

## *Editorials*

### **The History of the Word on Earth: The New Testament.**

Let us recall that the Word is given on earth several times: “The Word has existed in all times, but not the Word [of] this day. There had been another Word in the Most Ancient Church before the flood, another Word in the Ancient Church after the flood; then the Word written by Moses and the prophets in the Jewish Church; and lastly the Word written by the Evangelists” (*Arcana Coelestia* 2895) i.e. the New Testament. This last started when the Lord made His advent, for He Himself was the Word made flesh (John 1:1, 16). Thus, He was already omniscient, knowing “all truth previous to learning” (*Arcana Coelestia* 1469). Nonetheless, the Lord “introduced Himself by successive steps” into Divine Order, because the Divine Love in Him consisted of a “desire to save the whole human race” (*Arcana Coelestia* 2500). Moved by that love, but “from His own power,” He introduced himself into a “super-eminence of all wisdom and intelligence” (*ibid.*). All of this happened “gradually.” Although the Lord was born and grew up as any other child (*ibid.*), yet He grew “more quickly than other boys” (*True Christian Religion* 89).

Now, the entire Old Testament prophesies every detail of His actual life and work on earth, “such as it was to be in the world, even as to perceptions and thoughts, for these were foreseen and provided because from the Divine” (*Arcana Coelestia* 2523). Consequently, the Lord from infancy willed to “imbue” or “instruct Himself with no other knowledge’s than those of the Word, which was open to Him—from Jehovah Himself, His Father.” It was an urgent undertaking for Him, because “nothing is said in the Word that does not in its inmost have regard to Him, and that has not first come from Him” (*Arcana Coelestia* 1461). Not only was the whole of the Lord’s life “such as it was going to be” already written, but in addition everything He read had to do with Himself, and had indeed first come from Himself!

He saw Himself as both the subject and source of the text. Here then was the Lord as a boy, from “His infancy onwards” acquiring the factual knowledge of the Hebrew texts, the Divine meaning of which He already knew within Himself. This learning He accomplished by “revelations from Himself—and speaking with Jehovah as with Himself” (*Arcana Coelestia* 1999), thus by a “continual communication and internal conversation with Jehovah” His own soul (*Arcana Coelestia* 1791). “The Lord from His own power conjoined His external man with His internal and filled His cognitions with celestial things...according to Divine order and finally in the celestial things [stemming from His] infancy—As the Lord implanted cognitions in celestial things, so He had perception” (*Arcana Coelestia* 1616:5).

By instructing and leading Himself in this way, He came into such a power “when He was [still] a boy” that “by it He conquered and subjugated the most direful hells” (*Arcana Coelestia* 1401, 1434). These were the “giants” or Nephilim in Genesis 6 who claimed God existed only in themselves (*Arcana Coelestia* 1268). The Lord who alone did have God in Himself, could as a boy conquer them, without which it would have been “all over” with man, and “none could be saved” (*Arcana Coelestia* 582, 1266, 7686).

The Lord made Himself outwardly the Word, which He already was inwardly from eternity by fulfilling the Old Testament prophecies: “The Word was made flesh, and we beheld His glory.” That is why the Gospels so often say, “that it might be fulfilled.” As a result, however, “people treated Him as they had treated the Word, which they did because He was the Word” (*Lord* 15). Those who had already crucified the Word now treated the Lord the same way! The process reached its culmination when “the Lord said I thirst, that it might be fulfilled—He received the vinegar, [and] He said, It is finished” (John 19:28, 30). Here the New Testament Scripture “it is finished” means the Lord’s completion of fulfilling the Old Testament Scripture (cf. *Lord* 11, *True Christian Religion* 262). That is what the Lord accomplished on earth: fulfilling the Old

Testament.

