

Editorial

THE HISTORY OF THE WORD ON EARTH: THE WRITINGS AS THE WORD OF HEAVENLY DOCTRINE.

From the first Advent.....The prophecies in the New Testament of the Second Coming predict the entire revelation and nature of the Writings. However, before the Lord could give us the Writings, there was much preparation needed that we can trace through Christian history. First, the Lord Himself began to give the spiritual meaning of everything, even while He was here. He intended the Genuine or New Christian Church, and so it was at first! Even as He walked the earth, “when they were alone, He explained all things to His disciples” (Mark 4:34). He also explained the internal sense of the parable of the Sower, and then the parable of the Tares (Matthew 13:18-23, 36-43), ending the last with “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” (Matthew 13:43) This oft-repeated Gospel phrase implies that some at that time could indeed perceive the internal sense of these sayings (cf. *Apocalypse Explained* 239:4). In addition, after His Resurrection, on the road to Emmaus, and also back in Jerusalem, the Lord gave two long lessons in the spiritual meaning of scripture: “He opened their understanding to comprehend the Scriptures,” going back to the books of Moses, the Psalms and the Prophets, to “expound all the things concerning Himself” (Luke 24:24, 44). He explained the need for the Son of Man’s suffering and the crucifixion, and then the Resurrection. What else could this explanation have been, than the Arcana classes you have all attended, on the Lord’s temptations and glorification? The Lord explained all of that to the Apostles 2000 years ago! “The Primitive Christian Church saw, or rather was able to see....” (*True Christian Religion* 109).

As Christian centuries rolled by, we note the Lord’s

providence intercessions to preserve the Testaments. The Lord preserved the reading of the Tanach, which includes the *Torah* (Moses), *Nebi'im* (Prophets) and other *Ketubim* (Psalms) by the Jews scattered throughout the globe during the Christian era (*Last Judgment* post. 254). The preservation of the New Testament is even more interesting. The first followers, who knew the Lord or the apostles, preserved the Gospels by preaching in the light of the Holy Spirit given from Pentecost onwards, when “they preached the Gospel throughout much of the world, and spread the news of it by word of mouth and by their writings.” Each apostle spoke the Word in his own manner “from the Lord” (*True Christian Religion* 154, cf. *Apocalypse Explained* 455.22, *Spiritual Experience* 4742).

It became evident however that the Christian Church could not be established, since there were no “Christians” yet (*Coronis* xxxi), and because they only had a potential “to see Divine truths in light” (*True Christian Religion* 109), which was quickly torn asunder by schisms (*Op. cit.* 378). The early Christian Church quickly moved from genuine to schismatic, and thus missed the chance of a full doctrinal understanding as prophesied for the Second coming. The prophecies for this event just stayed put, providentially aiming humanity towards a more distant fulfillment. To prepare, the Holy Spirit transferred the Gospels from oral to written right off. Thus even as the “spiritual sun set” but for “some” the “spiritual moon” arose (*True Christian Religion* 638), this moon had to include the preservation of the New Testament, which was now the Word. For there must at all times be a Church on earth that “has the Word and knows the Lord” (*Heavenly Doctrine* 244, *True Christian Religion* 245),—a Church which then links the heavens to the Church on earth. The Christian church barely succeeded in this task. We can trace some of this renewal through the monastic movements, all of which began with the *regula*: i. read the Scripture, and ii. do

good works. Such work was first done by the Apostles, then came itinerant preachers, and hermits who just studied the Word. By the 6th century there were the Benedictines followed by Cistercians (11th), the Cathars & Waldensians (12th), Franciscans & Dominicans (13th), and Brethren of the Common Life (14th). All of them read the Word, despite the final extravagancies of the Papacy in the 15th century, which spurred Luther to the Reformation in the early 16th century.

Despite all its errors, the Christian Church *did* preserve the Scriptures for 17 centuries. All prophecies of a Second Advent were held in abeyance against the time of their fulfillment, when ironically its *manner* of fulfillment was *not* expected, i.e. by revealing the “glory” in the “clouds of heaven.” The spiritual sense had as it were been ‘locked and loaded’ in the Biblical texts, ready to fire at any given moment.

