

Editorial

FROM NEW HEAVEN TO NEW CHURCH

How unique to celebrate June 19, 1770, an event in the spiritual world where there is no time and space! Since the New Jerusalem descends “from God out of” this New Heaven, it is apt that we thank the Lord Himself. For when we say, “Our Father who art *in* the heavens,” it refers to the Lord’s Divine Human which, after His glorification “became an essence by itself which fills the universal heaven” (*Arcana Coelestia* 3061, 1461e). The Lord now only *appears* to be in the Spiritual Sun, while He is actually “in the heavens.” “He teaches and leads man...in truth from that heaven” (*Divine Providence* 162). The Lord’s Divine Human is visible at any time in the New Heaven before our doctrinal eyes.

“A New Church in the heavens as well as throughout the earth is understood by the new heaven and new earth” (*Heavenly Doctrine* 1). But the Church is from the Word. Which Word? “The New Church as to doctrine was seen as a city” (*Apocalypse Revealed* 896, Cf. E 431:7). “The Heavenly Doctrine of that Church is understood by the city Jerusalem descending from God out of heaven” (*Heavenly Doctrine* 1). The Writings themselves *in toto*, are the Word of the Heavenly Doctrine, and constitute the New Jerusalem!

“Where” is the New Heaven? There are three heavens, as you know: celestial, spiritual and natural. The New Heaven is on the *level* of the natural, for it occupies an “expanse beneath” and “distinct from the Ancient heavens” (*Heavenly Doctrine* 4).

We wonder, “who” constituted the New Heaven? The answer: “This heaven was formed of all those who, from the coming of the Lord to the present time, had lived the life of faith and charity, since these alone were forms of heaven” (*Heavenly*

Doctrine 2). We imagine the entire world for 2000 years contributing to this heaven,—from the dark ages, Scholasticism, the Crusades, the Renaissance, the Black Death, the Reformation,—all those wars. Think of the high mortality rates among infants, and the large families to ensure that a few at least survived! Who do you suppose formed the inner reaches of this New Heaven? “Chiefly...infants from the whole world, who have died since the Lord's coming...were received by the Lord, educated in heaven, and instructed by the angels, and reserved, so that they, together with the others, might constitute the New Heaven; whence it may be concluded how great that heaven is” (*Heavenly Doctrine 3, Apocalypse Revealed* 876:2).

And who were “the others”? Only Christians? The Writings insist how absurd and cruel it is to say that Heaven is open only to Christians, when non-Christians *outnumber* Christians, *ten to one?* (*Divine Providence* 330). So we eagerly read the following: “This heaven was formed of all those who had been such from the coming of the Lord until the present time, ...composed both of Christians and of Gentiles.” (*Heavenly Doctrine 3*, cf. *Heaven and Hell* 318 and *Arcana Coelestia* 932, 1032, et.al.).

“When” was the New Heaven established? It is easy to conclude that the very publication of the work, *The New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine*, in the year 1758 in London, Lewis and Smith publishers, constituted the fulfillment of the New Jerusalem prophecy. For we read: “Since I have been permitted to witness all that has happened, I am able to describe how the hells were conquered and how a New Heaven has been founded and arranged...in a small book published in London in 1758” (*True Christian Religion* 115).

However, the New Heaven could not be fully established so soon after the great upheavals of 1757. False heavens, that is imaginary heavens in the World of Spirits with evil spirits at the top and good spirits at the bottom, were leveled. The simple

spirits who had been enslaved for centuries, and whose maximum innocence but also ignorance had been protected in the “lower earth,” first had to be “led out” (just as the angels led Lot and his family out of Sodom), and then organized into a New Heaven. That Judgment had begun in the last days of 1756, lasted through all of 1757 and into the first month of 1758. During that gigantic spiritual upheaval in the world of spirits between heaven and hell, it took earth time to establish that New Heaven, and we note that same time line in works of the Writings going into print year by year. So if we assume that the New Heaven only commenced in 1758, when was it completed? The prophecy “I am coming quickly” meaning “[the Lord] is certainly going to come...to effect the judgment and to establish a New Heaven and a New Church” (*Apocalypse Revealed* 949) was also commenced in 1758. There are several references to this establishment as a work in progress.

