

A decorative border of blue birds, possibly swallows or similar birds, arranged in a rectangular frame around the text. The birds are facing right and are spaced evenly along the top, bottom, and sides of the page.

Comparing Freedom to Aspects of Nature

God has implanted freedom not only in people, but also in every beast, and an analogue of it even in things inanimate, enabling each to receive it according to its nature, as He also provides what is good for them all. That the objects themselves turn the good into evil, may be illustrated by comparisons.

The atmosphere gives to every person the ability to breathe, and in like manner to every beast tame or wild, also to every bird, the owl and dove alike. It also gives the ability to fly, and yet it is not the atmosphere that causes its gifts to be received by creatures of contrary genius and nature.

The ocean furnishes in itself an abode and also offers nourishment, to every fish, but the ocean does not cause one fish there to devour another....

The sun provides heat and light for all things; but objects, such as the various vegetable productions of the earth, receive these diversely, a good tree and a good shrub in one way, and the thorn and thistle in another; or a harmless herb in one way, and a poisonous herb in another.

The rain falls from the higher region of the atmosphere upon all parts of the earth; and the earth administers the waters therefrom to every shrub, herb, and grass, and each one of them takes to itself according to its need....

The like is true of people, in that the Lord flows into every person with spiritual heat, which in its essence is good of love, and with spiritual light, which in its essence is the truth of wisdom; but a person receives these according to whether he turns towards God or towards self.

(True Christian Religion 491)

Free nations in regard to the spiritual things of the church called theological, are like eagles which rise [soar] to whatever height they please; while nations that are not free are like swans in a river. Again, free nations are like the larger deer with lofty horns that roam the fields, groves, and forests at perfect liberty; while nations that are not free are like the deer kept in parks to please a prince.

(True Christian Religion 815)