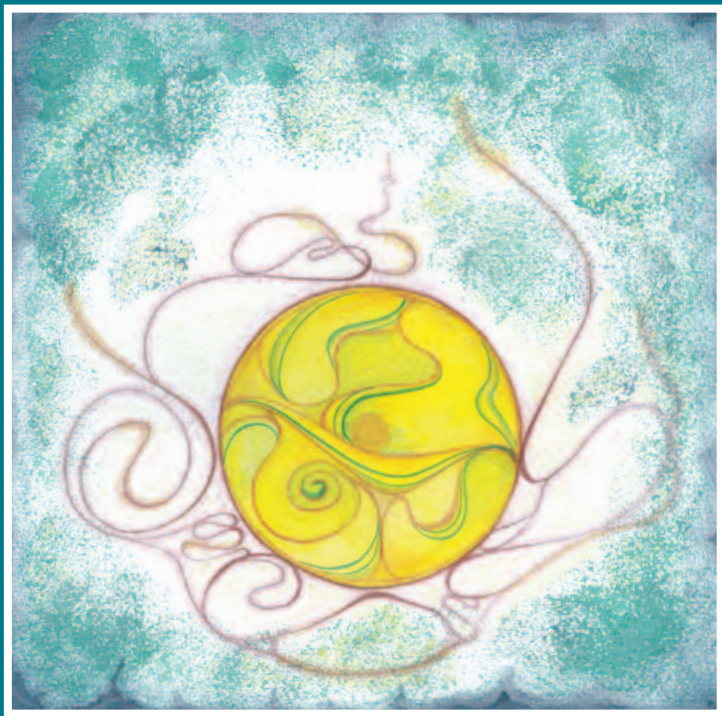


Our Soul's Awakening



Allegory of the Genesis Story

Thomas King



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Awakening*



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Allegory of the Genesis Story

Thomas A. King



Swedenborg Centre
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About the Author and the Book

Growing up in a family with a long line of prominent Methodist ministers on both sides, it is hardly surprising that Thomas King followed in their footsteps with ordination in 1879 at age 22, after completing the required studies at the Theological Faculty of the Maryland Conference of the Methodist Church which was close to his home. Two years prior to his ordination, he was introduced to the spiritual writings of Emanuel Swedenborg (1688 - 1772) by a fellow student who quoted from them when the lecturer asked each class member to give their idea of the Trinity. The answer which so impressed Thomas King was “There is one God, in whom is a divine trinity which is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, which make one like the soul, body and operation in man”. When his turn came to answer the same question, Thomas King replied, “I would say exactly what my brother has said”. He went on to say that even though he had read nothing of Swedenborg before, “Clearly, if man is made in the image of God, he must be finitely what God is infinitely”. After this class, Thomas King went about acquiring Swedenborg’s writings and avidly studying them. He started openly preaching and advocating these teachings which, being considerably different from the Methodist position, did not sit comfortably with some of the senior hierarchy in that Church. However, his popularity served to maintain his position within the Methodist Church, being appointed to minister to influential congregations, first in Baltimore and then Washington.

It was while living in the United States capital that he first had direct contact with the Swedenborg movement and just four years after commencing his ministry in the Methodist Church, he was ordained into the Swedenborg Church of America. He served six different congregations with great distinction for approximately the next 44 years until his death in January 1927. Through his ministry, lectures and publications, he introduced many to the spiritual writings of Swedenborg and to appreciate their relevance and value in a world where materialism had become the focus rather than looking for higher values in life.

In 1922, a manuscript which he had penned was published under the title of *Allegories of Genesis*. Over the intervening years, it has been sought by students of Swedenborg and those seeking an understanding of the early stories in the Bible from a non-literal perspective. It is a succinct presentation of the spiritual meaning within the first eleven chapters of the Genesis story which Swedenborg deals with in great detail in his major work *Arcana Caelestia* (or *Secrets of Heaven*). In writing the book Thomas King used terms found in Swedenborg's works which, for the reader who is unfamiliar with them, can make it difficult to appreciate their import. This revised edition endeavours to present the material in a more modern and readily understandable idiom.

In addition, short paragraphs have been inserted at the end of each chapter of the book to directly relate the biblical text psychospiritually and to personal experience. Dr. King's prime purpose in writing his book was to provide a description of the spiritual condition and development of humanity in its earliest times. He does touch on how the biblical text can be allegorically understood in terms of the life which every human soul can undergo. When awakened to the higher potential which can be attained, choices will inevitably have to be made through the exercise of freewill, producing a variety of positive or negative outcomes. This process of change and transformation is not a single experience, as can be seen by anyone reflecting on struggles already undergone. Different opportunities will arise over time allowing for gradual change, with them being more and more specific as understanding

grows. Those early Genesis chapters can be read as the sequence of personal spiritual development when the soul begins to enter into full consciousness of its existence from Divine Life, and the consequences which can flow from responses to it, but using the images of the natural world.

Coming to the realisation that the Bible is a book entirely made up of stories and happenings which relate to the journey of the soul through life is one of the most positive discoveries we can ever make. Reading the Bible knowing that its prime importance is describing our inner world - the life of the soul - and not the outer world of science and history will transform its message. It becomes an extraordinary tool for inner, personal awareness. While at first it may sound an encumbrance, adding the words 'in me' after every noun in the text enables the spiritual principle to which the noun is referring to come to the fore at the personal level. Think of 'light' and 'darkness' for instance as being times of spiritual enlightenment and obscurity through which everyone passes. The same applies to characters and their roles, the spiritual association depending on the context in which they appear.

The Introduction which follows is essentially a compilation from King's own Preface and the Foreword of the original book by John Whitehead, a good friend of Thomas King. Both the Epilogue and Appendix are additions to the original book to briefly put the first few chapters of Genesis into the wider context of the spiritual unfolding of the Bible as a whole and to outline aspects of the law of correspondences, the basis of Swedenborg's explanation of Scripture.

Neville Jarvis
Swedenborg Association of Australia



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Introduction

Since the beginning of scientific explanations for the origin of planetary systems and of life as we know it, the early chapters of the Book of Genesis have been at the centre of many controversies in the Church and the world. The reader who casually turns those pages, even with a very limited understanding of the world of nature, may well wonder at many of the things it contains. The reflective reader will immediately begin to ask questions such as:

- In the creation of the earth, as described in the first chapter, we are told that vegetation flourished before the sun came into being. How could this be possible?
- Is it not absurd to suppose that a serpent in the Garden of Eden could speak and thereby beguile Eve into eating the forbidden fruit?
- After killing Abel, Cain is reported to have founded a city. If his parents, Adam and Eve, were the first human beings, from where did the people come in sufficient numbers to establish a community of any size?
- Is it reasonable to suppose that Noah, with the primitive tools and limited materials at his disposal, could build a sea-worthy ark of the dimensions recorded in the biblical account of the Flood?
- Further, the problem of ventilation would have been insurmountable with only one small window eighteen inches square.

Those first eleven chapters of Genesis, when regarded as narratives of actual and historical events obviously present real problems for inquiring minds which demand sensible and rational answers. Christian Churches in general have taught, and followers have mainly believed, that creation took place about 4000 B C; for them, it was all completed in six days. The first man and woman came into being, the stories of their life in Eden and of their descendants and the account of the Flood all took place precisely as described in Genesis. When the sciences of cosmogony (origin of the solar system), geology, and archaeology, were developed, it was seen that the antiquity of the world and of humankind was immensely greater than the time assigned by the theologians.

Once Charles Darwin presented his theory on evolution and natural selection the debate between philosophers and scientists on the one hand, and the Christian Church on the other, regarding the literal accuracy of the early Genesis stories really got underway. Today, the body of opinion leans towards the scientific view although both positions create problems for Christians. Literal acceptance flies in the face of modern scientific understanding of the world and its origin. On the other hand, if they are to be rejected on that basis, how should they be regarded? Can they still be accepted as a part of the word of God and therefore Divine?

Two hundred and fifty years ago, Emanuel Swedenborg presented an understanding of those early chapters of Genesis stories which, had they been accepted, would have avoided any controversy. In his first major work *Secrets of Heaven*, he showed them to be symbolical or representative of the higher, spiritual condition in men and women rather than historical accounts. He placed the Book of Genesis, as well as the whole Bible, in a new light which clearly manifests the Divine nature in all the stories and events. In order to see how the Genesis stories, now often viewed as myths and legends, can be understood as an essential part of the word of God, a knowledge of the following issues is essential:

1. There was a divine revelation or Word prior to the time of Moses. This Word was the source of the religions of many

nations, and from it were derived the many traditions and fables concerning creation, the Garden of Eden, and the Flood. In his work *On the Sacred Scripture*, paragraph 15 (Section XV), Swedenborg says: “. . . the ancients had a Word written entirely by means of correspondences like our Word, but that it has been lost . . . The ancients . . . were in part from the land of Canaan and the neighbouring region, and also from some kingdoms of Asia, for instance, from Syria, Mesopotamia, Arabia, Chaldea and Assyria, from Egypt, Sidon and Tyre. The inhabitants of all these kingdoms had a representative form of worship, and so knew about correspondences. This knowledge was the basis of the wisdom of that time, since it enabled them to communicate with the heavens, to have inner perception, and in many cases speak with spirits. But because this Word was full of correspondences of a kind which only remotely meant heavenly things, so that as time passed it began to be falsified by many people, the Lord’s divine providence ensured its gradual disappearance.”

2. There are references to part of that Ancient Word in the Bible, with references to such books as *The Book of the Wars of Jehovah*, *The Ennunciators*, and the *Book of Jasher*. Swedenborg claims that the first eleven chapters of Genesis were based on the contents of this Ancient Word. None of this material is historical. The accounts of Creation, Eden, and the Flood were turned into fables by many nations and, in course of time, polytheistic conceptions of God arose among the nations.
3. This Ancient Word was written according to the style of the ancient people, in which they embodied their spiritual and philosophical ideas in symbols. This style of writing spread among many ancient nations; and with the Greeks, Romans and other nations, it took the form of fables. The mythologies of many nations originally were derived from the symbolism of the ancients. Natural things were used as symbols of corresponding spiritual things. Swedenborg

demonstrates in a rational and convincing way that there is a relationship between the outer world, the realm of nature, and the inner world of the mind or spirit of men and women, which he calls a Law of Correspondence - as above, so below. This style was not only in the Ancient Word but is also embodied in the Bible.

It will not come as a surprise to those readers of esoteric ideas that the teachings of Swedenborg also recognise the cyclical nature of the development of humankind. The first eleven chapters of the Book of Genesis cover the first two such periods, called the 'Most Ancient' (or 'Adamic') and the Ancient (or 'Noetic') by Swedenborg. He refers to them as 'Churches' but not as ecclesiastical bodies, rather as the spiritual relationship of people with their Creator at any given time.

This book endeavours to achieve a reconciliation of the inconsistencies, and even absurdities, found in the early chapters of Genesis using divine inspiration as the key. Scientific inaccuracies are shown to represent deep insights into the nature of God and people. Personalities are recognised as representative of particular states of mind common to all people. Ancient history becomes symbolic of the progress followed by human beings in attaining a life governed by enlightened love. The montage of prehistoric fables and fragments concerned with Enoch and his descendants struggling for survival in a forbidding land all have a more significant meaning than the literal text reveals.

Most readers of Genesis can derive a sense of moral values and an awareness of the presence of God in human affairs, but there is far more to be found in these early Scriptural narratives. The purpose of this book is to reveal some of the deeper or inner, spiritual meanings contained in the first part of the Book of Genesis utilising Swedenborg's principle of correspondence (see Appendix). Each chapter unveils unsuspected treasures which lie deep within the literal text. No longer does one need to dispute the accuracy of the account of creation, for it is seen as a parable charting the gradual formation of a truly benevolent spirit in the nature of

humanity. The story of the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden discloses the consequence of using sense experience as the ultimate criterion of truth. Nor is there any sense in exploring the upper reaches of Mount Ararat searching for the ark, for historically speaking, such a vessel never existed any more than did the boat which carried Odysseus and his men to the island of the Lotus-Eaters. What the ark symbolises is very much a reality and relevant to today's generation of spiritual wayfarers.

Before entering this fascinating world, a brief commentary on Swedenborg's approach to the biblical text as a whole would be usefully made. It is not only in the first eleven chapters of Genesis that the text creates problems for literalistic interpretation. Throughout, there are different accounts of the same event; there are many inconsistencies and even contradictory teachings; God's love wears very thin at times and is even transmuted into anger. What are we to believe? What do we accept and what do we reject? How do we reconcile all this?

Swedenborg offers the view that these questions can be satisfied only by seeing the whole text as divine revelation containing levels of meaning relating to spiritual life. His method of interpretation briefly mentioned above - the Law of Correspondence - is disclosed through the pages which follow. Essentially, the reader is presented both with valuable knowledge about the unfolding spiritual history of humankind and the internal processes we face personally as we journey towards kingdoms beyond.



Creation

Day One

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

Have you ever considered that when ‘heaven’ and ‘earth’ are referred to in the Bible they are symbols rather than actual physical locations or places? - heaven, on the one hand, as the symbol of our higher, spiritual nature, and earth on the other as the symbol of our lower, more worldly nature. Transformation, a process culminating with spiritual rebirth in individual human beings, is the all-embracing subject matter of the biblical story of creation. It is the orderly formation and development along the lines of distinct planes of life that are involved in the structure of the minds which serve these two natures. The spiritual mind is formed of three distinct levels or degrees - the celestial, spiritual and a higher natural. The natural mind also consists of three degrees - the rational, factual and sensual. These two minds, with their degrees of life, mark the difference between humans and animals, for the latter possess only the sensual level, along with something approaching the factual, but are wholly devoid of the rational and the three degrees of the spiritual mind.