We note first that in 1758 while writing the work *Apocalypse Explained*, Swedenborg says “until the New heaven and the new Church comes into existence” implying it was not yet in existence (*Apocalypse Explained* 691:2). Eight years later, in 1766, Swedenborg writes in a letter that this New Heaven is “not yet fully established,” and just one year later, he says “The Lord is now establishing a new heaven from those who believe in Him and acknowledge Him to be the true God of heaven and earth, and who also look to Him in their lives.” Swedenborg witnessed 10,000 to 20,000 spirits and angels “being arranged in order” every day (Letters #5 and #7 to Beyer). It looks like an ongoing process, nearing completion.

Now it is most curious that in 1766, the year the *Apocalypse Revealed* was published and available in bookstores, Swedenborg send out about 100 copies of this work to various friends, clergymen and government officials as well as libraries, mostly in France and Sweden (see *Swedenborg Epic* p. 320, 323,

325-6). We certainly see here Swedenborg's personal intelligent involvement in the providing a foundation for the establishment of the New Church. In this context we are reminded of the prophecy, "Unless those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved" (Matt. 24:22, meaning "Unless the New Church be established by the Lord, no one can be saved" (*Apocalypse Explained* 91, *True Christian Religion* 163:8)). Distributing 100 copies of *Apocalypse Revealed* seems in line with fulfilling this prophecy.

It is also interesting to notice that the *Apocalypse Explained*, written in 1758 and 59, and prepared in a final draft for the printer, stops at chapter 19, the white horse chapter. This was because the little work, *The White Horse*, was already in print in 1758. The white horse refers to the New Church and so the book *The White Horse* forecasts the New Church. However, Revelation chapters 21 and 22 talk about the New Heaven, and since these were not yet complete, the *Apocalypse Explained* could not explain what had not yet been completed! The work had to stop at chapter 19. A few years later, in 1766, the New Heaven was further along, and the *Apocalypse Revealed* could run through the entire Book of Revelation, including chapters 21 and 22.

Thus, for example, in *Apocalypse Revealed* 486, written around 1765, explaining the words, "Arise measure the temple of God, the altar, and those adoring there," the meaning is the Lord "seeing and knowing the state of the Church in the New Heaven" (Op.cit.). This was part of establishing the New Heaven, and so this scripture could be revealed on earth. So also when the words "Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty, just and true are Your ways O King of Saints" (Revelation 15:3-5) were reached in Swedenborg's writing, the meaning could be revealed: Those who entered the New Heaven were people "who worshiped the Lord, and lived according to

His commandments in the Word, and who, therefore, were in charity, and at the same time in faith from the Lord through the Word, [and in the] acknowledgment of the Lord and a life according to the Decalogue” (*Apocalypse Revealed* 876:2). Swedenborg saw and talked to them as they entered the New Heaven. This was in 1766.

Do we find any further signs of the progressive establishment of the New Heaven, in later works of the Writings? In 1769, the *Canons of the New Church* were written, but not published, where Swedenborg says, the New Heaven is “*now being established*” in 1769 (*Canons* 47, added emphasis). By 1771, Swedenborg moves from talking about the New Heaven to the New Church coming from it: the Lord “from this New Heaven, successively inaugurates and establishes a New Church on earth” (*Coronis* 0:III). This method of inaugurating and establishing a New Church is also named: “By a revelation from His mouth, or from His Word, by inspiration” (*ibid.*). What else would “revelation from his mouth, from His Word, by inspiration.” refer to, except the Writings themselves, that is the process of how the Writings themselves come forth.