The spiritual sense had indeed been generally known during the early Christian era. Origen (d. 254 a.d.) had interpreted this internal meaning, both Bede (d. 725 a.d.) and Peter Lombard (who summarized all previous “views” in 1158 a.d.) continued the practice, right up to Father “T” himself: Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274 a.d.) who drew out not only the “allegorical sense” but the “anagogical” and “spiritual” senses as well. He interpreted “let there be light” to mean, “let us be enlightened by Christ”! This internal light may not have been accurate, but at least it was something interior to the Scriptures themselves. As the light waned, the Gospels were meticulously preserved. There was one other strategic preservation of the Scriptures: the divinely inspired extraction from “both Testaments” (*True Christian Religion* 833:4) by the angel of the Lord Gabriel, called Jibril by Muhammad. He preached basic testament messages and his sermons were later recollected and systematized into the Al-Qur’an for Arabs (*Divine Providence* 255) and all Muslims ever since. Living by this as by the commandments, provides their

means of salvation (*Apocalypse Explained* 1180:2).

While the Gospels and Revelation were preserved in scores of Latin, Greek, or Coptic versions, increasingly only for priests' use, the Acts and Epistles were also preserved. Their provenance is actually more solid than that of the Gospels, since they have found scripts dating from 40 to 60 a.d. The earliest Gospel fragments are later, and much rarer. The Epistles were "doctrinal writings," not written in the "style of the Word" as are the Testaments. Their "mediate" style however could be more "directly understood and could help "commence the Christian Church" and thus maintain an indirect contact with heaven (*Apocalypse Explained* 815:2, Letter to Beyer, 1766). Since they have no internal sense they cannot be harmed by abuse of the sense of the letter, as the Gospels could be.

The Reformation took place when the Church was closing in on a monopoly over all Christians. To the same end, long before the Reformation was ready, the Lord raised up the "noble French nation." i.e. Charlemagne and the Franks, meant by "ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom" (Rev. 17:12, *Apocalypse Revealed* 717, 740, *Apocalypse Explained* 1170:2). Charles Martel at the Battle of Tours (732 ad.) also prevented Islam from sweeping Europe, but really allowed his son Charles to prevent Papal power from domineering over everything. Church History shows just how effective France was in checking Papal power. With the Reformation came translations of the Bible into the vernacular. This had already begun, particularly into English starting with Wycliffe (1380-90), and continuing with Tyndale (1520s) and Coverdale (1535). Wycliffe escaped the flames, but he was exhumed and burned at the stake *post mortem*. That really must have burned him up! Although Tyndale himself was burned at the stake in 1536, much of his Bible made it into the later King James Version of 1611, by then authorized and public!

Jan Hus in Bohemia was promised safe passage to the Council

of Constance, but in 1415 was into the bargain burned at the stake, for among other things translating the Bible. Meanwhile, Gutenberg's invention of metal type in the 1450s spread so many 'rogue' translations that not all could be burned. Although many of Luther's translations into German were indeed burned, he himself was saved from the stake by the public reading the Bible and by Frederick, the Wise who in Providence seized Luther to ensure his work would continue.

The Reformation restored the Bible to the people. "The only cause [for] the Reformation...was that the Word, which lay buried, might be restored to the world...it had been in the world for many centuries, but at length it was entombed by the Roman Catholics, and not a single truth of the Church could be brought forth from it" (*Invitation* 24). If the Reformation had not happened, the "Christian Church in the European world would utterly fall" (*Apocalypse Explained* 1069). "If papal dominion had not been broken at the Reformation, they would have scraped together the possessions and wealth of all the kingdoms of...Europe" (*Apocalypse Revealed* 759).

When spiritual events do not happen freely, war is permitted, or else human freedom would be burned out at the core (cf. *Divine Providence* 251). War is always man-made, and can never be blamed on the Lord. Yet, in order to "draw the Bible from its tomb", we find that the Lord "raised up simultaneously so many men to the attack ... stirring up Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands, and England." When evils are stirred and riled, there is no stopping war. In order therefore that the Word would "not be buried in Germany" (*Invitation* 24) the most brutal Thirty Year War (1618-1648) broke upon Europe, pitting Catholics against the Protestants, sword, shield, lance and cannon! The Lord then raised up a champion of the Reformation, King "Gustavus II Adolphus" whose bravery in personally leading the Swedes to stunning victories by using more