As the first verse of the Bible is telling us, transformation (termed ‘Regeneration’ by Swedenborg) begins with these two minds and it

is the relationship between the two which is at the heart of the process. It involves the opening of the spiritual mind by which the natural mind is reformed, gradually brought into order and thereby subordinated to the spiritual. The words of the Bible guide us in how we can understand this. In the beginning of a person's regeneration, the natural mind (the earth) is a vacuum or 'void'. It does not have the form of heaven and is empty of all genuine good. It is located on a lower, worldly level and its life consists only in the love of selfishness and self-centredness as well as outward pleasure. It must, therefore, be reformed so it can be filled with new affections and thoughts that reflect higher motives.

The natural mind is also in a state of darkness; it has no comprehension of spiritual things. It is of the earth, below the surface of which there is no light. In this regard, and also in its depth, it is like a great abyss covered over with darkness. And what a darkness it is! The natural mind is in total darkness to such things as God, the Divine Word, life beyond physical death, in fact, all the great truths of spirituality. It knows only what is perceived from the natural world, and sees only the things that minister to its self-absorbed and self-regarding loves.

If in the beginning, a spiritual mind had not been formed above the natural mind in men and women, humanity could never have been raised above the animal plane of life. Yet "in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). By heaven is meant the spiritual mind formed neither of nature nor of the deposits of the world through the bodily senses, but of the substance of the inner spiritual world, with deposits from heaven, through the ministry of angels. These heavenly deposits are referred to by Emanuel Swedenborg in his spiritual writings as 'Remains' or 'Remnants'. They are stored up in all infants, whether or not they are born in a spiritual environment and whether they are born of dutiful parents or otherwise. These things are spiritual - states of goodness, of innocence, formed in us all during childhood, while our mind is still on a heavenly level and is open, tender and malleable.

At a deeper level, Jesus Christ pronounced the truth of divine provision of these good states for child-life, when he said (Matthew 18:10):

See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven.

The implantation and storing of these remains make a spiritual life possible to everyone. They are really a heredity from the Divine Source of life - the Heavenly Father. Salvation, regeneration and the consequent subordination and service of our life to the divine motive for living becomes possible because of this work done by the Lord through the angels during childhood.



Before the Beginning

Here lies the ground of hope for the salvation of the human race. It is the means by which the All-Good Divine will realise the real purpose in the creation of humankind - a heaven of angels from the human race (refer Swedenborg *Divine Providence*, paragraph 27).

*Why bowest thou, O soul of mine,
Crushed by ancestral sin?
Thou hast a nobler heritage
Which bids thee victory win.
The tainted past may bring forth flowers,
As blossomed Aaron's rod;
No legacy of sin annuls
Heredity from God.*

Lydia Avery Coonley Ward (1845 - 1924), American Suffragette

The child grows into maturity and these remains must now be reawakened. They are the Lord's own in each of us; and he alone knows *how* and *when* they are to be found. So it is said (Genesis 1:2):

And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

The divine mercy of the Lord broods over these remains. It awakens them. The treasures that the Lord has hidden and stored up, how precious they are! *More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold*, as the Psalmist says (19:10).

They are what make us sacred. The sins which take root and ultimately disfigure and mar human life are truly ugly, and sometimes people seem hopelessly involved in them, yet even they have the sacred treasures stored up in them by the Lord. The time comes when the spirit of our common Lord moves upon the face of these waters. These hidden treasures are the Lord's in each person. They are not anything we acquire by our own conscious efforts. All this shines beautifully through the words of an old lullaby by Dr. Isaacs Watts (1674 - 1748), English Preacher and Hymn Writer:

*Hush, my babe!
Lie still and slumber;
Holy angels guard thy bed;
Heavenly blessings without number
Are gently falling on thy head.*

The waters of this first day of creation are the good things collected together in the subconscious mind and God's spirit gently moves over them. In ways recognised, and unrecognised, the Lord's Holy Spirit is moving - brooding over these things of heaven stored in our spiritual mind. The time comes to all who hear his voice when the things are reawakened. It may not come in this life but after it, in the world of spirits - an intermediate stage between this world and the ultimate hereafter. Everyone who has not effectively closed off access to their remains by confirming themselves in evil will hear the divine voice and open the door. They will sense the divine brooding and yield to God's tender love.

What a need there is for parents to know this blessed teaching! For knowing it, they can intelligently co-operate with the Lord and the angels. These remains are "the living creatures" to which the good news is to be preached (Mark 16: 15) so that it may appeal to what is of the Lord in them. This will reach and uncover the golden side of their life (Psalm 42:7):

Deep calls to deep.

A great light will dawn upon humankind through such an appeal. It will be the light of their Heavenly Father's face, and in that light they will see truth. This 'seeing the truth' is an awakening of a human soul, and what a momentous event it is! It is the dawning of a light in which we see the Lord Jesus as our God and Saviour; in which we see ourself as a spiritual being; in which we see the spiritual possibilities of life - the beginning of the great creation within (Genesis 1:3):

And God said 'Let there be light', and there was light.



Day Two

And God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters."

The awakening of the good and true things implanted and stored away during childhood, together with the dawning of the light of God upon the mind, brings the consciousness that within the mind there are states of knowledge that are from heaven and states of knowledge that are from the world. Facilitating this consciousness is the rational perception of the duality of the mind. This perception at first is far from being clear; it is in fact very dim, but it enables us to realise that lying above what is natural-minded within, is a higher mind or self which, for its satisfaction, demands growth and cultivation - things the world cannot provide nor foster.

This dawning perception of an internal rational faculty existing separately from an external one is what is meant by these words (Genesis 1:6):

And God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters".

It is rational perception, but it is in the formative state. It is not, at this time, lifted up, clearly discriminated and intellectually distinguished from the general perceptions of the mind. It is, at first, in the *midst* of the waters.

Yet growth is the nature of Divine Life in our life; therefore this rational perception grows and expands. Such growth is largely dependent upon instruction - instruction suited and accommodated to the mind's state of reception. What a wide field for reflection is opened up!

Rational perceptions are formed slowly so that instruction must be suited to the mind in which they are growing. Simple teaching, drawn from the stories of the Word, presented affirmatively and

affectionately and always with reference to the sacred religious life that is awakening in early years, never fails to arouse and hold our interest. The deeper things of the spiritual sense of the Word - of the philosophy of doctrine - must wait until they too can be received rationally.

While the expanse is in the midst of the waters, the simple Bible story, illustrated in its relation to the awakening religious nature, is all that is needed. In the budding young mind, there will come the opening of a deeper rational perception - the expanse divides into two waters. The faculty of classification now develops. Things will be able to be distinguished from each other. As the knowledges in the mind - the waters - begin to be classified by rational thinking guided by true and suitable instruction, truth can be presented to this new and higher plane of reception that is forming. The simpler meaning of the spiritual sense *in* the very stories of the Bible can be readily received along with related doctrine as it applies to life.

Here we have the dividing between the waters. Knowledge that could only come from heaven, through the Lord's Word, will be distinguished from knowledge that comes from the world and which belongs to the world. It is all a gradual unfolding of the mind.

So, there comes a time when the waters, which were divided, attain perfect classification - a time when truth, derived by revelation, and truth derived through the exercise of the natural mind, is clearly distinguished, the one from the other.

This is what is meant by these words (Genesis 1:7):

And God made the expanse, and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse.

Until this discrimination is made, it is not clearly seen that there is an internal person and that the things that are in the internal person are goods and truths that are from the Lord alone.

Waters above the expanse! What do they refer to other than the truths that come from the Lord? The rational faculty of perception does not originate spiritual truth. The divine and spiritual truths, with which the internal mind is imbued, are above reason. The rational degree is an intermediate degree. The things that are proper to the natural mind, such as the knowledge belonging to the sensuous plane, and the facts that are learned in school, are below, under the reason. There is a side of the rational that looks down upon, orders and subordinates them. They are from the world and are not matters of revelation. They serve to teach everyone how to preserve their body and physical health, to form and cultivate their natural mind, how to become a civic and moral person and a useful member of society. They are all under the expanse. However, the waters which are above the expanse! They are not on a level with nature. They are truths that have come through the channel of the spiritual world, the word of God, and the spiritual pathway. They are above the reason but not contrary to reason; for as there is a side to the rational degree of the mind that opens down to the stored states of the natural mind, so there is a side to it that opens up to the stored states of good and truth in the internal mind.

When the rational perception has attained this degree of development, it calls for distinct guidance. This should be the sole goal for any religious organisation or spiritual pathway: to prepare people to live spiritually ordered and useful lives. From the Christian perspective, this is one prescribed by teaching drawn from and understood through the word of God. Religious institutions have a role to play in this process by providing people with the light that allows them to be able to distinguish between spiritual good and natural good; between life lived from regard to God and life lived from regard to self; between truth from heaven, through revelation, and truth from the world. This work should be their mission; regeneration - the new life - must be the aim. The word of God exists solely for this.



Day Three

And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so.

The rational perception that is involved in our two minds - an external mind for this world and an internal one for the spiritual world - puts us in a position to see that all spiritual knowledge, the truth and good of heaven, inflows from the Lord through the internal mind into our external one. It is stored up in the memory for use in our coming regeneration. The memory is therefore a most important part of the mind. It must form and then be stored with truths, learned from outside sources, before there can be any distinct reasoning or deep thinking. As children we are inspired by the Lord, through our guardian angels, with the love of knowing facts, and gifted with the mental organ of memory. This is the receptacle for the knowledge that is acquired and serves to retain what is learned. The will and the memory are active long before the understanding is in any degree developed. The will to learn, the love of knowing, must come in order that we can learn.

The memory is therefore the 'one place' into which the waters under the heavens are gathered. Those waters are the truths acquired by study and instruction - the truths that are stored after they are learned. It is during this period that parents and teachers have the golden opportunity of fixing the knowledge of biblical stories into their children's minds. In terms of their eternal welfare, there is nothing more important than this and despite the many questionable suppositions and scientific inaccuracies, nothing should be done to disturb a child's implicit belief in the account of Bible stories. They should be taught to the child in their God-given form. Further, the child will be helped at later stages in life if

certain portions of the Bible are committed to memory, such as the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, many of the shorter Psalms and the sayings of Jesus Christ in the Gospels. They are remnants which can be drawn on as and when needed. This is what is meant by the gathering of the waters into one place.

Rational thinking about these things will come later, and also the opportunity to integrate them into a useful body of spiritual understanding. When this state arrives, a plane for the reception of the divine seed will form in the mind from which will spring up and grow the life of heaven. This plane, or soil, is what is meant by the appearance of the *dry land* or *earth*.

The beginnings of the spiritual life - how interesting they are! God said (Genesis 1:11):

"Let the earth sprout . . ."

Up to this point, God has done everything, but now the earth, which has risen out of the waters, is called on to bring forth. Childhood is a period of preparation for the spiritual life. This is what makes childhood so sacred. However, when the memory is stored with truths, and the understanding of them in their relation to life has been formed, we are then capable of co-operating with the Lord. We can hear, understand and obey the divine commands. We have come into our own responsible life. We are, spiritually, of age, and can act as of ourselves. We can receive and become conscious of God's operation in our soul, and are able to co-operate with the regenerative endeavour of the Divine Spirit. So God says: "Let the earth sprout."

What is brought forth at first is very tender and quite feeble. It is called, in some versions of the Bible, "the tender grass." Self-compulsion is the first conscious step we take in an effort to co-operate with the Lord's endeavour to regenerate us. Our outward nature is born into the tendency to first love evil; the natural inclination is to those things which were habits and approaches in the life of our parents. This is not the old doctrine of original sin,

for no one is born into sin. It is the teaching of heredity - the fact that we inherit from parents and ancestors the love of self and the world. These two loves, which are self-seeking, are the very life of our natural mind. We need to give up a life only incorporating them; we must seek and replace them with higher loves if we would come into the life that makes heaven.

This is what Jesus Christ meant when he said (Luke 14:26):

“If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother. . . , yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.”

Self-imposed obedience to the Ten Commandments is the beginning. The spiritual life that comes as the result of this self-compulsion is what is meant by the “tender grass.” It is a state which must be dealt with gently and patiently. There is much of self in it, and its motive is very external, but it is a beginning. How thankful we should be that the tender grass has no seed in itself. It appears in the beginning, serves its use, passes away and makes room for something higher.

This higher form of spiritual living is represented by the “herb yielding seed”. A higher motive for life comes and a more spiritual thinking and doing follows. The habit of obedience is formed. The truth is delightful. We love it, and do it because of our love for it, and a new life centre is formed. The love of the Lord and the neighbour becomes our very life. We have lost our life for the Lord’s sake; we have found his life and made it our life. The natural person is being put under the reign of the Lord’s truth. The herb yielding seed has sprung up, and is growing in the soul.

Yet something more than the herb comes in this day of a person’s spiritual creation. Fruit-bearing trees make their appearance. There comes the perception that all truth, all good, is from the Lord. Fruit trees of the third day. How patiently the Lord waits for us to come into this state! He lets us, in the beginning, believe that we are thinking the truth and doing good from ourselves,

because he knows that at first we cannot act otherwise. So he leads us on step by step, like the loving and kind Father that he is, until the tender grass and herb states are lived through. He then allows the perception that all truth is from him, that all good flows in from him to grow in the mind - the fruit-bearing trees. What a revelation it is to us! How the very thought of it humiliates self! How it exalts God! It brings a new state of life with it. It bears fruit. This was not so of the tender grass, nor of the herb. It is said of the tree, though, (Genesis 1:11):

... and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind.

The fruit which the trees bore is the good outcome of repentance. This third state is one of repentance. In this state we see the evils that are in our natural mind - evils of heredity and evils acquired by the wrong acts of life. It is the state of self-revelation. Repentance follows, one that is deep and sincere. For in this state we not only see the evils in ourself, but acknowledge them, express guilt before God, confess them to the Lord, implore forgiveness of them, and then desist from them and enter into a new life. Should they subsequently rise up, we turn from them and seek divine aid in being withheld from them. This is the fruit that the tree bears. In this way the Lord introduces us into the spiritual life, and communicates to us the inward joy of heaven in a peace that passes all understanding, that is unspeakable and full of glory.



Day Four

And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years, and

let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth." And it was so.