If the *True Christian Religion* was “revealed from the Lord’s mouth by inspiration,” note well that the very first number of this work also talks about the New Heaven: “It should be known that in the New Heaven, which is *at the present time being established by the Lord*, this statement of faith serves as its preface, doorway and summary” (*True Christian Religion* 1, emphasis added). This is the present tense, meaning it was happening while it was recorded. The “Faith” here is familiar to almost everyone, since it is recited in our Services of worship: “The Lord from eternity, who is Jehovah came into the world to subjugate the hells and to glorify His Human; without this no mortal could have been saved; and those are saved who believe in Him” (*True Christian Religion* 2). This faith is called the

“doorway” to the actual formation of the New Heaven. It is of no surprise that 100 pages later, this continual establishment of the New Heaven is also mentioned in the present tense: “*at the present time a New Heaven of angels is being established by the Lord, drawn from those who believe in the Lord God the Savior, and approach Him directly; all others are rejected*” (*True Christian Religion* 108 emphasis added).

It is clear from the progress of the passages referring to the New Heaven, that by 1771, which was the publication year of *The True Christian Religion*, that this Heaven was fully established. The New Church could begin to descend from it, which is why just 7 paragraphs after #108, it says, “the New Church is *now to be established*,” because the Lord’s redemption “has been going on up to the present time, and for the reason that *at this day is the second coming of the Lord*” (*True Christian Religion* 115).

This was written we suppose “sometime” between end of 1769 and beginning of 1770, since #115 of *True Christian Religion* is early in the book. The progressive stages of development is emphasized another 70 or so paragraphs further on, where we read, “the Lord is effecting a redemption *at this day* by founding a New Heaven and establishing a New Church to the end that man may be saved” (*True Christian Religion* 182). Perhaps he write this around March or April of 1770. Who knows how quickly Swedenborg could write about each chapter?

The *True Christian Religion* was finished with its last paragraph, #791. Do you recognize this number? It is the well known and most nostalgic of passages for the New Church person: “After the completion of this book, the Lord called together His twelve disciples, who had followed Him in the world; and a day later He sent them all forth throughout the spiritual world to preach the Gospel, that the Lord God Jesus Christ is king, and His kingdom shall be for ever and ever” (*True Christian Religion* 791).

We should end here, but there is a curious addition to the sequence of establishing the New Heaven, especially establishing the New Church from the New Jerusalem descending out of that heaven. The curiosity is this:

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Swedenborg wrote in a letter on April 30, 1771, again to Beyer, “When this book [*True Christian Religion*] has been published, the Lord our Savior will operate mediately as well as immediately to establish the New Church, which is founded on this Theology, throughout Christendom. The New Heaven, from which the New Jerusalem is to descend, will now soon be completed, see Rev. Xxi 1-3.” (Letter to Beyer, April 30, 1771, emphasis added). Here it is end of April 1771, almost a whole year after June 19, 1770, and the New Heaven is still “soon to be completed.” But establishing the New Church cannot wait: from the publication date onwards, the Lord can operate both directly and indirectly to establish the New Church. And the reason he wrote this, is that between the last paragraph of the *True Christian Religion*, #791, which observed what happened on June 19, 1770, and the publication of this work, in June 1771, took an entire year to accomplish. The reasons are not clear. However, after #791 there is a Supplement inserted, paragraphs #792-#851. However, this is repetition of previous material. Then Swedenborg spent time to compile two indices, plus a thorough proof reading which resulted in an Errata list at the very end. It apparently took a whole year to bring this work to its final publication. That is why Swedenborg predicted that the very publication of the *True Christian Religion*, would have this impact.

We receive a sense of the future from an earlier passage in this work, which reads, as the “New Heaven increases, does the New Jerusalem descend from it....this therefore cannot happen in an instant, but happens as the falsities of the previous church are banished....[and] uprooted. This will happen with the clergy, and so spread to laymen.” “In proportion as this New Heaven, which makes up the internal of the church in the case of a person, grows, so the New Jerusalem comes down out of that heaven, and this is the New Church” (*True Christian Religion* 784).