However, while He was doing this, He Himself also taught, His teachings becoming the New Testament for the coming Christian Church: “The reason why it is said that ‘the Holy Spirit was not yet, because Jesus was not yet glorified,’ is that while the Lord was in the world He Himself taught Divine truth” (*Arcana Coelestia* 9818). The duration of the Lord’s life on earth lasted anywhere from the year 6 b.c. to 36 a.d. Pilate’s tenure as Prefect was from 26 to 36 a.d. During this era, and prior to the eventual composition of the Gospels from about 66 to 90 a.d., the risen Lord Himself spoke, but this was not yet the Holy Spirit! The Holy Spirit was “not yet” for “Jesus was not yet glorified” (John 7:39). Thus “much” of the Gospels were “from His own mouth” (*Sacred Scripture* 2), for it “was from the Divine itself [and] all the particular things that He said were representatives and significatives of Divine things, and so of the heavenly things of His kingdom and Church” (*Arcana Coelestia* 2900).

The Gospels are therefore “from the Lord’s own mouth,” and “the rest” of them came from “the spirit of His mouth, which is the Holy Spirit” (*Sacred Scripture* 2). The arrangement of the four historical narratives was by His Holy Spirit. However, there was a time prior to the composition of New Testament, and that was while the Lord Himself was speaking on earth. Thus the “new covenant” (*True Christian Religion* 730) was at first an oral tradition, kept in followers’ memories. Writing it as a text did not occur until “after the resurrection, by the Holy Spirit either apart from or by means of angels and spirits” (*Arcana Coelestia* 9818). The words from the Lord’s own mouth were then recollected by “the spirit of His mouth,” inspiring the Evangelists to “Bring to your remembrance” and “Recollect everything I said to you” (John 14.26, 16.4) in order to actually write the Gospels. The earliest fragment of such writing is the Egerton fragment, from ca. 90 a.d., and the Codex Sinaiticus containing the earliest complete four Gospels as we have them now, dates from 350 a.d.! Before that, there was the Muratorian Canon version, ca. 200 a.d.

What was the very first “event” of writing the Gospels? We know that the Lord Himself never “wrote” anything. Or did He? Yes, when they brought the woman caught in adultery, we read,

“Jesus stooped and wrote in the ground” (John 8:2-11). About this event, we read “The Lord's writing twice in the earth in the temple signified their condemnation for adulteries in the spiritual sense; for the Scribes and Pharisees were those who adulterated the goods and falsified the truths of the Word, thus of the church” (*Apocalypse Explained* 222:7). It is interesting to think that the Lord Himself wrote a condemnation long before the writing of the Gospels. Is that a similar sequence to the Ten Commandment first being written with “the finger of God,” being the “first of the Word, being promulgated from Mount Sinai before the Word was written by Moses and the Prophets” (*Apocalypse Explained* 939)? Did the Lord Himself on earth also stoop down twice to write words of condemnation before the writing of the texts of the New Testament? In both Testaments, the Lord's own “finger of God” performed the very first act of writing.

Can we therefore put the writing of the New Testament into a similar sequence as we did with the Old? 1. The Lord at His Advent already knew the Word, but studied it in order to fulfill all scriptures of the Old Testament. 2. During His ministry, He Himself spoke Divine truth starting an oral tradition. 3. He stooped and wrote in the ground, twice. 4. After the resurrection, He as the Comforter or Holy Spirit enlightened His followers to repeat the words He had spoken “from His own mouth,” as on the road to Emmaus. 5. The authors of the Epistles wrote from enlightenment to express main doctrines in plain language. (N.B. the “epistles of Paul, which have not an internal sense,” were permitted to become central for the Christian Church, “lest,” we read, “the Church should work evil to the Word of the Lord, in which there is an internal sense” *Spiritual Experiences* 4824. The Epistles became a “decoy”). 6. The Lord as the Holy Spirit or “spirit of His mouth” inspired the recollection of His own words, and the collation of all Gospel materials. 7. He used the society “Gabriel” to inspire the Qur'an to be drawn from