Regeneration is the progressive development of the Divine Life in the human soul which is a spiritual creation, for when it is finished a person is a new creature. The old carnal life - the life of loving self and the world - has been displaced by the new life - the life of loving the Lord and the neighbour.

No one begins regeneration with a deep love for the Lord, nor with a clear and living faith. The light of divine truth dawns upon the mind, and we see ourselves in contrast with the purity and the requirements of the truth. As the truth points, with directing finger, straight to the duty to be done, we find that we must compel our lower self to do it. This is the beginning of the creation of God in the soul.

Yet faithfulness to duty, daily acting against the life-impulses of the lower self, leads us on and on to that state in which we begin to feel the warmth of living love in the heart and sense a clear bright faith in the Lord and the realities of the inner life. The sun and the moon of the fourth day are this love and this faith set in the internal mind of the regenerating person, a state which is come into by growth. The natural sun is therefore the symbol of the Lord's love that is given to everyone to be within them. It is the love of God towards humankind and should be the centre of our life - the glowing orb around which everything of life must revolve, like planets round the sun. It is the greater luminary set in the mind; for of all graces, love is the greatest.

Love is the fulfilling of the law. (Romans 13:10)

God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God.
(1 John 4:16)

This is the sun of the soul. This sun comes to rule over the day. A person who is regenerating has 'days' and 'nights'. It is day in the soul when awake and spiritually active; when the Lord, the Word,

spiritual life and all that pertains to heaven are close and real to consciousness. The soul is warmed by the Divine Sun and the mind enlightened by the light of the great love of God that is shining within. We all have these day states. Then everything is bright and beautiful. God is near; the Holy Word glows with warmth; and the Divine Humanity is present. This is the day time of regeneration, and the sun of divine love rules over that day.

However, it is not always daytime in the soul of the person who is following the Lord in regeneration. There are nights as well. It is night-time in the world when the earth turns away from the sun. It is night-time in our soul when we turn away from the Lord and incline towards our own judgments. We all do this. Then the sun of the soul is not seen and its warmth is not felt. It is night. Yet in the case of those regenerating, it is not a night of thick, black darkness. The moon of faith rises high and full in the sky of the soul. We see and walk by faith. The love of day-states is still there; the current state is simply an obscure one. In that state, faith reflects the light of love as the moon reflects the light of the sun. Belief is still present, although not the feeling of the glowing warmth of love. God, the Word and growing spiritually are still realities. Faith is bright and clear. This is the moon that rules the night-time. This faith is living. It is not mere intellectual assent to dogma. It is the soul's sight of eternal things - a belief founded upon a rational conviction of the truth.

So far as such a person's daily life in its outward associations is concerned, no change has occurred - praying to the Heavenly Father, reading the Bible, attending faithfully to duties. Only the person, the Lord and the angels know that it is night. The folly of forsaking these things is not committed; they are held on to even if the love of them has grown less warm.

However, the person who has come into night and then turns away from and neglects the Lord, shows in an unmistakable way that there has never been any real love for their Heavenly Father. Then there are those who mistake mere enthusiasm for genuine love. Teachings which they have read may solve their intellectual

problems and they are fired by zeal; they are zealous for the cause of the truth. But opposition arises, or persecution for the truth's sake; the world is indifferent to the things that seem so clear to them; night comes on - dark states in which their first love grows less ardent, and finally ends in cold. Then, they begin to doubt the truth, to question divine revelation. Eventually they sink into utter indifference. What does such a happening mean? It means that they never did really see the Lord as he is. They never did really see the internal things of the Word. Their state was an external one - one of the understanding only. Yet those who have really come into day states, who have deeply felt the movement and inspiration of divine love within their heart, when the dark night states come, they 'look up to the moon' which is the lesser luminary that rules the night, and order their direction and conversation by the light of faith.

This is not all. It is said of God (Genesis 1:16):

And God made . . . the stars.

The stars are distant suns, and the light from them travels over immense expanses in reaching our earth. They are God's beautiful symbols of the spiritual knowledge which has come down to us from the past. The star seen by the wise men at the birth of Jesus was a spiritual star and symbolised the knowledge of the Lord's coming which had been handed down by tradition from the dim long ago. Much is said about stars in the Bible, and always they stand for the knowledge of spiritual things.

States come to the regenerating person in which faith is clouded - in which the divine truths of religion cannot be clearly seen. However, no truly sane individual loses their knowledge of spiritual things, especially of what is taught in the Ten Commandments - a knowledge of what is right, of what is wrong.

Love may grow cold, faith may be darkened, but the knowledge that evils are to be shunned because they are sins against God remains. "He made the stars also." The light that reaches us from

the spiritual stars - the knowledge of what is to be shunned as sin and what done as good - comes in the darkest, moonless, night. From the past come the dim points of light that shine so beautifully in the darkness. They never fail.

If we live in such a state - by star-light - shunning and turning away from the evils forbidden in the Lord's commandments and doing the good things they command, it will not be long before the moon will emerge again in our mental sky, giving us the light of faith, and still later, if we are faithful, the sun will rise again, and the divine love fill and warm the heart. It is all wonderful - the various forms of divine guidance and watchful care constantly remain over the human lives of those who are committed to him.



Day Five

And God said, "Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens."

It requires a long time for us to realise that the good we do and the truth we believe and speak are from the Lord alone. The consciousness that all genuine good and truth are from the Lord does not come until we have formed in our internal mind the principles of love to the Lord and of faith in the Lord. These two elevated principles are meant by the two great luminaries, the sun and the moon. These spiritual luminaries, set high in the heavens within, begin to give a living quality to the truths that are in the mind. These truths are meant by the waters, which are now commanded to bring forth abundantly the moving creatures that have life. The spiritual truths that have been acquired by instruction are stored in the memory like waters in the sea; and now that the sun of love and the moon of faith have been set in the

mind, life from the Lord, through them, is communicated to the religious truths, which up to this point, have existed as mere knowledges in the memory. Warmth and light from above penetrate the waters of the mind, and the regenerating person begins to act from higher and purer principles, gifted with a higher motive. The change is an internal one, affecting the willing and thinking, giving a living quality to all the more external affections and thoughts.

We are told in the biblical text that the waters brought forth fish and birds. These are symbols of the spiritual truths which arise in our mind when brought forth under the influence of love and faith. Fish are among the lowest order of animal life and represent in their moving, the active life of the affections, the beginning of a real love for the genuine good of heaven. This affection is of a very external character at first; still there is something of the living quality of heaven in it. It is all we are capable of producing at this stage. We must not expect too much in the beginning.

The affections that first awaken are external. As we tend to be solely interested in things related to the active affections in our mind, there is a need to be held in touch with spiritual concerns by the things that appeal to us. We cannot enter with understanding and affection into the deep things of the spiritual meaning of the Bible which will help us at such times, nor into the depths of doctrinal structures. While not adequately prepared to integrate spiritual aspects into worldly concerns, those simple teachings of life which are immediately present from recalling biblical stories will help. However, God brought forth from the waters not only fish but also winged birds flying above the earth in the open firmament of heaven. The birds are symbols of spiritual thoughts. At first our thought of spiritual things has much that is natural connected with it, and has to be freed from what is natural before it can rise above the earth and freely soar in the open expanse of heaven.

Scientists tell us that in the beginning birds were part reptile and part bird, but that in the process of the evolution of animal forms,

a complete separation was made, the reptile branching out in one direction as a typical reptile, and the bird rising out of the water as a typical bird. This picture that science provides has a beautiful correspondence. The reptile, with the length of its body in close contact with the physical ground, is the symbol of sensuous thinking - of thinking that is confined to the sense-plane of the mind; and the bird is the symbol of spiritual thinking - of thinking that rises above the sphere of the sense life into the clear atmosphere of what is spiritual.

At first, though, our thought of spiritual things is connected with what appeals to our senses. This is especially the case in our earlier years. We are not capable of freeing our thinking from what our senses appear to tell us. This is why mere abstract truth fails to hold our interest. Yet, if brought up in an environment where higher approaches to living are active, our thinking is not wholly sensuous; it has a spiritual element in it.

In learning truths about nature - the facts, laws and phenomena - in the same way as the materialist learns them, we do well to think of them as the outermost expressions of the divine creative impulse that is present in all material forms and natural life. In the same way, while learning the facts and moral lessons found in the biblical text, we should, at the same time, learn to think of them as outward and symbolic expressions of a great underlying spiritual sense of reality, which, when we grow to it, will unfold in all its beauty before our wondering minds.

In the course of the mind's growth, there comes a time when its thinking is separated from what is natural or sensuous. The mental reptile and the mental bird separate. Natural thought stays on its own level and finds its development on its own plane, and spiritual thought rises and flies in the open expanse of the heavens. Then we can come to thinking spiritually directly.

When this state of spiritual thinking comes, the great corner-stone teachings of spiritual life - the whales coming into being - can be taught, rationally received and confirmed. It is a mistake to attempt

to do this before the faculty of distinct spiritual thinking has been formed. Once these are clearly fixed and confirmed in the mind, then the external person, the daily life, is imbued with new qualities. As these are developed, more self-aware things begin to appear - things that have in them a living spiritual soul of good affection and thought.

This is what is meant in the introduction to day six by the arrival of higher animals (Genesis 1:24):

And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds - livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds". And it was so.

It is then that the regenerating person begins to speak from a principle of genuine faith and to confirm what is good and true within. This prepares the way for the Lord to form that high and holy human quality that he calls 'man.'



Day Six

And God said, "Let us make man in our image and after our likeness".

The making of 'man' on the sixth day is God's symbolic way of telling us how the spiritual individual is created and their nature reformed. The spiritual 'man' is a human quality of life, organised in the soul, and exercising its supremacy in the daily conduct of life. Seen from the divine view-point, anything short of the attainment and exercise of this human quality of life is not this 'man'.

The sensuous thought of what constitutes us stops with the body. Doubtless this is what most people think of when they attempt to form an idea of 'man'. They think merely of so much matter moulded into the human shape and moved and animated by the mysterious force called life. It does not enter their minds that 'man' is something apart from the human shape.

To a base sort of society, what is termed 'man' is a well-formed physical body with the additional quality of physical prowess. In polite and cultured society, 'man' has been viewed as being endowed with charm and a graceful, dignified deportment. In the eyes of the law, a 'man' is someone who has attained a specified age. Yet none of these measurements has in it the divine idea of 'man'. None of these things is meant in this story by the words (Genesis 1:26):

"Let us make man".

Intellectual and spiritual excellence and supremacy are what God calls 'man'. This is evident from the use of the term 'man' in the Bible. For instance, we read (Jeremiah 4:23-25):

"I looked on the earth, . . . and behold! there was no man."

This cannot mean that, in a physical sense, there was no 'man' upon the earth. It means that the human forms on the earth were without those intellectual, moral and spiritual qualities which constitute the divine idea of what it is to be a 'man'. Again we read (Jeremiah 5:1):

*Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem,
look and take note!
Search her squares to see
if you can find a man,
one who does justice
and seeks truth,
that I may pardon her.*

Human shapes are not in themselves ‘men’. Jerusalem thronged with human shapes, but ‘man’, in the sense of the quality of life which is truly human, was not to be found.

The story of creation is God’s symbolic way of telling us of the creation of the spiritual person and how this is achieved stage by stage. He carries forward the great work of regeneration, until in the sixth stage, ‘man’, the fully regenerated person, comes upon the scene. It is a slow process, this making of ‘man’. Many stages of preparation must be passed through before it is possible for God to say: “Let us make man.” This spiritual person who results from the challenges and labours of the regenerative work of the six days, from a principle of faith and love, speaks what is true and does what is good. The person, acting from love as well as from faith becomes a spiritual ‘man’ and is an image of God.

Yet this spiritual ‘man’ whom God makes, through the process of regeneration, is both male and female in form; for it is said (Genesis 1:27):

Male and female he created them.

Do not let your thought drop to the plane of thinking of two individuals, for the story of the creation of the male and female is introduced to show the complete evolution of the two great elements constituting the human mind - its understanding or discernment, with its intellectual faculties, and its will or motivation, with all its affectional graces and powers.

The *male* ‘man’ is the divine symbol of the understanding; the *female* ‘man’ the will and its power of love and affection. Men and women, considered as individuals, are the two *equal* halves of a complete humanity. Neither standing alone is complete. It is only in the spiritual union of the two that the complete human exists. This is effected by marriage, in which each supplies what the other lacks. Here then is the symbol. It is the symbol of the understanding and the will. As an individual is incomplete, standing alone, so the understanding on its own is incomplete. It

is only half a mind. The person who lives merely through understanding becomes cold, hard and critical. As an individual woman standing alone is incomplete, so the will standing alone is incomplete. The person who lives merely in the will becomes emotional, impulsive and blind in their judgment.

Marriage can be seen in the sense of a spiritual union and is a divine sacrament - the uniting of two makes one flesh - one 'man'. So true marriage - the union of the understanding and the will in the individual - makes a spiritual person. This spiritual person is male and female - not all intellect nor all emotion. The person is both an intellectual and an emotional or affectional 'man'.

The understanding is turned toward the Lord's truth, providing delights in the sight and reception of it; it opens the wonders of creation, the wonders of the Bible, the wonders of the incarnation and the divine redemption. The clear intellectual aspects of these great truths bring further rewards. All this is the legitimate field of the masculine side of the mind.

Yet the person is also female with a will, a heart, an affectional side to the mind, and it must find a corresponding development. This female element must exist in the person that God makes in his image in order that the mind may have the basic drive of desire. Both elements are necessary.

The understanding must be formed to see and rationally comprehend the truth, and the will must be formed to feel and love the truth. Either one, standing alone, is fruitless. This is true, even of God Himself. For if God were love alone, he could not create anything of any real sense; if he were wisdom alone, he would not have any generative powers and consequently could not create anything at all. The creative life, the creative power, results from the perfect union of divine love and divine wisdom in God.