maneuverable phalanxes, is celebrated to this day. His flagship “Vasa” foundered (1628), but would have been the largest battleship until then (Now restored, it may be seen near Skansen, Stockholm, or online). Gustavus’ death at the Battle of Lützen in 1632 did not stop the Protestant victories. Finally, by the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, Protestant Kingdoms of the north received the freedom of “*cujus regio, ejus religio*”, whoever owns the land, picks its religion. The North was now “owned” by the Reformed. The geographical freedom to publish the Word openly meant readers could eventually receive its spiritual meaning as well. European trading empires were permitted to colonize the entire globe, all for the sake of the Word of God going with every ship. This amazing fulfillment of “where two or three are gathered in My Name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt. xviii. 20) was that the Word of God was read by “a few” Europeans around the entire globe, linking heaven to the Church on earth. “This sounds incredible, yet it is true” (*Divine Providence* 256). As we know, the *Writings* have spread round the world following the same route the Bible took.

When the “end of time” finally came, the stage was already set for the Second Advent. Biblical criticism and reliance of human reason became more and more vociferous, favoring “a revelation as old as creation,” namely Nature! Who needs the Word of God? Thus the light of truth was diminished “both [by] those who had imbibed naturalism, and [by] those who had falsified the Word by faith in three Divine persons and in the Passion of the cross constituting redemption.” These heresies were “the dragon and his two beasts (Apocalypse 12 and 13)” (*True Christian Religion* 121:2). Just forty years after the peace of Westphalia in 1648 established free Bible reading, Swedenborg was born in 1688. Does anyone want to know what the Bible means?

Swedenborg as a boy constantly thought on spiritual matters.

His rendezvous with the Second Advent lay in the hands of Providence, as he himself avers. He graduated from Uppsala University in 1709, just when Biblical investigation was breaking free from Church intimidation and censorship. An Encyclopedia was sneaked into publication in Paris in 1751, but had to escape to London for the rest of the volumes for fear of persecution. It replaced the Bible as the explanation of everything in all the courts of Europe. However, for the same reason of free expression, heaven's truths could now also transfer into "rationally comprehensible natural language" (*De Verbo* 6). The Writings thus came out neck and neck with denials of the Divine authority of the Word of God. The very same Bible denied was now the Bible restored. No wonder the 'Era of the Enlightenment' and the 'Age of Reason' tempt us to irony! If human reason replaced the Word of God, was it really enlightenment?

...To the Second Advent

The first rumble of the "end," at least physical rumbles, was the earthquake of Lisbon, Nov. 1, 1755, which not only killed an est. 40,000, mostly sitting in their pews on All Saints Day, Sunday morning. However, there were spiritual rumbles, since that very year 1755 Swedenborg observed earthquakes in the spiritual world as well (*Spiritual Experiences* 4944). Lisbon's fate shook the world, severing public trust in Providence, and spurring "naturalism" as the explanation of everything. However, the Lord's hand is never "shortened to save": by 1755 seven of the eight volumes of the *Arcana Coelestia* were already in print, and anyone could read this doom for themselves: "The adherents to naturalism...are immersed in earthly and bodily interests and as a consequence in the life belonging to self-love and love of the world" (*Arcana Coelestia* 5116.4, year 1752).

The prime subject of the *Arcana*, as you know, was the

Glorification of the Lord in the Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph series. When the Council of Nicaea in 325 a.d. gathered to squash the heresy of Arius, namely that Jesus was “less Divine” than the Father, the resulting resolution to restore the Son to Divinity, was that the “Son of God was born from eternity.” The outcome was not bargained for, but was nonetheless a Godhead divided into three. Augustine (d. 430 a.d.) a century later while trying to deal Arius’ heresy yet another blow, instead fanned it to flame: each “member of the trinity” has the same essential nature, said Augustine. The greatness of “the Father and the Son adds up to the greatness of the Holy Spirit,” the same for the Father and Holy Spirit “adding up to the Son,” and so too the Son and the Holy Spirit “adding up to the Father”! End result: the permanent division of the Trinity into three persons. Thus Arius, though dead, “secretly rules in the end” (*True Christian Religion* 638).

