't afford it.

Jackson—Why don't you travel free?

Johnson—Free?

Jackson—Yes, become a president.  
G. T. E.

When the President intimated that we had steered between the Scylla of plutocracy and the Charybdis of mob rule, he hadn't noticed how the paint is scraped on the Scylla side.—The Detroit News.

If, as they say, the giants of the commercial world are almost without exception dyspeptic, the question arises, Are little fish good for big fish, as a steady diet?—Puck.

A little bird sat on a telegraph wire,  
And said to his mates: "I declare,  
If wireless telegraphy comes into vogue,  
We'll all have to sit on the air."  
—London Fishing Gazette.

BOOKS

THE ART OF LIVING LONG.

When a man writes with his own hand at the age of ninety-five a treatise on temperate living, telling us that he finds himself healthy, strong, contented and happy, that his appetite is so good that he always eats with relish, that his sleep is sweet and peaceful, that his mind is clear, his judgment sound, his memory tenacious, his heart full of life, and his voice still strong and sonorous, and when we know that when he wrote thus he had seven years of happy old age ahead of him, surely we have to acknowledge that such a man has a right to speak on the subject of health and long life.

Louis Cornaro was born in Venice in the year 1464, and died at Padua in 1566, in the one hundred and third year of his age. Up to his fortieth year he was by no means strong, nor had he taken care of his health, so that between his thirty-fifth and fortieth years he expected an early death. Then he was led to begin and to persevere in a temperate mode of living, which restored his shattered health and carried him

cheerfully past his centennial. His rules were very simple, as the reader of his discourses will see.

Cornaro wrote four discourses on his favorite subject of *The Temperate Life—La Vita Sobria*—one at the age of eighty-three, one at eighty-six, one at ninety-one, and the last at ninety-five. "For three hundred years," says his recent biographer, "this treatise has been a classic in his native land. Translated into Latin, as also into many modern languages, it has been popular wherever studied. Slight as the book is, it has, and will continue to have, a permanent place in general literature; though we believe it may be questioned if many in this country, even among the most cultured readers, have had an opportunity of reading it."

This last remark is doubtless true, and for this reason Mr. Butler has done a good service in bringing out this very attractive and useful volume (*The Art of Living Long*, William F. Butler, Milwaukee, \$1). Besides the four discourses of Cornaro, the book contains an introductory essay by Addison, and selections from Lord Bacon and Sir William Temple. There are also appendices and notes and four well-executed portraits. The book gives evidence throughout of thorough and intelligent editing, and Mr. Butler deserves the thanks of the public for his timely and handsome production of these great classics of right living.

I cannot close this brief notice of the book without calling attention to the fact that Cornaro valued, and praised, and urged upon others, his method of frugal living, not only for the sake of living long, but for the sake of living well. He found that his way of life affected his mind and his temperament. "For," said he, "as sobriety keeps the humors of the body pure and mild, so, likewise, does it prevent fumes from arising from the stomach to the head; and the brain of him who lives in this manner is, as a result, constantly in a clear condition, permitting him to maintain entire the use of reason."

It may be that there is nothing startlingly new in Cornaro's treatise; but he writes with such sincerity and good-will that no one can read him without being influenced for good.

J. H. DILLARD.

BOOK RECEIVED.

—"The Failure of Jesus and His Triumph. Silhouettes touching the story of the unfolding of the Son of God in the Son of Man." By Frater Occidentalis. Red Wing, Minn.: The Argus Press. To be reviewed.

PERIODICALS.

There is a most delightful little satire on newspaper reports in the August Scribner. It comes in Mr. Jesse Lynch Williams's short story, "The Burglar and the Lady," which is worth reading for other reasons as well. Another feature of this attractive summer number is the poem "In Quiet Ways," and even better than the poem are the charming illustrations and the old-fashioned decorations which accompany it. Some will find interesting "The Skyscraper Problem," discussed by Montgomery