A religion that is all feeling runs into wild emotionalism - into mere enthusiasm. A religion that is all faith runs into mere

intellectualism and spends its time in abstract thinking, in mere idealistic speculation.

However, God said (Genesis 1:26):

“Let us make man in our image and after our likeness”.

The ‘man’ that was made is the new person, born, not of the flesh, but of the spirit, with an understanding open to the light of heaven, and with a will open to the warmth of heaven. Marriage - the blending of thought and feeling, understanding and will - is the eternal union in the mind, which having its beginning on earth, grows more beautiful to all eternity.

Yet in the making of this spiritual ‘man’, there must be a willing and intelligent co-operation on our part with the Lord. That is why it is said: “And God said, let us make man.” The reference to ‘us’ does not mean that God the Father addressed the Son and the Holy Ghost. The Lord is addressing the individual. The spiritual person is not made by a divine *fiat*, nor by an arbitrary divine election or predestination. God and humans are personally distinct from each other. Men and women are created out of the dead substance of matter, as to their body, and out of the substance of the spiritual world as to their soul. Then, endowed with freedom and reason, co-operation with God is enabled. God cannot make anyone spiritual unless there is this co-operation in the process. God stores up in us, during childhood things good and true, the possibilities of spiritual humanness; and when we come to the years of responsibility, the Lord says to you and to me and to all who hear his voice: “Let us make man.” God operates; we cooperate.

To sum up, we have a person, absorbed in mere worldly things, recognising their humanity only in the human shape, and who has attained a degree of intellectual, moral and civil life, but none of a truly spiritual nature. Then God, in effect, says to the person:

I will operate upon your soul; you cooperate by keeping my commandments, and so let us, I operating and you co-

operating, make the spiritual person in you, who in coming into being, will have dominion over things of your lower nature, subduing and bringing them into order.



Day Seven

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done.

The first chapter of Genesis describes, in its spiritual sense, the creation of the spiritual person. It tells us of the great processes by which, from being merely natural, a person becomes spiritual. Out of the merely natural state, in which individuals love themselves and the world, it carries them in spiritual growth until there is implanted a genuine spiritual life - affections and thoughts, regulated and determined into act by a clear understanding of the laws and rules of religious life and duty. The person then reflects divine wisdom and becomes an image of God. This process is what is meant by the six days of creation. During this growth, from one state to another, the regard is for divine truth. All that is willed, thought and done is inspired by an understanding and love of the truth.

This is why the name 'God' is alone used in the first chapter of Genesis; for by the name God, the operation of the Lord as divine truth is meant. The spiritual person is therefore the product of the divine truth. Truth is received by an outward way into memory. Then the person begins to think about it, to reason about it; after that it is lifted into the light of the understanding with a growth in intelligence in spiritual teaching.

The next step taken is the act of compulsion to live according to it. The person begins to order their life and conversation by the truth which is understood. As this is done, the Lord, by the Holy Spirit, flows in by an interior way and provides the gift of affections for the truth. These affections are ultimately united to the truth and the person becomes a spiritual 'man'. This is the way the Lord makes the spiritual 'man'. When made, the person is the image of God and differs in every particular of life to those who are motivated from the natural 'man'.

The spiritual 'man' though, while in God's image, is not in God's likeness. So above the plane of the spiritual degree of the internal mind of each person, there lies a region of possible affection and thought which, when it is formed and developed, results in a celestial 'man', a 'man' that is as distinct from the spiritual 'man' as the spiritual 'man' is from the natural 'man'. The celestial 'man' is not made by the truth, although every act of the person's life is in harmony with the truth. The person is open to the Lord in the heart-life; and while far from being wildly emotional, is at the same time moved and compelled by divine good. There is no necessity to reason about divine truth for what is believed, thought and done are in complete harmony with the highest exercise of spiritual reason. Truth falls immediately into the embrace of the person's love and it is seen from within. What faith is to the spiritual 'man', perception is to the celestial 'man'. The person is intuitive, and comes, by an internal way, into the deepest things of divine wisdom. There is a childlike trust in the Lord. Yet the understanding sees in clearest light the deeper things that are hidden from the wise and prudent. The law of the Lord is inscribed on the tables of the person's heart. The Lord is the supreme Being - Life Itself - to the person who lives and moves in the atmosphere of divine love. When the Lord's Word is read, the personal atmosphere of the Lord in it is felt; there is a conversation with heaven.

Such is the celestial 'man'. Such are the celestial people, those people of the world who live from unselfish love. The celestial 'man' is the Lord's 'day of rest'. God's truth has done its work.

The person has had spiritual combats. Now love crowns the whole spiritual work with its life, touching and filling the soul with its Sabbath calm and peace.

The 'day of rest' of the Bible was the seventh day. Think of the meaning of the number seven. The word seven is used in the Bible as the number of wholeness and perfection. For instance, when it is said in the Bible (Isaiah 4:1), *And seven women shall take hold of one man in that day*, the thought expressed is that of all the affections of the heart - the pure love of the heart going out to the Lord in his Divine Humanity and seeking guidance.

In the Book of Revelation it is said that the Lamb in the midst of the throne had seven horns and seven eyes which are the seven spirits of God. The Lamb is the symbol of the Lord in his Divine Humanity; and the number seven applied to the horns and eyes of the Lamb stands for the perfection and holiness of his power and his wisdom. The seven devils cast out of Mary of Magdala do not denote her sinfulness and moral degradation, but the fullness of her regeneration.

So of the seventh day of the creation. It stands for the perfect work of regeneration, for the state of fulfilment of the soul. The celestial, or love, 'man' is the Lord's rest. Such people have the rest and peace of the Lord in their soul. Repose and heavenly tranquillity characterise their lives; the delights of wisdom are felt and the peace of exalted virtue enjoyed.

When we understand the difference between the celestial 'man' and the spiritual 'man', instantly there dawns the reason for the two conflicting accounts of creation given in Genesis. The account in the first chapter describes the rise of 'man' out of the natural into the spiritual state. The account in chapter two describes the rise of 'man' out of the spiritual into the celestial state. The spiritual 'man' is made by the truth; and because Elohim means God as to divine truth, that name is used in the first account. The celestial 'man' is made by a double operation - the operation of love and truth; and because Jehovah means God in the operation of his divine love,

therefore it is introduced in the second account of creation. Jehovah-Elohim (Lord God) is used to designate the fact that the celestial ‘man’ is the likeness of God where all truth is from good.

The inner ‘doorway’ to the soul of the celestial ‘man’ is open to the Lord. Love is first, flowing from the Lord into the will; and because the understanding is connected directly with the will, love from the Heavenly Father passes immediately into the understanding where it is intellectualised and becomes truth from good.

Such was the ‘man’ of the seventh day of creation. There are but a few who, during this earthly life, come into the fullness of the perfect life of the seventh day. It exists for all who faithfully do the work of the six days. ‘The New Jerusalem’ in the Book of Revelation means, in the highest thought of it, the coming again to people of the beautiful celestial life of the long ago Golden Age. It seems far away, but it will come again. Of the seventh day it is not said “And the evening and the morning were the seventh day”, for when the state of regeneration dawns, the work is done; and one unending state of spiritual peace and joy reigns in the purified soul.



Spiritual Development Experienced Personally

Creation - *Model of the Spiritual Maturity Process*

There comes a time in the life of nearly everyone when a yearning to seek fulfilment from a pursuit of values higher than purely material ones comes to the fore. When that happens for us, we look for a spiritual pathway which we believe will satisfy our needs. However, as we progress on this new journey, it appears to be without any pattern or real direction. We set

ourselves goals along the way but their achievement can elude us. Frustration, and even a questioning of whether there really is a Divine Being in charge of creation and of our higher life, results. The great value for us of the mythical account of the seven days of creation at the beginning of the book of Genesis is to provide assurance that there is a pattern underpinning our spiritual development.

Spiritual maturity can only be achieved by moving through divinely established stages. Initially, we are in spiritual ignorance ~ *the earth void and empty* ~ but are capable of becoming aware that higher values can be applied in life along with those more apparent, external ones ~ *the light divided from the darkness*. Levels of consciousness develop ~ *land formed separating the waters* ~ and spiritual truths form ~ *fruit-bearing vegetation*. A desire to be guided by higher values is established within us ~ *sun, moon and stars* ~ resulting in a life directed by a growing level of loving thoughts and feelings ~ *birds and animals multiplying*. Such a life, being in accordance with divine principles, is spiritual maturity ~ *the formation of Man*.

But if our aim is to become spiritually mature, why then do we not see this evolutionary process happening in our lives?

Moving from one stage to the next requires a considerable struggle to overcome ideas and understanding about life and its purpose which have no spiritual dimension to them - ideas which may have been held over a long period. Further, it is not one process happening stage by stage. Rather, it comprises many such individual processes, each dealing with a spiritual awakening occurring in different time frames together with the effects which flow from them all. So despite an overall order, we experience an appearance and sense of chaos - having seemingly made progress here while stumbling over other issues elsewhere. Swedenborg affirmatively tells us that by continuing to work with all aspects as best we are able, over time we will be steadily growing towards that state of spiritual maturity which is

our re-creation by God as a truly human being ~ *Man* ~
bringing inner peace and contentment.

Personal Reflection

Look back over your life and try to identify a time when you first became aware of a particularly meaningful spiritual principle. Can you think what changes resulted in your attitude and approach to life and how they helped develop your nature and character?



Adam and the Garden of Eden

Forming Adam

Then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.

Instead of being another account of creation as is supposed by rationalising critics, the second chapter of Genesis is the description of the divine process in the carrying forward of the spiritual creation of 'man' to the higher and celestial plane of life. As already stated, the celestial, or love-motivated 'man', different from the spiritual, or truth-inspired 'man', is formed and moved by divine love. It is because of this that the name Jehovah, or Lord, comes to the fore in the second chapter of Genesis; for the name Lord stands for God as to his divine love. Yet in what sense are we to view the 'man' whose formation is so minutely described in this chapter? Is the 'man' to be conceived of as an individual; or rather, can the expression be regarded symbolically as a type of community?

The verbal expressions of the story, as well as the dictates of sound reason, show that the 'man' of the Genesis story is the communal humankind. This is, of course, away from the ordinary interpretation, but there are several circumstances mentioned in the

story that clearly indicate this as the true conception. For instance, it is said (Genesis 5:2):

Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man (Adam) when they were created.

Also Cain, after he had slain Abel, said (Genesis 4:13,14):

"My punishment is greater than I can bear; . . . and whoever finds me will kill me."

This statement certainly implies the existence of a society of humans.

There is another statement in the story which clearly indicates the existence of human society. When Cain went into the land of Nod, he is said to have known his wife who bore him a son, Enoch, for whom a city was built and called after his name. If there existed no human society, where did Cain's wife come from? From where were workmen procured to build a city? Those whose existence, at that time, is inferred by the narrative had no connection with and bore no relation to Adam.

The story is a divine parable. Adam is a race-name. It stands for a community of men and women who, by the processes of regeneration described in the first chapter of Genesis, were gradually separated, spiritually, from the general mass of human beings, and who had come into those superlative qualities of character which gifted them with the moral image and likeness of God. In other words, by the creation of Adam is meant the formation of the first spiritual era on this earth - the Most Ancient era.

Surely there is nothing irrational in this thought. It was then, as it was when Christ came into the world and established the Christian era. It was formed of all who accepted him, and who, by their acknowledgment of him, were separated, in motive and belief, from those who rejected him.

The people who formed this spiritual collective during the infancy of our race were of a heavenly genius. Their whole being was alive with the consciousness of divine love. They reached up to the highest things; and the life of the Lord descending through them, gave a living and human quality to the most external things of their lives. This coming down of the Divine Life into the most external plane of their being and gifting it with a human quality is what is meant by the Lord forming ‘man’ of the *dust* of the ground. (Genesis 2:7):

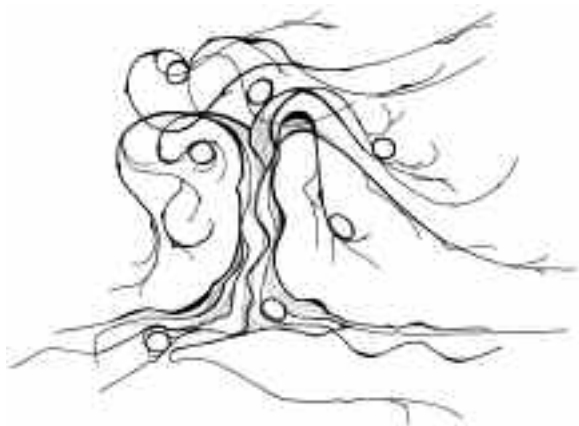
... the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living creature.

Keep your mind on the spiritual plane of thought, for by “dust from the ground” is not meant natural dust, but natural dust is used to symbolise that which *in itself* is dead and external. Not only the souls of these most ancient people, but their minds and even their very bodies shared in the inflowing and formative power of the life of God. The Lord dwelt in their souls, and through their souls illuminated their minds, and through their minds filled even their physical bodies with sensations of joy and delight. The very dust of their mental ground was made alive - imbued with a human quality.

How much more worthy of the Divine Creator this conception is! What a profound interest it creates in the Divine Book!

The breath of life (the original Hebrew text translates this word as *lives*) which God breathed into the nostrils of Adam can be readily understood when we recognise that Adam stands for a highly developed heavenly society and to see in that breathing, the symbol of how the Divine and heavenly life came to the people who constituted this first spiritual era! The nostrils, through which odours, good or bad, are sensed, stand for the mental faculties of perception. The people of that long ago Golden Age had an inner, living perception of what was good and true. The Lord’s life of goodness and truth came to them as a matter of inward perception.

It was breathed into their souls; and it came, not as the breath of life, but as the breath of lives, as was said in the original text. Human beings have a will and an understanding. Today the understanding is separated from the will and made capable of an intellectual elevation above the will; but this was not the case with the Adamic 'man'. Will and understanding were united. Good from the Lord flowed, in an internal way, into the will and passed immediately into the understanding and became there, in an intellectualised form, the guiding truth. Good in the will, truth in the understanding were God's breath in the most ancient peoples. It was the breath of lives in them - the life of good, and the life of truth from that good.