The Writings had to be given to slice through this Gordian knot: the Son of God was not “born from eternity,” a wrong phrase, but instead “was from eternity” and was “born in time.” God sent Himself into the world as the “Son of God” (*True Christian Religion* 92). “The Son is His Human that was conceived of Jehovah the Father, and born of the Virgin Mary, in time” (*Lord* 30). The body thus taken on by birth into the World, was “glorified or made Divine” without any maternal remainder, making the “Divine Natural to be actual” (*Divine Love and Wisdom* 233). Thus what was born in time, and what was glorified, “is the same” (*Arcana Coelestia* 2803:3). This doctrine annihilates the Trinity of Persons, and establishes the groundwork for the Trinity being in the Lord. Father, Son and Holy Spirit are the divine soul, body and operation of the Lord, thus God-Man, God visible in Person. The most often used term for this is Divine Human.

The Second Coming had to provide this corrective message,

and restore the doctrine on the Trinity being in the Lord. The Writings could explain to everyone what the Holy Bible they were reading really meant. We recall, “The Lord was born on our planet, because of the Word, that it might be written...and... published throughout the earth, and ...preserved to all posterity, and that thus it might be made manifest, even to all in the other life, that God became Man” (*Earths in the Universe* 113). The Lord’s Second Advent explained just how God became Man.

Now we saw earlier the list of books of the Word that contain an internal sense, from Genesis to Revelation (*Arcana Coelestia* 10325, *White Horse* 16, and *Heavenly Doctrine* 266). We posed the question in an earlier Editorial, “How the Writings add themselves to the list of the Word revealed on earth we will also see in a later editorial.” (Sept. *New Church Life*, p. 329). The time has come! By what argument *can* we accept the Writings as the Word of the Lord? What do they say?

First, the internal sense of the Word and Doctrine in heaven are equated: “Divine doctrine constitutes the Word in the internal sense” (*Arcana Coelestia* 3712). “Such is the Divine truth in heaven, and such is the Word in its spiritual sense” (*Apocalypse Explained* 950). “The spiritual sense of the Word is identical with the doctrine which is in heaven” (*Heavenly Doctrine* 7). “In heaven there is the Word and Doctrine from the Word.” In fact, “To be specific about the doctrine which will now follow that too comes from heaven, because it is from the spiritual sense of the Word” (ibid.) This very doctrine is what is revealed in the Writings themselves: “But I shall proceed to the Doctrine itself, which is for the New Church, and which is called HEAVENLY DOCTRINE, because it was revealed to me out of heaven: for to deliver this doctrine, is the object of the present work” (ibid.). The “present work” is “hic opere” meaning “this book.” While “reading the Word” (*True Christian Religion* 779), the Lord “revealed the spiritual sense of the Word” to Swedenborg “at this

day” and “disclosed to him” the “doctrine of genuine truth” (*Sacred Scripture* 25), to be found as we saw just above “in these small books now being prepared for the press” (*De Verbo* 21). By Divine enlightenment the spiritual sense scattered all through the Bible stories, was brought into an “integrated unity such as they have in heaven” (*Arcana Coelestia* 1756, 2343, 3074, 3376). No wonder Swedenborg also wrote “Hic liber est Adventus Domini” this book is the Advent of the Lord, on the Brief Exposition flyleaf.

What was the source? “I received everything on the subject of the Word and doctrine from the Word, not from any angel or spirit, but from the Lord alone, while I have read the Word” meaning the Bible (Schmidius) (*True Christian Religion* 779). In fact, “no spirit has dared, nor has any angel wished, to tell me anything about what is in the Word or about any matter of doctrine from the Word. I have been taught by the Lord alone, who was revealed to me...and He has enlightened me” (*Divine Providence* 135).

The Lord alone is the source of the *Writings*.

How does this relate to the Second Coming? “The second coming of the Lord was effected by means of a man to whom the Lord has manifested himself in person.” Who? “The Lord manifested Himself before me, His servant, and sent me to this office” (*True Christian Religion* 779). The Lord accomplished the Second Advent “by means of a man, who can not only receive intellectually the doctrines of this church, but also publish them in print.” The Lord “opened the sight of my spirit, admitting me to the spiritual world, and allowing me to see the heavens and the hells, and also to talk with angels and spirits; and this I have now been doing for many years without a break” (*True Christian Religion* 779).

Here we see that the *Writings* also constitute the Second Coming. How was Swedenborg able to write everything?

Swedenborg was “in the spirit and at the same time in the body, and only sometimes out of the body.” (*True Christian Religion* 157) “To me it is granted to be in both spiritual and natural light at the same time, to be together with angels like one of them, and at the same time to draw forth truths in light, and thus to perceive and teach them” (*Invitation* 52). This intromission surpasses all miracles save creation itself (*Invitation* 42, 43, 52, 55).