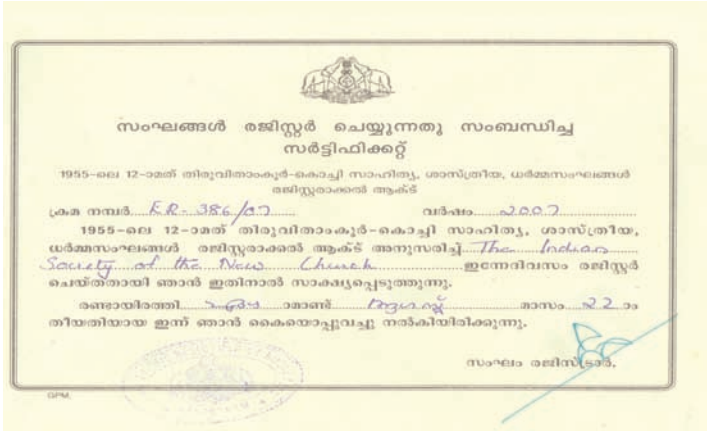
“both testaments” (*True Christian Religion* 833:4). The Qur'an replaced the Christian Word among Arabs in the sixth century a.d. just when Christian councils were creating dogmas on the Trinity. (cf. *Divine Providence* 255, *True Christian Religion* 833). 8. The Lord's providence preserved the New Testament until the Second Advent, which is another story!

Let us recall that “in the beginning” the Lord taught and led the first human beings on this earth “face to face,” a practice that continued all the way up to the Most Ancient Church. “Face to face,” meant that the Word to them “was not” anything other than Lord Himself! And when at the Advent the “seed of the woman had trampled the head of the serpent,” now “He Himself taught Divine truth” (*Arcana Coelestia* 9818) “face to face” once again! There was at first no other Word than the Lord's own mouth! The people “heard Him gladly” (Mark 6:20) for “no man ever spoke like this man” (John 7:46). That was the oral era of the new gospel truth, lasting until the destruction of the Temple, 70. a.d.

By around 66 a.d., they think Mark wrote his Gospel, followed around 80 a.d. by Matthew and Luke, and 90 a.d. by John. Both Matthew and Luke incorporate most of “Mark” in the same sequence, but interspersed by shared material not found in Mark,—the mysterious source “Q” of modern scholarship. Whatever may be the case, this written New Testament was “sufficient cause” for 2000 years of Christian history. Although the first Christians saw this truth as in a “morning light” (*True Christian Religion* 109), they were *not* yet “Christian” enough to form a New Heaven (*Coronis* xxxi). They were mostly very “simple people” so the full truth “could not be revealed to them, since, had it been, it would not have been understood and would have been of no use to them” (*True Christian Religion* 206). There were already predictions of Christianity destroyed by their initial heresies and schisms later augmented during Church councils (*True Christian Religion* 378, 163, 177, 206, 632, 634, 640). All the prophecies of a New Jerusalem descending and of the Second Coming when “the Spirit of truth shall guide you into all truth...for He shall receive of Mine, and shall declare it unto you” (John 16:13-14) were taking center stage. What historical rumbles initiated that event?

# Church News

## THE FIRST OFFICAL MEETING OF THE NEW CHURCH IN INDIA



The registration certificate for the New Church in India requires an official address, which is in the city Cochin in Kerala District,

The Statement of Purpose: "The object of the NEW CHURCH IN INDIA IS TO WORSHIP The Lord Jesus Christ as the One God of heaven and earth, to live a righteous life as it has been set forth in the Sacred Scriptures and in the theological *Writings* of Emanuel Swedenborg, and to spread the NEW CHURCH IN INDIA to all people in India who embrace the faith of the NEW CHURCH IN INDIA."



Here is Mr. Peter Devassy, with Rev. Goran Appelgren. We may call Mr. Devassy the Founder of the New Church in India.