A Breath

When we speak of the spiritual era formed among these people we must think of it as a heavenly state of life *in* them. They had no outward book or revelation. They perceived what was good and true. They had - that is, the more interior among them - open communication with heaven; and from heaven they knew the heavenly correspondence of the objects of nature that surrounded them. Their internal sight made one with their external sight. When they looked upon natural objects, they saw what we see, but, different from us, their minds were immediately elevated to see the heavenly meaning of natural objects. Nature to them was a vast symbol of the divine mind. They could ascend from nature to

nature's God. Heaven was then close to the earth and they saw it mirrored in all the beautiful forms of natural life. Their whole being, soul, mind and body, was open to the divine inflowing. They lived and moved in the current of the divine harmonies.



A Garden Eastward in Eden

*And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east,
and there he put the man whom he had formed.*

These people of the Golden Age lived simple pastoral lives. They were celestial, open in their heart-life to all the influences that came to them from their Heavenly Father. Revelation was his voice in their souls. They lived the truth and had no memory of it apart from their life. Love and faith - their life - came to them as a constant inflowing from above, and as their external mind acted in complete harmony with their internal mind, there was nothing in them to resist or act against the divine inflow of life. They were the love-people of long ago.

The state of love in which they lived - love to the Lord and to each other - is meant by Eden. Whilst the people who formed this spiritual community of the childhood of the race had a local habitation in the world, the Eden of the Golden Age was not a natural territory or tract of land, but a heavenly state of love, with the tranquillity and blessedness of soul that belongs to and results from it. It was the kingdom of heaven in people's hearts and lives. It was within and not outside.

This thought of Eden presents no difficulty if we keep in mind that the Lord in this story is telling us, not of the natural life of an

individual, but of the spiritual life of a race. It is the history of the celestial era of humankind that we are reading about in this story - a state of love and faith in human hearts. This is the key to understanding the subject. The state of love and faith was in the most ancient people, the love-side of it - the love that filled and animated their will - being Eden. We have seen that in the people of that time, the will and understanding were united. They had no memory knowledge - no understanding, no faith, no intelligence apart from the great love-life of their will. People thought as they loved, and their thinking-life or intelligence was the form their love assumed in the understanding. Here we see the spiritual meaning of the garden planted eastward in Eden. The garden in Eden was the heavenly intelligence that was from and in the heavenly state of love denoted by Eden. Eden is one thing and the garden is quite another thing. The celestial person, because of being in a state of supreme love to the Lord - a love that is from the Lord and directed to the Lord - comes into a state of rapport with the angels and is like one among them. In this state, all thoughts and ideas which flowed from the celestial person, and even words and actions, were open to heavenly influence from the Lord, containing within them what is celestial and spiritual. Such were the celestial people of the Edenic age. They were open to the Lord; intelligence was from love. True order was formed of their life - intelligence came from within. It was the form of their love. This was the garden planted in Eden.

It is true that this intelligence was not of the external character that belongs to our idea of intelligence. It was not an intelligence formed from knowledge of external 'science'; for the people of the Golden Age did not study matters of mere 'science'. Their intelligence was the intelligence of love. They understood the deep things of the Divine Life.

Remnants of this intelligence may be found today in the simple good people of the world. Their hearts are right; their love is pure and single. While they may lack much, and in many instances all the knowledge of external matters of science and philosophy, so highly prized by the world, yet they have an inward intelligence that

opens them to see and comprehend the deepest things of what it means to be spiritual. They are the babes of the kingdom of heaven to whom the Lord reveals the things that are hidden from the so-called wise and prudent of the world. Such, only in a deeper sense, was the heavenly intelligence of the people of the Most Ancient era. Their garden was planted in Eden.

Think of what is meant by the statement that the garden was planted eastward.

In the supreme sense, the east, as a spiritual quarter, stands for the Lord. In Ezekiel we read (43:1,2):

Then he led me to the gate, the gate facing east. And behold, the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the east.

It was because of the east corresponding to the Lord that there prevailed among the Israelitish peoples, before the building of the temple, the holy custom of turning to face the east when praying.

Yet the east not only represented the Lord; it also represented the reception of intelligence from him. Here lies its meaning. The minds of the Adamic people were turned toward the Lord. He was in their love, and their love of him formed and turned their thoughts toward him. This is the true origin of orientation. Largely the internal has been lost and only the physical act remains. However, among the people of the celestial genius there was a real turning of their minds to the Lord and a real reception of intelligence from him. He was the east they turned to, and light from him was the intelligence that made their beautiful garden.

However, this was not all. There were beautiful fruit-bearing spiritual trees in the garden (Genesis 2:9):

And out of the ground the Lord God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food.

The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The trees of the garden eastward in Eden, being the heavenly intelligence of the person of the celestial age, are the perceptions from that intelligence - perceptions of truth and good. Every tree desirable to behold! Do we not see that they were the perceptions of truth? The eye of the mind is the faculty of understanding - the intellectual seeing of the truth.

We must not think of these most ancient people as being without intellectual guidance. They possessed the highest form of intelligence and from it, in an internal way, saw the deepest truths. Truth with them, though, was not a spiritual plaything. It was a vital thing of life. They beheld it as a desirable tree to look upon because it was from good and led to good. A tree good for food! How easy to see that it was the perception of good!

Truth and goodness, as matters of perception, formed the very life of these people. They did not reason about truth; they perceived it. They did not reason about good; they perceived it. Open to the Lord and the heavenly inflowing, they spiritually sensed what was true and good as we sense naturally the odours of flowers. They had no system of doctrinal teaching - all things came to them from within.

The tree of life in the midst of the garden was the highest of all their perceptions, the perception of the Lord as the very Being, their very inmost life. They ate of the fruit of this tree - lived from the Lord's life - had a sensation of his life in the midst of all their intelligence. For this tree was in the midst of the garden. The Lord's life, which is love, they made central in all their willing, thinking and doing. This was the tree of life.

While all this is true, in order to have freedom, it must appear to everyone that their life is their very own. We must be held in this appearance but it should never be confirmed as if it were the truth. This is what is meant by the tree of the knowledge of good and

evil. It was there in the garden, but to turn to it and seek to enter into heavenly things from self would result in spiritual death. So it was said (Genesis 2:17):

... for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.



The River of Eden

A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers.

The people of this time and spiritual genre had an intuitive perception of the divine symbolism of nature. The lands and rivers of the earth were to them representative of the internal things of heaven and spiritual life at the natural level. They saw from within that the world of nature was a theatre representative of the world of mind and that there was a living and vital relation of correspondence between the two worlds. Remnants of the knowledge of this correspondence of natural things to spiritual are found among us today. Christian people speak of Zion, Jerusalem, Canaan and Jordan with spiritual ideas attached to each name. In using these names they do not think of natural cities, lands or rivers, but of what they spiritually stand for.

With the Adamic people, correspondence - the relation of natural objects to spiritual realities - was a universal language. Here we have the key to the meaning of all the natural objects mentioned in connection with the Edenic story and people. As Eden was not a natural place but a highly developed state of heavenly love, as the garden eastward in Eden was not a highly cultivated piece of ground but a beautifully cultivated state of heavenly intelligence, so the river of Eden that parted into four heads was not a natural river. It was the divine wisdom of the Lord, which flowed into the

mind, performing for it a service fittingly represented by the service which a river renders to the natural country through which it courses its way.

In the minds of the most ancient people the thought of a natural river was instantly changed into the thought of the inflowing divine wisdom. The variety of forms the divine wisdom takes on as it flows into finite minds they regarded as its streams, giving corresponding or symbolic names to them. This very thing has been preserved in the ancient mythologies. The consecration of the fountains of Pindus, Helicon and Parnassus to the Muses and other references, in mythology, to rivers, their sources and results, had their rise from a perception of the correspondence of a river to divine wisdom.

In the Bible, this symbolism is clearly set forth. Those who find deep satisfaction in receiving instruction in the truths of divine wisdom are said to drink of the river of God's pleasures (Psalm 36:8). Ezekiel's vision, recorded in chapter 47, of the stream that issued from under the altar of the Lord's house and which widened and deepened as it flowed on until it became a river that no man could pass, was none other than divine wisdom received by a person and heightening as they learn to love and obey it, until it attains to what no mere finite mind can comprehend.

Take John's vision in Revelation 22:1 of the river of life proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. Is it not a symbolic representation of wisdom as the Word going forth from the Lord to men and women? The Psalmist says (46:4):

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God.

What is this river? - none other than the Lord's Word, which is his wisdom. The streams of that river - what are they? They are the particular truths informing the will, enlightening the understanding and enriching the life, that go forth from divine wisdom in the Word as streams from a river.

Now, in all these instances none of us has been thinking of a natural river. We have been thinking of the Lord's Word, which is the source of all wisdom to angels and to men. Why, then, should anyone think naturally of the river in Eden?

The river in Eden is mentioned as the symbol of the divine wisdom of God. There was a tree of life in Eden, and it was the perception of the Lord as the very life of the will - the Divine Love Itself, from which the will's affections existed. However, the Lord was not only, as to his love, the life of the affections which belonged to the Adamic people, but he was also the life of the thoughts that belonged to their understanding. God's wisdom, being the very life of their thinking, was the river of life to them, as God's love, being the very life of their willing, was the tree of life to them.

Have you noticed the fact that no name is given to this river? Why is it a river without a name? Its branches are named, but the river itself bears no name. Why is this so? It is because divine wisdom, as it is in God, cannot be expressed to finite thought. There is no finite term by which it can be defined. For this reason the river is not named. Yet when the river entered Eden "it divided and became four rivers." The nameless river entering Eden symbolises the inexpressible divine wisdom finiting itself - adapting itself to human reception and so presenting itself to the various faculties of the mind and there finding what distinguishes it in the human quality of loving and thinking. It is not difficult to comprehend this for everyone can see that the divine wisdom of God cannot fall into finite vessels, and that in order to be understood by the finite mind it must, in some sense and degree, enter the faculties of the mind.

Here, again, we come to the distinct degrees of the mind - to that sublime psychology which is a part of the Lord's revelation to humankind. The mind is a definite spiritual organism comprising distinct degrees or planes of mental life. In general, it is formed of three degrees, designated as celestial, spiritual and natural, but there is really a fourth degree. It is the rational, which exists between the spiritual and the natural. As divine wisdom flows out of God to

men and women, it is therefore parted, like the river in Eden, into four heads. It enters these four degrees of the mind, and wisdom formed in these four degrees is capable of being grasped by every person. The heads of the river can be named. Parted into four, the streams of the Edenic river were called Pison, Gihon, Hiddekel and Euphrates. Each of these names stands for a distinct form and activity of divine wisdom as received into the finite mind.

As a Hebrew word, Pison means literally a 'change' or 'extension', but spiritually the name stands for the operation of divine wisdom upon the human will. As this operation goes on, the will undergoes continual changes in its quality - constant improvement by being lifted up. As this is done, divine wisdom directs its affections in the performance of wide and extensive uses. This is Pison - change and extension.

Gihon, as a Hebrew name, means a stream or a 'valley of grace'. Spiritually, this stream of the river of Eden means the understanding's perception, through the truth, of all heavenly graces. Wisdom from God is the only thing that enables the understanding to distinguish between the graces of heaven and the moralities and virtues of a well-ordered natural life. The grace of heavenly life is a quality that belongs to a purified understanding - an understanding that sees how to classify the virtues of life, distinguishing those that are merely moral and civil from those that are the result of the inflowing wisdom of God. This is Gihon - Valley of Grace.

Hiddekel means a 'sharp voice'. Here we have divine wisdom pictured to us as the influence which illuminates the rational faculty - the inflowing reason as the sharp voice that guides, by instruction, the rational degree of the mind. In the Eden story Hiddekel flowed toward the east of Assyria. Assyria is the Bible symbol of the rational mind. The word itself means beholding. The rational is the seeing faculty of the mind. Hiddekel is the rational faculty receiving the stream of divine wisdom by which, like a voice speaking from within, it is led to look up to God and revelation in all its processes.

Euphrates, the fourth stream from the river, means literally 'to make fruitful'. The natural mind, the whole plane of natural life, when it receives the guidance of divine wisdom, is made fruitful in good works as the true and ultimate expression of the heavenly life. So the Lord's wisdom flowing into the natural mind and rendering it prolific in works of genuine charity is Euphrates.

Such is the spiritual meaning of the river in Eden parted into four streams. It is the symbolic way of telling us of the influence of divine wisdom upon every department of the life of the Adamic people. There was a stream for the will (the celestial); there was a stream for the understanding, (the spiritual); there was a stream for what lies between the spiritual and the natural (the rational) and there was a stream for the natural mind and life. The whole mind and life were reached and affected by the wisdom of the Lord which adapted itself to every plane of their being.



Spiritual Development Experienced Personally

Adam and the Garden of Eden - *Love United to Wisdom*

As we come to accept concepts which we believe are necessary for eternal contentment and then strive to change our approach to life to incorporate them in our motivation and action, a sense of being led by higher loves increasingly develops. Each truth we accept is empowered by a spiritual love formed as its core. This will happen in a myriad of occasions and ways during our lifelong endeavours to grow spiritually ~ *the forming of celestial 'Man'* or Adam. For the most part we will essentially be unaware of what is going on in our higher levels of consciousness, the mundane and routine requirements of life holding us firmly within their grip. Yet, there will be times when we directly experience something of the process, clearly

seeing the results of changes we have implemented in our spiritual motivation, particularly when directing some aspect of our life simply out of a love for the spiritual well-being of another. This will lead to a sense of tranquillity and blessedness at the level of our soul ~ *the Garden of Eden*. All feels good because we know our own self-serving direction has become subservient to that of divine love which is the true order for spirituality. While it is necessary for us to have put in the work, we recognise that progress is only achieved through everything being provided by the Divine Source of Life: spiritual goodness ~ *every tree pleasant to the sight and good for food* ~ and spiritual wisdom ~ *the river which parted into four heads for water*. What else do we need?