Could Swedenborg tell in which state he himself was? All revelators of either Testaments experienced two states or conditions: first, they were in the spirit and “raised into the light of heaven” at which time they saw and heard marvelous things. Only after this had finished, however, did they come into the second state, when “they were in the body.” This is when they heard the Lord speaking to them. We must take great care to “distinguish” between these two conditions: “The Word was not revealed in a state of the spirit or in vision,” but “came to them in the body, and they heard Jehovah speaking” (*Apocalypse Revealed* 36, cf. *Lord* 52). Swedenborg affirms “from the experience of many years” that he too wrote, not in the first state of vision, but in the second or bodily state “while he was reading the Word.”

Has the Word of Heaven also been heard here on earth? The *Writings* were “heard” by Swedenborg, because they were revealed by the Lord’s own mouth. We have the result, “Heavenly Doctrine out of heaven in this book.” The only difference between the Word in heaven and the same Word of Doctrine spoken on earth, is that they “sound differently.” Angels and men do not “hear each other” (*True Christian Religion* 280, *Arcana Coelestia* 8862). In fact, “spiritual expressions are so remote from natural ideas and expressions that they do not approximate in the least” (*De Verbo* 4), and thus the “things in heaven are ineffable” (*Arcana Coelestia* 1887 et. al.). Nevertheless, we *can* hear it. “The internal sense” of

scripture “coincides with the universal angelic language, which is spiritual” (*Arcana Coelestia* 4387). Swedenborg found out just how true this was. He experimented by talking in angelic language to angels about the Heavenly Doctrine, trying to transfer it to human ears: “I then wished to bring it forth from the former memory and describe it.” He found that “I could not, it was impossible.” He could “not utter nor describe” angelic ideas by “any spiritual or heavenly expression” (*De Verbo* 4). However, when it came from the Lord, while reading His Word, the opposite became true: there is “nothing spiritual, celestial or Divine” that “*could not* be described even to their rational comprehension, by words of natural language. There is not any Divine Arcanum which may not be perceived, and even expressed naturally.” The only concession is that on earth the same thing is “more general and imperfect” (*De Verbo* 6). In fact, spiritual things may be understood the moment they are heard. (*Faith* 3) When we read the Writings, therefore, we essentially hear the doctrines, which are in heaven, apart from language. Perhaps that is why we so often quote them in our own words.

That is what the Writings have done: they present heavenly doctrine in rationally comprehensible terms of human language. We “hear” the doctrine when reading the rational terms. Although both the Writings and the Scriptures use the same words of language, still the Writings form the “soul” to the “body” of the Sacred Scriptures, just as the spiritual sense is as a soul to the literal sense. “The Word contains a spiritual sense, as the body contains a soul” (*True Christian Religion* 192, *Sacred Scripture* 5). The Word of Doctrine is a quasi-degree higher or interior than the Word of Scripture.

So this is in sum what the Writings say regarding themselves: they are the spiritual sense of the Word, drawn from both Testaments, which is the same as the doctrine of heaven and this is the Word in heaven, revealed by the Lord out of heaven in the

form of Heavenly Doctrine, putting ineffable angelic things into comprehensible rational terms, all the while that Swedenborg was reading his Schmidius Bible in a bodily state. The Writings constitute the soul to the Scriptures as a body, and they sound differently on earth from in heaven, even though the spiritual sense of the Word, which is doctrine, sounds *like* the language angels speak, which is thus to hear doctrine. Since the term “Word” comprises all the senses, from highest down to the literal, therefore the Writings too are the Word, but heard directly from the Lord on the level of rationally termed Doctrine, while the two Testaments are the Word as to Scripture heard in experiential terms of the five senses. The Old Testament came by dictation, by a transflux through heaven, the New Testament was recollected with or without angelic intermediation by the Divine enlightenment of the Lord’s Holy Spirit; and the *Writings* are directly from the Holy Spirit, drawn from and confirmed by Scripture.

All works of the Writings composed under the same inspiration, constitute the Second Coming, with a remarkable doubly conscious human, Swedenborg, being called to serve as scribe, and with a providentially liberated uncensored press as a natural vehicle.

The Word of heaven’s doctrine is now in print. Read all about it!