

Death and Resurrection

The Gospel of Easter Morning

By Erik Sandstrom

At Easter time we honor the Hero on the Cross and celebrate His triumphant resurrection on the third day. What died was born of Mary; what rose in Divine majesty and glory was born of God.

Jesus Christ, our Lord, had no mortal human father. The angel said to Mary, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God." (Luke 1:35)

This means that from birth His soul was Divine but His body - including His brain - was created like that of ordinary people. It also means that He was born with a twofold heredity: one that was pure and perfect, the other burdened with inclinations toward all evil derived from endless past generations. There were two natures opposed to each other within Him. (This is the case with us, too, but what with Him was Divinely pure is with us limited and fragile conscience.)

Two natures opposite each other! These - as with us - struggled for dominion. In the Gospels these struggles are called temptations. "Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being tempted for forty days by the devil." (Luke 4:1,2 et al.) But His life in the world was a constant battle with the hells (the "devil"), not only for forty days. And so in the very last week of His earthly life He said to His twelve, "But you are those who have continued with Me in My trials." (Luke 22:28) His trials had been continual.

Temptations and trials - and victories! As many as were His temptations, so many were His victories. His life was a conquest, He never failed. Therefore He could say, "Which of you convicts Me of sin?" (John 8:46)

His life was His glorification. "Who is this King of Glory?" sings David, foreshadowing the Lord. "The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle ... The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory." (Ps. 24:8,10)

The hells attacked Him through His maternal human, and in His maternal human, from His Divine, He overcame all. This was a process of subduing and removing one nature, and assuming and confirming the other - until there was nothing left from the mother. He signified this when from the cross He turned Mary over to His disciple John. "He said to His mother, 'Woman, behold your son!' Then He said to the disciple, 'Behold your mother!'" (John 19:26,27) Mary, by all accounts in herself a good woman though bearer of the heredity of the human race, was no longer His mother. His Divine alone remained with Him. "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit." (Luke 23:46)

On Easter morning, therefore, He rose in His Divine body, not in His maternal body. The tomb was empty! The Theological Writings of Swedenborg, which establish the New Christian Church, say that the Lord in the sepulchre, and thus by death, "rejected all the human from the mother and dissipated it;" and also that "the prior forms which were from the maternal were completely destroyed and extirpated, and Divine forms were received in their place." (See the posthumous work The Athanasian Creed nr. 162, and Arcana Coelestia nr. 6872.) This rejection and extirpation were going on throughout His life. He was successively glorified.

After His resurrection, therefore, He was the Immanuel, God-with-us. And the disciples worshiped Him. So the New Church bows before Him, and calls out with joy with the disciple Thomas: "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28) Now His Soul and His Body were One. Our God is One. And He is standing forth in His own glorified Human, to be seen and known and followed.