Personal Reflection

Can you recall a time in your life when you sensed a deep feeling of peace and joy due to implementing a spiritual principle in your life specifically for the good of someone else? Was the acknowledgement of the involvement of a higher power in it all part of your process?



Eve and the Serpent

Creating Eve

So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.

When the true spiritual character of these early chapters of the book of Genesis dawns upon the mind, one feels less and less inclined to call attention to the difficulties standing in the way of one who attempts to invent theories of a merely literal interpretation. God's purpose in the very structure of these early records is so apparent that the mere calling of attention to their literal contradictions seems almost sacrilegious. For that reason we have not dwelt at all with that phase of the subject but have held the mind on the high plane of their spiritual meaning. It must be a constructive, not a destructive, work. We need therefore, to come directly to the Lord's own opening of the internal sense of the story of Adam's sleep and the creation of Eve.

The Most Ancient era gradually rose to the fullest enjoyment of all the love and intelligence that belong to the highest state of regeneration. The deepest heavenly love filled the hearts of the

people in the Adamic spiritual community. That love was Eden. The highest heavenly intelligence illuminated the mind of the people of that time. That intelligence was the beautiful garden planted eastward in Eden. The deep perceptive faculty with which this era was endowed, enabled it to receive instruction from the Lord in an internal way. The voice of the Lord was heard in the garden, that is, the guidance was not effected by allowing an outward rule of life, but by an inward listening to the Lord's voice as it uttered its message in their souls.

It was a beautiful life, indeed too beautiful for us, to whom the Lord must come in such a different way, to form any adequate idea of it. The man - the Adam - dwelt alone in the garden. How significant this is when we learn what is meant in the Bible by living alone! Those who look to their Heavenly Father and trust in his guidance in all things are said to be alone. External things simply accepted as spiritual principles - things that make one conscious of one's individuality - are not in the affections and thoughts of such highly developed people. They live alone with the Lord. In speaking of the future of Israel as the Lord's people, Balaam said (Numbers 23:9):

Behold a people dwelling alone.

Moses, on one occasion, in speaking of Israel, said (Deuteronomy 33:28):

So Israel lived in safety, Jacob lived alone.

A prophet of the olden time, exhorted Israel, saying (Jeremiah 49:31):

Rise up, advance against a nation at ease, that dwells securely, declares the Lord, that has no gates or bars, that dwells alone.

Of course, we all see that by dwelling alone was not meant individual solitude; so of Adam. As Adam is the name of the

spiritual era of the childhood of the human race, his being alone means that those forming this celestial community lived alone with the Lord, that it was led and influenced solely by divine guidance from within.

We have no means of determining how long this single leadership of the Lord - this dwelling alone with him - lasted. A very considerable length of time must have elapsed before the Adamic people began to turn to self and therefore away from the Lord. Ultimately, though, there came a generation from this era that were disposed towards their own selfhood, who entertained the thought and desire to possess the consciousness of an individuality apart from the Divine. This thought and desire grew from generation to generation, until finally the selfhood, the personal individuality, had such prominence given to it that the sole leading of the Lord was no longer possible. This state, when it was formed, is what is meant by the words (Genesis 2:18):

Then the Lord God said, "it is not good that the man should be alone".

This does not mean that in the original creation the Divine had failed to supply all the needs of 'man' and that upon the discovery of 'man's' need for human companionship, it was necessary to set to and remedy the defect. What it is telling us is that a state had arisen amongst these Adamic peoples whereby it was felt that it was no longer good to live alone with the Lord. The Lord respects, in all the dispensations of his providence, the freedom of every individual. So when the Adamic peoples no longer desired to be led solely by the Lord, he did not interfere with that freedom. It would not have been for the good of the individuals or humanity in general if the Lord had compelled them to live alone with him.

Yet while the Lord permitted the Adamic people to descend into this more external state, he did not turn away from them. He followed these most ancient people in their decline and raised up the means of providing the opportunity for them to still grow into

a heavenly state even on the plane to which they had fallen. Hence we read that the Lord said (Genesis 2:18):

“I will make him a helper for him.”

Here we come to the story of Adam's deep sleep, but do not think of a person going to sleep physically. The sleep described here was a spiritual sleep. The Apostle Paul exhorts spiritual sleepers where he says (Ephesians 5:14):

Awake, O sleeper, and rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.

The mind is not simply a thinking faculty; it is a spiritual organism, created in distinct levels of consciousness. This was true of the people called Adam. So, when that Most Ancient spiritual era ceased to desire to be alone with the Lord, the highest plane of life, Adam fell into a state of spiritual sleep. The Lord's love was no longer active on that plane. Deep sleep brooded over it. This was Adam's sleep. Falling into this sleep, the Adamic people would have utterly destroyed all heavenly life in themselves if it had not been for the Lord's divine mercy. They inclined to their selfhood, and it would have swallowed them up. Think of the Lord's mercy! Adam sleeps; the highest life of that first spiritual era has ceased; but while Adam sleeps, the Lord takes one of his ribs and closes up the flesh instead, and that rib, he builds into a woman. So runs the allegory. What does it mean? Remember, it is the spiritual condition of the Most Ancient era that is treated of in this story of the rib being made into a woman - remember that, and the whole narrative becomes clear.

The rib of Adam stands for the selfhood - or the individuality - of those earliest people. This selfhood, in itself, was dead - without any spiritual life. Yet it was capable of being vivified with life from the Lord and be the means of arresting spiritual ruin. In being taken out of the most ancient 'man', raised into a new condition and animated by another life, it could come to see that what is good and true is to be believed and practised in daily life by each

person as of themselves, yet with the acknowledgment that the will, the understanding and the power to do so are from the Lord alone. When the selfhood is vivified in this way, it is no longer an unbending task-master - no longer a hard bone. It becomes soft, pliable, fair, yielding and lovable. These qualities are meant by the 'woman', beautiful and innocent.

This is not, therefore, the story of the origin of woman. The 'woman', though, is introduced into the story because, in all the tenderness and beautiful qualities of high and noble womanhood, she represents what was true of the selfhood of the most ancient people after it was taken out of them and raised to newness of life by the Lord. They could love this state of selfhood, and the Lord could still retain his hold on them. It was, of course, a more external state than the one pictured by Adam alone in the garden. It was not an evil state, though. In coming into it, the future generations of the Adamic peoples withdrew from many internal things. This is what is meant by the forsaking of father and mother. These peoples could cleave to the wife - to the pure and the good, as they saw them, on a more external plane. Further, to show that while humankind had fallen into a more outward state of spirituality but not, as yet, an utterly evil one, it is said (Genesis 2:25):

And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

There was no guilt up to this point. The impulse to live according to what their senses told them - providing the appearance that their life was their own - still yielded willing obedience to the dictates of the celestial principles of the mind in the most ancient people. Like an obedient servant, the sensuous level of their minds ministered to the attainment of the highest life. It kept its subordinate position. The whole plane of sense life was designed by the all-wise Creator to serve the higher life of the soul. The senses are inlets for certain kinds of knowledge - doors through which the outer things of the world enter the mind; and while they are kept subordinate to the higher principles of the soul, they serve the use

of elevating and enlarging the mind; but when they are turned to and exalted above the intellectual and spiritual things of life, they close the mind to heaven and open it downward to the world and invert all true order.

It was, though, the beginning of the fall that went on, as described in detail within the subsequent biblical stories, until the incarnation of the Messiah.



The Serpent of Eden

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field.

The sensuous level of life, the part of life that belongs to the senses of the body, already referred to, is what is meant by the serpent in the Eden story (Genesis 3:1).

The animals to which Adam gave names stand for the affections and thoughts of the most ancient people. By Adam naming the animals is meant that the peoples of that celestial era perceived the quality of all such affections and thoughts. Now, the statement that the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field means that the senses are more deceptive than any other quality of human life. They are the lowest and the least to be depended upon. They call for constant watchfulness on the part of the higher powers of the mind; they need constant direction and guidance. They belong to the outer extremes of human life and are open directly to receive impressions from the world, by which the memory is furnished with things it can use with persuasive art in favour of the delights and greed of mere bodily life. The natural mind is formed through storing knowledge from the world via the senses of the body. It

then begins to reason from that sense level, rejecting the truth of revelation and doubting all divine things. The senses cannot be trusted. The judgments and conclusions formed from them are always erroneous.

In finding spiritual truth, every wise person has to correct the impressions received by the senses. They cannot be followed. While the integrity of the people of the Most Ancient times remained, this sensuous level was 'as wise as a serpent' because it admitted into itself the correcting light of the higher principles of the mind. As succeeding generations of that era began to incline to the sense life, to look to the senses for their interpretation of life, they came more and more under the influence of the sensuous side of their being, until all the inner avenues of life were closed.

To whom did the serpent make its appeal? To Eve, who is the symbol of the selfhood. The selfhood, imbued with innocence, was at first a helpmate. Now it had grown so large in the regard of these most ancient people that it became a means by which the senses were able to involve them in complete spiritual ruin.

The tree of the knowledge of good and of evil was not literal tree, for we can all see that the knowledge of good and evil could not have been the product of a tree. The knowledge of spiritual things is communicated to humankind by the Lord. It can come only by revelation, given either through an internal dictate or by a written word of Scripture.

With the most ancient people, this knowledge flowed in from the Lord and they were forbidden to attempt to gain it by any external methods. This is the reason Adam and Eve were allowed to eat from all of the trees in the garden except the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Why this prohibition? They were permitted to possess the 'fruit' of every perception of goodness and truth except the knowledge that belongs to God alone. For to eat of this tree meant a mental appropriation by which they would be led to believe that spiritual knowledge was the result of their own self-derived intelligence. Yet the Eve in this generation of the Most

Ancient era - the selfhood - had opened the way for the pleadings of the sense life. Knowledge, as a tree to *see*, was planted by the Lord in Eden; for it is lawful to see the tree of knowledge - to seek to learn and comprehend the things of knowledge; but it is never lawful to eat of the tree of knowledge because that act stands for making knowledge a result of our own efforts. It meant intellectual conceit. The serpent said (Genesis 3:5):

. . . you will be like God

However, this generation yielded to the deception of the sense life. They began to think of themselves as wise from themselves - to be as gods. The senses won out, for Eve it is said (Genesis 3:6):

. . . she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

The selfhood, the will, yielded to the senses, and as a result, the intellectual faculty consented. Innocence was lost. The soul was closed to God. The sense of guilt came. Conscience took the place of perception. They knew they were naked. Eden became closed to them and we are told of Adam (Genesis 3:23):

The Lord God sent him out of the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken.



The Curse

Eating of the tree of knowledge is assigned, in the Genesis story, as the reason for the expulsion from Eden. When we see that for those Adamic people:

- Eden was the state of heavenly love which had been gradually formed in their hearts;
- the garden *in* Eden was the heavenly intelligence of their minds;
- the tree of knowledge gave the appearance that life was their own;
- eating of that tree meant that they confirmed and accepted the appearance as a truth; and
- as a result they came to regard knowledge of spiritual things as self derived,

we can see that nothing less than the loss of their heavenly love and intelligence could result.

The question can be asked - If the serpent stands for humankind's sense-nature which finally led to going astray, why did the Lord put such a snare in the first place? In answering this question, we must fully comprehend what is meant by the term 'sense-nature'. It does not stand for the lusts and appetites of a fallen mind, but for that level of the mind which sees and concludes through the senses of the body - the sensuous level of our mind. This level is the sense plane of life, or the sense-consciousness, which makes us conscious of the external world and its life. Clearly the Lord could not have created us without this plane of life. We would not be fully human if it were left out of our constitution. With the primeval Adamic people, this plane was in perfect order. It was upright. It looked to the higher element of spiritual reason for guidance. It was an obedient servant.

The posterity of the Adamic people, who lost their heavenly Eden, inclined to this sensuous principle. They paid an undue regard to that which, on its own plane, was designed to minister to higher things. They came to prefer the things of mere bodily life to the things of the soul. This led them to eat of the tree of knowledge, so to speak. They then came to believe in their own goodness and wisdom; they became wise in their own conceit; they attempted to enter into divine and heavenly things through a cultivation of their sense-life. So that which was a necessary endowment became,

because of an abuse, the source of the greatest evils. This could not have been prevented without violation to that freedom of will in which the Lord holds everyone. Where the will is not free there can be no moral responsibility.

The dreadful 'crime' committed by this generation of the Most Ancient era was the exaltation of their own good above God - the turning of their minds downward to the senses and the consequent loss of all the heavenly excellencies that had crowned and beautified the lives of their forefathers. It attracts fearful curses. How are we to understand this? The idea generally prevails that God became angry with people when they transgressed his law, and that he visited these evils on humankind because of his anger. This cannot be true. Anger has no place in the divine mind. It is as utterly foreign to God's nature as sin itself. There may be here the appearance of anger, but it is only an appearance. It cannot be a reality. Anger when attributed to the Lord, expresses the aspect under which he appears to the perverted mind of men and women.

Those in a state of evil think God must be angry when his laws are broken, because of the ideas of God formed from this state. God is believed to do what they know they would do in God's place. Here is a principle by which to explain all that is said in the stories of the Bible about the anger of God. However, the serpent was cursed: the woman's sorrow was to be multiplied, and the ground, cursed of God, was to bring forth thorns and thistles. What do these things mean?

The serpent of this story is, as we have seen, the sensuous side of the mind. This mental serpent, which in the beginning was upright, led the selfhood of the Adamic people astray and involved them in dreadful evils. It therefore turned away from its subordinate position. Then it sank to the lowest depths, reaching a deeper degradation than any other fallen principle in the Adamic people. The curse, which is said to have consigned it to drag its slimy length upon the ground, was simply the utterance of the divine truth as to the state of the sensuous mind after it averted itself from the divine order in which it was formed.

