

## THE WONDER OF THE LORD'S WORD

by the Rt. Rev. George de Charms

We think of the Word as a book. And, indeed it is a very special book, which must be treated with reverence at all times because it is dedicated to the worship of the Lord. For this reason it should be kept separate from other books, placed in a repository in the home, or upon the altar in the church. This is true of the Old and New Testaments, but the Word includes many other books, written at different times. Now there are the books that we call the *Heavenly Doctrines*, consisting of many volumes, all of which are the Word. What makes these books so different?

Have you ever tried to write a book, or even a short paper? If so, you must realize that before you can write any thing at all you have to *think* of something to write. In other words, what you write must first exist in your mind. In fact, the only reason any one writes a book is because he wants to tell other people about something he knows, or thinks, or feels. Thousands of books have been written which are outwardly similar to the Word. They are written in different languages and on thousands of different subjects, all of which have existed in the mind of the writers.

So it is also with the Word. It existed in the mind of the Lord before it was written down. Therefore it is said in the first chapter of John: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (verse 1). The Lord is a Divine Man. He is wonderfully loving, and wonderfully wise. From His Divine love, and by means of His Divine wisdom, He created the whole universe and perpetually maintains its existence. Last of all, He created man—human beings who could live, not only in the natural world but also in heaven after the death of the body. Everything was created for the sake of human beings so that they might come into heaven and enjoy ever increasing happiness and blessing to all eternity there. And the only things that can make people truly happy are those that exist in the Lord's mind. No one could know what these are unless the Lord had told them.

Because the Lord wills to give people life and happiness, He has always given His Word so that we might know how to think, and how to live in order to be happy. But we cannot possibly know what is in the Word unless we read it. If the Word is kept closed, in a repository, or on a shelf, or even on an altar, its wonderful secrets remain unknown. Furthermore, there is so much to be learned from the Word that no one can discover it in a moment. We have to read the Word many times. Indeed we should read it every day, and, if we do, we will find out that we are discovering new and wonderful things in it all the time.

But if we merely read the Word, even if we memorize what we have read, we still may not truly understand it. We have to think about what we have read, reflect upon it, and search out its meaning. And, more than this, we must *live* it. We must live according to what the Lord commands in His Word. Only this will lead to our happiness, which is why the Word has been given. That is why the Lord says: "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love,

just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things have I spoken to you that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full" (John 15: 10, 11).

Of all the thousands of books in the world, the only one that is written by the Lord Himself is the Word. Other books are written by men and contain what is in the mind of the author. Only the Word can reveal what is in the Lord's mind.

If you were told to write a paper, and if, instead, you asked someone to tell you what to write, and just copied what he dictated, then the composition would not be your writing. It would not show what was in *your* mind. Instead, it would reveal what was in the mind of the person whose words you copied. That is the way the Word was written. The Lord selected someone and told him what to write. Moses and the prophets who wrote the Old Testament did not write down what *they* knew, or what *they* thought. They wrote only what the Lord told them to write. That is why we often read in the prophets "Thus says the Lord." So it was also with those who wrote the Gospels. The Lord caused them to remember the things He had done and what He had said to them while He was in the world, and they wrote down nothing but what He told them to write. For this reason, what they wrote was the Word of the Lord.

It is important to know that the Word was written differently at different times. Any book must be written so that its intended audience may understand. A book intended for the people of France must be written in French; one designed for the people of England must be in the English language, and so on. More than this, if a book is designed for children it must be written in very simple language that children can understand. One that is designed for adults must be written in adult language. And then there are many kinds of books. There are books written for scientists, or for philosophers, for artists, and many others.

Now notice this. The Word must be written in many languages. Above all, it must be written differently for different ages. The Ancient Word was quite different from the Old Testament, which was written specially for the Jewish people. So also, the New Testament, which was written for Christians after the Lord had come on earth, was in a very different form than any Word that had gone before. And, when the Lord made His Second Coming, He spoke the Word in a new form to Emanuel Swedenborg, who wrote down only what the Lord told him to write.

For this reason, all the books of the Heavenly Doctrine are also the Word of the Lord. They are very different from the former Scriptures, but nevertheless they contain nothing but what is in the mind of the Lord. Swedenborg tells us this, saying, "From the first day of my call I have not received anything whatever pertaining to the doctrines of the New Church, from any angel, but from the Lord alone while I read the Word" (*True Christian Religion* 779). For this reason these writings also are the Word, but they are a form of the Word designed for the people of our day. And by means of this new Word the Lord has opened the deeper meaning of the Old and New Testaments for us, a meaning that could not have been understood in earlier times.

Knowing this, you can understand how wonderful the Word is. It is not a single book, but consists of many volumes, written at different times, all of them telling about the Lord, about heaven, and about how we must live on earth if we are to know the joys of the Lord's kingdom after death.

Such is the wonder of the Word. It is like a great river of truth proceeding from the throne of God, and bringing life and blessing to all who drink its water. To drink this water of life is to read the Word, to learn what it teaches, and to live according to it so far as we understand it. This is the life of religion that leads us to the eternal happiness of heaven.

**Texts: John 1:1; John 15: 10, 11;**  
***True Christian Religion 779***