

A TRUE BELIEVER AND HUMBLE SERVANT

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Lessons: Matthew 13:44-52; *True Christian Religion* 779, 780

Last month people in all parts of the world rejoiced together because of the wondrous birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. During the month of January, people in the New Church remember another birthday, the birthday of Emanuel Swedenborg.

Now Swedenborg's birthday is not nearly as important as our Lord's birthday, but it is still useful for us to learn about and remember Swedenborg. As we read in *True Christian Religion*, the Lord gave Swedenborg a very important job to do—a job he did most willingly and well. The Lord used the Writings of Swedenborg, sometimes called the Heavenly Doctrine, to come again to this world, teaching people His own Divine truth so long hidden within the stories of our Old and New Testament Word.

Why did the Lord call Swedenborg especially to be His servant? You may have heard about the fine family into which Swedenborg was born and the very good education he received in school as he was growing up. Perhaps you have learned also how he became a brilliant and great scientist when he was a young man. All these things were important to the Lord when He chose Swedenborg. But there were even more important reasons why the Lord called Swedenborg to serve Him when He made His Second Coming.

From the time he was a small child, Swedenborg believed in one God—our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. As he grew older, his belief grew ever stronger. So it was that when he became a man and a great scientist among other great scientists, it made him very sad to learn that some of these other scientists did not really believe in God. Swedenborg knew that no one could become intelligent and wise and be truly happy unless he believed in the Lord, and so he decided that he would try as hard as he could to prove to others that there is a God who makes all things and keeps all things going. We can well imagine that the Lord was very pleased that Swedenborg should choose to take up such a work. It made it easy for the Lord to teach Swedenborg many marvelous things about the minds or spirits of people, about the spiritual world and about the Lord Himself.

When Swedenborg first began to study these things, he was sometimes quite proud of himself and of the things that he was writing. But as the years went by and Swedenborg learned more and more about the Lord's creation, the Lord very carefully led him to realize that actually it is very foolish to think that we

are good and wise by ourselves. All goodness and all wisdom are from the Lord. At times Swedenborg suffered great temptations, but finally he chose to become a most humble person before the Lord, and so he was completely ready to do whatever work the Lord might want him to do.

So it was that when the learned but humble Swedenborg was some fifty-six years old the Lord, surrounded by the light of heaven, appeared to him in a vision. He told Swedenborg that He had chosen him for a special task, to declare to people the spiritual truths that were hidden in the Word. The Lord said that He Himself would tell Swedenborg what He wanted him to write. Then He opened the eyes of Swedenborg's spirit so that for the next twenty-seven years Swedenborg could hear and see and live in the spiritual world at the same time as he lived in this world.

Before Swedenborg was ready to write down the wonderful truths in the Heavenly Doctrine for the New Church, there was much that he still needed to know and understand. He had to learn about the spiritual world and those who had come there from this world. For several years he listened to all that he heard and carefully studied all that he saw in the spiritual world. He began to write these experiences down in a diary so that he would remember them later and be able to use them. At first he did not understand all the things that he heard and saw, but little by little the Lord taught him what they meant.

While Swedenborg was hearing and seeing many marvelous happenings in the other world, he was also doing something else. He was studying the Word in the Old and New Testaments very, very carefully. As he did so, another exciting thing began to happen. The Lord began to show him the heavenly truths that had been so long hidden there, like a precious treasure hidden in a field.

At last, when Swedenborg began to clearly understand what was happening around him in the spiritual world and what was being shown to him in the Word, the Lord led him to write these things down for others in what we call the Writings for the New Church or the Heavenly Doctrine. For the next twenty-four years, until the death of his body, the Lord gently and carefully guided Swedenborg.

In these books, that is, in the wonderful truths that they contain, we can, if we will, find the Lord Jesus Christ Himself speaking to each one of us. We can learn to know Him as the one and only Divinely Human God who is perfectly loving and wise. In the Heavenly Doctrine we can learn thousands of things about the Lord's kingdom in the heavens and His church on earth. We can discover countless things about the people that the Lord has created, about ourselves, and about how we can be led by the Lord into His heavenly kingdom. The more we read and the more we learn, the more will we realize that these books are not Swedenborg's but the Lord's. They are His second coming to all humankind.

But while it is true that the Writings for the New Church are the Lord's Writings, His Word, and not Swedenborg's, it is still useful to remember that they were given to the world through Emanuel Swedenborg. And they could only have been given in this way because Swedenborg chose to be the kind of person that he was, one who truly believed in his God, one who was willing to become the humble and obedient servant of the Lord in all that the Lord would call him to do. For this reason, it is well to honor Emanuel Swedenborg and remember his birthday each year in January.

Amen.