

## LESSON 3: A SPECIAL LESSON ON THE “INCREDIBLE”

### TEACHER BACKGROUND

#### *Overview of Lesson*

Beauty is only skin deep. A person with an ugly face may in fact be a beautiful person. The Word is similar. Sometimes parts of it may seem strange, but when we are told the inner meaning in the Heavenly Doctrine, the stories make a lot of sense. The universe is full of amazing things. If we investigate them, we are led spiritually to see the infinite wisdom of God. Heaven is a place of wonders. Swedenborg felt that he had always known some of the spirits he met because he experienced the joy of their common loves upon meeting them.

#### *Theme*

“Select any particular object and examine it with some wisdom. Take a tree, or its seed, its fruit, its flower, or its leaf, gather up the wisdom that is in you, examine the object with a good microscope, and you will see wonderful things; while the interiors that you do not see are still more wonderful. Observe the order in its development, how the tree grows from seed even to new seed, and consider whether there is not at every successive step a continual endeavor to propagate itself further; for the final thing to which it aims is seed, in which its reproductive power exists anew. And if you are willing to think spiritually, which you can do if you wish, will you not now see wisdom here? Moreover, if you are willing to go far enough in spiritual thought, will you not see also that this power is not from the seed, nor from the sun of the world, which is pure fire, but is in the seed from God the Creator, whose wisdom is infinite” (*Divine Providence* 3).

#### *Underlying New Church Ideas for the Teacher*

The Heavenly Doctrine for the New Church contains incredible things.

Someone who has an ugly face in this world may have a beautiful one in the spiritual world (*Conjugal Love* 330).

In a similar way the Word contains some stories that may seem strange— but the Heavenly Doctrine for the New Church shows that inwardly they make a lot of sense.

Natural science presents us with many amazing and incredible things.

Even ordinary things— such as leaves— are amazing when examined closely.

When we examine things closely and think spiritually, we can see the Lord’s wisdom and power (*Divine Providence* 3).

There are also wonders in heaven. We meet people and feel we have always known them.

We find our way to our place in heaven— and everyone knows where their place is (*Divine Providence* 319).

## Teaching Ideas for *The Human Face*

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#### LESSON

##### *Introduction*

1. Show the students the accompanying pictures of Amie Osborn and Marilyn Monroe.
  - a. Ask if they can identify either of the people. (Marilyn Monroe was a famous actress who had a short life that was reportedly unhappy and filled with disorders. Amie Osborn is training to become a doctor. She was born with Treacher Collins, a genetically caused disfiguring syndrome. She is highly motivated to let others know the challenges of living with this disorder.)
  - b. Which of the two is more beautiful? (See what the students bring up, and then guide them to a discussion about what beauty really is.)
2. Show the students the accompanying picture by Lisa Buss of a person waking up in the spiritual world and becoming a form of what he loves.
  - a. Discuss the relationship between natural and spiritual beauty.

##### *Main Lesson*

Read or paraphrase *The Human Face* Lesson 3: A Special Lesson on the “Incredible” with the students.

*Discussion Ideas* (Because a range of topics is addressed in the lesson, you may wish to use the discussion ideas during the readings as the topics come up.)

- Can you think of a story in the Old or New Testament that seems hard to understand in the literal story?
- Why do you think the Lord included that story in His Word?
- What tools can we use to find out the spiritual meaning of the stories of the Word? (You may wish to briefly mention using the *Arcana Coelestia* for Genesis and Exodus, Searle’s *General Index to Swedenborg’s Scripture Quotations*, *NewSearch*, etc. A description of these resources is given later in the lesson.)
- How can we find the wisdom of the Lord in natural things? (We need to be willing to think spiritually.)
- What are some of the wonders of the spiritual world that Swedenborg was allowed to see?

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#### *Suggested Activities (select one)*

1. Gather enough leaves so that each student in the class can have one. (If none are seasonally available, you could raid your household plants.) Borrow a microscope that is easy to use. As a class, discuss the structure of the intact leaf. Examine the vein patterns, flexibility, and discuss the functions of leaves. (Oxygen producers, produce food for the plant, *etc.*) Examine the leaf under the microscope and discuss the structure that you can now see. Discuss what better equipment might show you. (You may wish to get a library book or biology text that shows the detailed cell structure of a leaf.)

Introduce the topic of scientific analysis.

- a. How can this method of inquiry serve our thinking?
  - b. Can we see spiritual concepts in the natural world through using this method of thinking?
  - c. What do we need to do to see the Lord’s wisdom in creation?
2. The wonders of nature can be demonstrated with amazing facts about bird or fish migrations. Attached are some amazing facts about bird migration from the internet:  
[http://whyfiles.org/006migration/fact\\_sheet.html](http://whyfiles.org/006migration/fact_sheet.html). Use these facts as a basis for discussing scientific analysis and spiritual thinking (see above.)
  3. Take a difficult story in the Old Testament. (A good example is Psalm 137:8,9, where there is a description of a baby being joyfully dashed against a stone.) Using Searle’s *Index* and *NewSearch*, look for a deeper meaning for this story. In general, this story has to do with rooting out evils that we find while they are still small and removing them from our lives. The inner meaning is quite different than the Old Testament story!

The *General Index to Swedenborg’s Scriptural Quotations* is a book by A.H.Searle (commonly referred to as “Searle’s *Index*”) which indicates passages that are directly mentioned from the Old and New Testaments in the Heavenly Doctrine for the New Church. In case you cannot get a copy of this book, the references to these passages that are given in Searle’s *Index* are included here:

Psalm 137:8 ; *Arcana Coelestia* 3024:5, 6729, *Apocalypse Revealed* 762.

Psalm 137:9; *Apocalypse Explained* 411:27

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*NewSearch* is a computer program that allows users to search the Heavenly Doctrine for specific passages by the title of the work and the passage number. It contains the complete texts of Swedenborg’s theological works. This program is included on a CD in the front pocket of *The Human Face Teacher Edition*. Use this tool for today’s lesson. Introducing your students to *NewSearch* will help them find tools that they may wish to use later. If you do not have computer access, you can introduce the students to the books of the Heavenly Doctrine to look up the passages.

#### *Closure*

- Look again at the pictures of the two women. In what does beauty lie?
- Discuss the need to look beyond the natural to what is *spiritual*. If we are able to do this, we will see the Lord in all things of creation and life.