This side of the mind, which in the beginning looked up to higher principles, now crawled close to the earth and was fed by merely earthly and bodily things. The higher degrees of people's life were closed and they began to live a sensuous life believing only the things reported to their minds through the outer doorways of their bodily senses. They became sensuous - that is, a generation of serpents - mere naturalists, to whom God and spiritual things were mere sounds. Ah yes, this curse upon the serpent is seen even in our own day in men and women who are seeking the satisfactions of life only in the gratification of bodily appetite, in just pleasure and natural diversions.

What was the enmity between the serpent and the woman and her seed? It was the separation that was then effected between the sensuous life and the heavenly selfhood. These two planes became antagonistic. There originated then an antagonism which has persisted in all the succeeding generations of humankind. We all know what it is. Paul graphically describes it (Galatians 5:17):

For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other.

It has been the conflict of the ages, and will continue until the mystery of sin is ended in the final triumph of redemption.

What was the curse upon the woman? Certainly it was no divine infliction. The woman of the Edenic story was the symbol of the selfhood, which the Lord mercifully granted to the Adamic people when they could no longer live alone with him, and into which he inspired what was lovely and pure. Yet this selfhood, yielding to the senses, fell. Its entire character was changed. Thereafter, to be brought into the states of heavenly life would be hard. It would be difficult to even conceive of spiritual things, and great spiritual sorrow and temptation would be experienced in bringing the high truths of heaven into the daily life. Is it not so? How difficult it is for men and women to comprehend that there is a spiritual world!

How hard it is for them to believe in the super-sensuous life! This is all the result of the fall of humankind.

Then comes the curse upon the ground (Genesis 3:18):

Thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you;

The ground referred to is the external, natural life. Out of this ground, the Lord, in the beginning, formed 'man'; now there is a return to the ground from whence that formation took place; but it brings forth evils, which are spiritual thorns, and false principles of life, which are spiritual thistles. These things became the hereditary nature of people; they grew up spontaneously. The curse upon the 'man'? He was to eat bread by the sweat of his face - hard work! No longer would good come directly from the Lord by a gentle inflowing into the will. The order of this inflowing was changed. Only through spiritual toil could heavenly life - the good of heaven - be procured. It has been so ever since. Humankind came under a different law, the law expressed by Paul where he says: "Work out your soul's salvation with fear and trembling." Only in this way can we expect to procure and eat of the bread of life.

What a wonderful parable this story of the first pair is! We have seen Adam and Eve in their beautiful garden home - happy, because innocent. We have traced their decline, step by step, to their final act of disobedience. Now we see them driven from their beautiful garden to till the ground. It is all a wonderful divine parable. We have grown familiar with the thought that Adam is the name of that portion of the then existing human race which, by process of spiritual and celestial unfolding, was formed into the first spiritual era established upon the earth; and we have learned to think of Eden as the name given to the beautiful love-life they lived, and of the garden, eastward in Eden, as the name given to designate the heavenly intelligence they possessed; for like a luxuriant garden, their minds, always open to the Lord, brought forth every form and order of celestial intelligence.

In this love-state, with all the beautiful forms of intelligence which clothed it, the Adamic people lived for many generations. Then the love of leading themselves began to take root and grow in their hearts but gradually the Lord modified that love by imbuing it with the affection of looking and acknowledging him in the life of acting *as* of themselves. When he showed this marvellous love for them, he called it taking a rib out of Adam and building it into woman. This mercy of the Lord arrested, for a while, the fall of this spiritual era, but the decline once entered upon, went on until by turning to their senses for the interpretation of life, those who were a part of the race's infancy, fell entirely away from their Heavenly Father's guidance and lost their love for him and their intelligence of heavenly things, and were expelled from Eden.

The steps in this moral decline were slowly taken, and many generations came and passed away before these early people came to believe that they had life and intelligence from themselves. The story of the talking serpent is introduced into the parable to symbolise the sensuous life of these most ancient people. This sense plane, good when subordinated to the higher principles of the mind, they exalted to a degree of dominance and began to listen to its pleadings. This led them into evil.

The serpent has ever been regarded as the symbol of sensuous thought and life. In Phoenician mythology we have the story of an egg surrounded by a serpent. It was the Phoenician way of expressing the fact that life, in its very beginning, is beset with danger from sensuous thoughts and affections. The hair of Medusa was transformed into serpents after she had violated the sanctity of the temple of Minerva. This myth expressed the law that the ultimate things of life become merely sensual in those who violate the holy things of their soul life. Hercules strangling great serpents while he was still an infant in his cradle and afterward destroying the hydra, is a mythological picture of how innocence destroys every approach of sensuality and how through the labours of spiritual birth every form of evil is overcome.

The serpent of the Edenic story represents the same things. Eve, listening to its subtle pleadings, was the selfhood inclining to the mere sense plane and finally yielding to its seductive influence. This could not have been prevented without taking from the most ancient people that freedom of will which enabled them to live a responsible human life. In this way the final fall came about.

Gradually, the Adamic people confirmed as a truth the appearance that they lived of themselves and that life was their own. Little by little they brought into their thinking the importance of their individuality; little by little they receded from the inward guidance of the Lord until finally sensuous reasoning seduced them into believing that outward and visible things were more real than inward and invisible things; that it was folly to believe life came to them from God when it was evident to their senses it originated in them; that it was foolish to look up to the guidance of an invisible being when their sense-consciousness clearly revealed to them the fact that they guided themselves. So it was these appearances, which they exalted into the region of truth and adopted, that led them ultimately to believe they were good and wise of themselves - gods knowing good and evil.

What could result from this dreadful state but their expulsion from Eden? This expulsion, however, was not an arbitrary act on the part of the Lord. It was the result of their closure to the inflow of the Lord's life.



Expulsion from the Garden

The story of the Lord driving the first pair out of Eden is only the parable way of describing how things appeared to the fallen people of the Most Ancient era. The people of whom this parable treats

had effaced those heavenly graces which were once the glory of their lives. They could no longer respond to divine love. They had closed, plane after plane, their minds to the heavenly influences, and their expulsion from Eden was their own act.

It is self-evident that as evil loves grow in a person's heart they expel that person from any real delight in the society of innocent and pure-minded people. The person does not love what they love but seeks what is in accord with their own love. So it was in the long ago. By closing their hearts to heaven, the fallen people of the Adamic age withdrew from the sacred influences of goodness and separated themselves from heaven as bad people expel themselves from the society of the virtuous and truth-loving.

However, they were shown a great mercy. We are told of it in the story of the cherubim with the sword of flame stationed at the east of the garden to guard the way to the tree of life. Do not think of a literal cherub, nor of a literal sword of flame. Instead, think of the mercy and providence of the Lord over those most ancient people, his watchful care lest from a simple reasoning from their senses, they should seek to enter into holy things and treat them with irreverence (profanity), and by so doing bring a deeper curse upon themselves.

We need to remember that at this time in the spiritual progression of humankind, there was no separation of the understanding from the will. The great miracle of such a separation was to come a little later and we will deal with that in due course. The will, or the ability to love, feel, desire and intend had to be guarded lest in them there might occur a mixture of good and evil. Such a mixture is profanation; and this sin is incurable because it closes the very capacity for the reception of God. The gate of their will had to be guarded; and the loving providence of the Lord in so protecting them against this sin of profanation is what is meant by the cherub at the east of Eden. The cherub stood there to guard the way to the tree of life (Genesis 3:22):

... lest he reached out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever...

How remarkable this language is! Theologians have thought that it was God's way of preventing humanity from attaining an immortal existence in this world. It was not that. So long as a person does not mix good and evil in the heart and therefore profane holy things, they are able to be saved; but if they become guilty of deliberate profanation, they commit the sin that can be cured neither in this world nor in the afterlife. To eat of the tree of life after they had turned their hearts to the world - to put forth their hand and pluck the fruit of that tree - meant to attempt to enter into interior things, holy things, from their selfhood and own power. To do this would mean to live forever in evil - in a state of utter profanation. Seeing this, what a mercy that a cherub should stand there to prevent such an awful crime!

Here in the east of the garden appeared also the flaming sword, turning itself every way to guard the tree of life. This flaming sword was the self-love of those fallen people, with its insane greeds and persuasions which desire to enter into holy things, and by so doing profane them. The sword of flame turned every way, and therefore, prevented profanation. It is the same today. The Lord's providence prevents evil people from entering into and profaning the internal things of the Word. A flame, as of a sword, turns every way to guard the Lord's Word and true teaching from it. He hides these interior things from the wise and prudent. The man-child of the Book of Revelation is caught up to the throne of God and the woman finds a place in the wilderness.



Spiritual Development Experienced Personally

Eve and the Serpent - *Our Ego Entrapped by our Senses*

This is probably one of the most well-known biblical stories from the Old Testament. It has certainly given rise to many different interpretations. A vital part of our spiritual awakening and growing is the recognition that much of our life can be motivated by selfish thoughts, feelings and actions.

In this state ~ *Adam sleeps* ~ our rational processes to simply serve our own desires override higher principles for living which were active when we were more conscious spiritually. These self-serving rational processes are hard and unyielding ~ *Adam's rib*; they are very precious to us as they give the appearance that we live from ourselves rather than from the Divine Source of Life.

On one hand, this sense of selfhood (self-consciousness or our ego) ~ *the rib removed from Adam and given life as Eve* ~ will become a most important aspect in our quest to grow spiritually when we realise it is part of our God-given nature ~ *Eve being Adam's complementary helper*. Armed with this knowledge, we can use our rational faculties to control ego desires, directing them towards serving higher motives aimed at the wise implementation of divine truths and principles.

Yet, on the other hand, awareness of its presence can bring danger for us; we consciously realise we have the ability to choose between higher and lower thoughts and loves. For much of our lives we necessarily operate at the level of our five senses but despite our understanding of what a spiritual life might consist in, the sense-impression can become the reality for us rather than simply the appearance of it. We can be led to make choices which can allow this appeal to our senses for pure self-gratification ~ *the beguiling serpent*. Sensual pleasures first appeal to us because they are delightful and then our mind begins to think up reasons why we should indulge in them ~

eating of the fruit of the tree of good and evil. On realising the error of our ways, we usually compound the problem by using our own rationality to find excuses ~ *Adam and Eve covering their nakedness.* If we do so, consequences follow. We are punished, not by God who is perfect love and always trying to lead us to better outcomes, but by ourselves. At least temporarily, we close ourselves off from living in a new state of harmony and peace with ourselves and others ~ *banishment from the Garden of Eden* ~ and have to seek new ways for spiritual advancement.

Personal Reflection

Observe your thoughts and your feelings from time to time to see if you can pinpoint any that make you seemingly more important than other people around you, more deserving of sympathy, of respect, more 'special'? Can you detect any sense of rigidity in your view of yourself? If so, how do you really feel when you realise this? Is there a sense of guilt? These painful admissions can lead us to great rewards spiritually.



Cain, Abel and Seth

The Firstborn Brothers

The story of the birth of Cain and Abel is told in very simple and direct language (Genesis 4:1,2):

Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord". And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground.

These events occurred after Adam and his wife had been expelled from Eden which is tremendously important to the whole subject we are now to consider. The story is an allegory but it is none the less inspired Scripture and its meaning is full of heavenly instruction. While still examining that Most Ancient era in the history of humankind, we are moving into a period in which heresies concerning truth had arisen. So long as the Adamic race was in the Eden state, it had no doctrine as a thing to be studied. When it lost its Edenic state, it came into mental obscurity and could no longer be led from within.

Now that the Adamic or Most Ancient era had fallen from its first estate, different views of faith and life arose within it; the people,

having turned their minds outward to mere sensuous reasoning, began to act from their selfhood. This introduced a dividing principle amongst them. Under the influence of self, sects began to arise, and the descendants of the original Adamic era arranged themselves around certain definite principles of faith and life.

These conditions, as they arose, formed a spiritual genealogy. This is what is involved in the story of Adam's descendants. The genealogy is the story of the conception and birth of religious opinions and sentiments.

This same condition or law has occurred many times in the spiritual history of humankind. The followers of Christ came together as the Holy Apostolic Catholic Church through the missionary labours of the Apostles and their successors. The Church was one body of men and women. However, as the love of spiritual dominion and the pride of intelligence grew up in the heart and mind of the priesthood, divisions came, sects arose, and the body of believers arranged themselves under different leaders. The first schism took the name of Roman Catholic; the second took the name of Greek Catholic; the third took the name of Anglican Catholic. In this way one sect was propagated from another in the original Catholic Church. Besides these three divisions, there were a great many minor Catholic sects following the opinions of their respective founders. The same is true of the Protestant Church. It branched out into almost innumerable sects, each claiming to have the whole truth. So that if it were our custom to write church history as the ancients did, we should have an ecclesiastical history that would read very much like the history we are considering.

The story of Cain and Abel becomes clear in its teaching when viewed from this standpoint. Cain and Abel are not to be understood as individuals, but as symbolising two different classes of religious sentiments and spiritual principles that grew up in the Adamic era. So long as it maintained its integrity, the minds of these Adamic peoples were united, and all the various faculties of their minds existed and acted in harmony. The will loved what was

good, and from that good, the understanding perceived what was true.

However, when these peoples turned their minds out and down to the sense plane and sought to enter into interior things from mere sensuous knowledge, the two faculties of the will and the understanding ceased to act as one. The harmony of the moral creation was broken up. The will and the understanding began to act against each other, and in course of time there developed two types of people. One of these types was called Cain; the other was called Abel.

The Cainites were people who had an intellectual knowledge of what was good and true, but exalted that knowledge into mere faith and claimed that faith itself, irrespective of whether or not that faith was put into action, was the all of spiritual life. So arose in those times, the heresy of the superiority of faith over all other aspects of living, or faith-alone.

Abel was the name given to those, who, while they did not disparage faith, nor ignore the place of spiritual knowledge, saw that charity (in the sense of living life for the good of others) was superior to knowledge and the mere teaching of faith. So, side by side, these two groupings grew up within the Adamic peoples, the Cainites claiming that faith was a more excellent and saving quality than charity, and the Abelites claiming that charity was the great and distinguishing mark of the religious life. Both of these sects professed to serve the Lord, but each had a different principle and motive in that service.

Cain was the firstborn of Adam. It was natural that he should come first, for "in eating of the forbidden fruit", the Adamic people chose knowledge as a thing above obedience; and in so placing the cultivation of the intellect above the cleansing of the heart, the first outcome - the first spiritual conception and birth of the Adamic era - could not have been other than the teaching of faith as something separate from charity and forming the sole

ground of acceptance with the Lord. All who accepted this spiritual teaching were denominated Cain.

Abel was the second son. He stands for the principle that charity is the supreme characteristic of the truly religious person. The Abelites were those who cultivated the good of charity in their hearts and practised it in their lives. They loved the Lord; they loved each other. They had faith, but it was not made the prominent thing in their religious life. Charity of life was their principal quest. They were humble, gentle, kind and loving. They believed, but they laid the emphasis upon the loving and doing side of religion.

Here, then, we see the two branches into which those from the great Adamic era were divided:

- Cain being the branch that placed the totality of religion in mere faith by itself; and
- Abel being the branch that stood for charity as the embodiment and true expression of faith.

Look at the respective occupations of these two brothers. Cain was a tiller of the ground. Abel was a shepherd. Cain a tiller of the ground! That expression is full of meaning in relation to what he stands for! The ground mentioned here is the external or natural plane of the mind. By Cain tilling this ground is meant the labour bestowed upon the cultivation of the external mind in making it fruitful in the production of theories of faith as a thing apart from the daily life.

The Cainites did what the same kind of faith-alone people did and do in the Christian Church. For instance, - the Apostolic Church worshipped one Lord, and had one faith and one baptism. It was based on true principles. In time, though, schismatic bodies formed in it invented theories of the Trinity, theories of Atonement, theories of Salvation, theories of Faith, almost without number. What was the age of the Councils but a long period in which Cain did nothing else than till the ground? The various and

conflicting teachings of Catholic and Protestant theologies are, in the Christian Church, only the reward of the labour conferred by Cain, on the ground he has tilled. It was the same in the Adamic era. The intellect of the Cainites was busy tilling the ground of faith-alone.

On the other hand, Abel was a shepherd. Spiritually thought of, a shepherd is one who carries out good in a charitable life and as a “keeper of sheep,” Abel stands for what this truly religious branch of the Adamic peoples was doing daily - keeping the affections of their hearts pure in the sight of their Heavenly Father. The Abelites employed their time in promoting the life of charity in themselves and in others. They were keepers of spiritual sheep - not despising nor undervaluing the faith side of religion - for they knew that without faith it was impossible to please their Heavenly Father. Yet they made the life of religion to consist in that principle of charity of which Paul says (1 Corinthians 13:4):

Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant.



The Offerings

In considering the offerings of Cain and Abel we need to recall that these peoples of the Most Ancient era, when in a pure state, had an internal perception of the correspondence of natural objects to spiritual realities. All of their compositions were structured according to the law of correspondence and their mode of conversing was correspondential. They employed the objects of nature to express their spiritual ideas. This was especially true of the animal kingdom. When, for instance, we read of Adam giving

names to the animals that are said to have been brought to him, we are not to think of natural names being given to natural animals, but instead we are to think of those earliest men and women linking celestial qualities to the various affections and thoughts of the mind. The same applies to the fruits of the ground; to those ancient peoples they were symbols of the fruits of the mind. The offerings of Cain and Abel were not therefore what we might understand by ceremonial worship. This practice of acknowledging the Divine did not begin until later when men and women lost the spiritual ideas of worship and formed a worship with the things that in the beginning were spoken of only as symbols of celestial affections and thoughts.

The period in the Adamic spiritual era, pictured in the story of Cain and Abel, was not far enough removed from its original state as to require ceremonial worship. This state was to come. When it did the objects, the names of which were only mentioned in connection with worship, began to be used. What we do have here was the origin of outward sacrificial worship. Remember, Cain was the name given to those who made religion to consist in faith without charity and the people of this Cainitish sect who adopted this principle had their own mode and practices of worship. At first there was something of charity among the Cainites. They did not begin as they ended. They underwent a gradual decline. Each step they took was away from their original regard for charity, until they finally eliminated it entirely from their lives and from their worship of the Lord.

This is pointed out in the allegory itself. It is said (Genesis 4:3):

In the course of time Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground.

When expelled from the garden, Adam was required to till the ground from whence he was taken, this 'ground' being the external nature. The external nature is the ground on which the celestial and spiritual states of the internal nature rest. They must be

grounded in what is natural; for the external mind is to the more interior things of the soul what the earth is to the body.

The original Adamic state was made of the dust of this ground, which means that as the most ancient people rose into the life of celestial rebirth, a human quality was given to the most external plane of their mind. The Lord, in the gospel, used the ground in a spiritual sense when he said (Mark 4:26):

The kingdom of heaven is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground.

Further, in the parable of the Sower, he speaks of the seed falling on “good ground”. It can plainly be seen that in these instances, the Lord used natural ground in a symbolic sense as denoting the external mind of men and women.

Now, notice one important thing. Cain did not bring to the Lord an offering of the fruit of *seeds* sown in the ground. He brought of the *fruit of the ground* and not the fruit of the seeds. Do you see the point? The fruit of the ground represented simply the works - the deeds - of the external person. It is not, however, meaning the physical body. From a psychological perspective, the external person is formed of the affections, thoughts and knowledges that are gathered from the natural world. These form the exterior plane of every person as a spiritual being. The natural body, strictly speaking, forms no part of an individual. It is only a material scaffolding within which the external as well as the higher spiritual person is being reared.

The internal part of a person is created on a level with heaven, formed so that the things of heaven can be seen and loved. The external part is created on a level with the world and is formed to see and love the things of the world. In a perfectly reborn spiritual person, these two - the internal and the external - act as *one*. In the person whose loves are evil, however, the internal is closed to heaven and only the external is open and active. The quality of the external mind in such a person is evil. In life’s motivation, there is

a separation from all that is of heaven. The person becomes worldly no matter how much memory knowledge there may be of spiritual things. Any good carried out is done from a selfish intent and not from the acknowledgement of the Lord. This is what is meant by the ground of which Cain was a tiller. The spiritual life, therefore, of the Cainites did not have anything from the Lord in it. It was the fruit of the ground - mere knowledge, mere form - a body that had no soul in it. How could it be acceptable unto the Lord? It was heartless. Faith as a thing by itself is mere self-derived intelligence and can never be a thing of divine regard. It belongs to the external person separated from its proper internal - which is the fruit of the ground rather than the fruit of the seeds - and is not accepted by the Lord. This is why Cain's offering was rejected.

Look now at Abel. The Lord respected his offering because, as representing the branch of the Adamic people principled in charity, he brought to the Lord the offering of a sincere and good heart. Under the ceremonial law, offerings taken from the flock were lambs, sheep, rams and goats. These stood for the good things of charity. The Abelites were full of innocence and charity. They acknowledged the Lord with their whole heart. Their faith was only the form of their charity, and their charity consisted in shunning evils as sins against God and in doing good according to divine will.

There is no real charity without innocence; and innocence is the quality of single mindedness - a willingness to be led by the Lord alone. As Abel stands, in this allegory, for all who preserved the principle and life of charity, his offering to the Lord of lambs, the firstlings of the flock, was acceptable to the Lord for it portrays the quality of innocence in life of the Abelites. All that made them a people of charity with its innocence of life, came to them from the Lord, and they acknowledged him in every form of their charitable and innocent lives, and acknowledged him from the good of charity.

The Abelites were not without faith, but their faith was a living and doing faith - a faith made perfect by love. They knew their Heavenly Father's will; they believed his word; but they also did their Heavenly Father's will and Word. This is why the Lord respected Abel's offering. When Cain's offering was rejected, it is said (Genesis 4:5):

So Cain was very angry, and his face fell.

How expressive this is! Faith-alone has in it the *anger* that is to come to those who adopt it as a principle of their spiritual approach to life. Cain's anger is the evil that fills the place in the heart that charity should occupy. The falling of Cain's face expresses the dreadful state of those long-ago faith-alone people of the Adamic age; for the changes that take place with the face indicate corresponding and *causal* changes in the mind. With Abel it was different. A life from charity was acceptable to the Lord; and the Abelites must have experienced in their hearts the sweetness of their communion with their good and Divine Father in heaven.



Death of Abel; Cain the Fugitive

The wickedness of the Cainitish sect in Adamic times continued to increase; for it is as true of a false and heretical sect as it is of an individual, that unless it repents of its evils and abandons its false teaching, it will continue to sink lower and lower on the moral scale.

This was the case with the Cainites. At first they were not wholly bad. They had, it is true, adopted a false spiritual principle, but in the beginning they retained something of charity. Yet the faith-

alone principle for which they stood involved the deadly falsity that a religious life was merely for the intellect. This gradually led them to have less and less regard for charity, until it culminated in the utter rejection and death of charity in their hearts and lives.

This is clearly pointed out in the allegory (Genesis 4:8):

Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.

The idea expressed here is that of an angry dispute. Cain was the aggressor. He talked or disputed with Abel. He rose up and slew him. We have these two distinct branches amongst the Adamic peoples, one of which was called Cain with its understanding that faith is the essential and first thing of spirituality, and the other called Abel, whereby charity is that essential and first thing. In a real sense, they were involved in a theological controversy, and each was seeking an ascendancy over the other.

Again, it was not unlike the controversies that have arisen in the Christian Church. The original catholic church of Jesus Christ was one. Paul gloried in the fact that it had one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. Rome grew to be the most important Episcopal See in the church, and the Bishop of Rome saw the way clear to establish himself in the chair of the apostle Peter as the universal bishop of Christendom, and he did it. Yet his claim was denied by the Eastern Church; and after several centuries of bitter controversy, the Eastern Church broke off communion with the church in the west and installed a Patriarch at Constantinople as the spiritual head of the Eastern Church.

These two branches of the original Catholic Church, which died as Adam is said to have died can, in one sense, be seen as the Cain and Abel of the Catholic Church. Rome, as Cain, has been arrogant and intolerant at times and shown no mercy for those who dared to differ in opinion from its edicts and bulls, thus destroying the principle of true charity.

The same thing has been realised in Protestant Christianity. The long and angry disputes that took place between the Lutheran, Calvinistic and Armenian sects in the Protestant Church come readily to mind. Like Cain and Abel, these sects have talked together in the field; but it has been vehement and invective talk.

Think of the strife - the battle that was fought between Luther and Erasmus. Luther rose up like Cain. He said: "That exasperated viper Erasmus has again attacked me." Servetus dared to controvert one of John Calvin's pet theories; and, like Cain, Calvin rose up, caused him to be apprehended, accused him of blasphemy, had him condemned as a heretic and consigned to the flames.

These facts of church history help us to an understanding of the story we are considering. The Cainites were faith-alone people. They had no regard for the charitable life *per se*. The Abelites were of a sweet and affirmative disposition. They had no quarrel with faith as such; but they did see that standing alone, it was a worthless, dead thing. They would have nothing to do with faith-alone. They saw where it would lead those who adopted it. The Cainites would have nothing to do with charity. Religion, with them, was a matter of faith apart from the life. This was the dispute in the field.

This division having entered into the thinking of those Most Ancient peoples enabled controversies over spiritual principles to arise in many forms, and those who ranged themselves on the side of faith-alone drew to themselves great numbers who saw in the Cainitish position that which favoured their lusts and pride of intelligence. As a consequence the Abelites, who loved peace and were motivated by an affirmative spirit, suffered at the hands of the larger and more powerful sect of Cainites. They submitted to persecution and sought in all their trials to exhibit the true spirit of religion. Still Cain rose up. Think of that expression: "Cain rose up." You see in it the idea of exaltation - of superiority. This is precisely the state that faith-alone produces in the mind. It exalts creeds above life - forms above the genuine spirit of religion. Those who believe that faith, simply principles of teaching, is the

essential of the spiritual life are exalted in their own esteem. They *rise up* in their regard for such teaching and claim to be superior to those who differ from them.

What the Cainites failed to do was to recognise that those who held spiritual beliefs different to their own - the Abelites - would still be children of God. In fact, they held unkindly sentiments against them which coloured all their thinking (Genesis 4:8). They tried to establish the pre-eminence of faith, and they finally did it, but it was done at a dreadful cost. "Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him". The story of the natural murder is introduced into the allegory to represent the spiritual murder that had been committed in the hearts of the Cainites. Abel is murdered in all who destroy the life of charity in themselves by exalting faith above it. So when the Cainites had slain Abel in their hearts - when they made faith the essential element of living - they did not rest until they had exterminated the Abelite principles of charity. Abel was slain. We hear nothing more of him. Faith-alone then ruled the hearts of the people.

What consequences could come upon the people who perpetrated so dreadful a spiritual crime? The curses heaped on Cain provide us with the clues.

The Lord is represented as asking Cain (Genesis 4:9):

Then the Lord said to Cain, "where is Abel your brother?"

This question conveys the idea of an internal dictate to the conscience of those who had slain charity, as to what had become of it. It means this - there was once peace and tranquillity amongst the Most Ancient peoples; now there is discord and division; what has become of charity? These things could not exist if charity were alive and active. Where is charity?

The faith-alone people of the long ago, while they stood convicted by this dictate, instead of repenting of their crime, made an effort to justify it. Cain said (Genesis 4:9):

"Am I my brother's keeper?"

This expressed the utterly fallen state of these Cainites. They had no regard for charity. In essence, they were saying - What have we to do with charity? Our business is to establish and defend faith. Then came the curses. The ground would not yield its strength, and Cain would become a fugitive and a vagabond. It was so. The external mind of the Cainites produced heresy after heresy, each one more dreadful than the former, until this branch of the Adamic age perished in its own evils.

Cain became a fugitive. The spiritual idea is that of one who shirks his duty. This is what the Cainites did. They ran away from every demand of duty. Their wills were turned away from the Lord. They ran away from the practice of goodness. Cain also became a vagabond, a wanderer. It was so with the Cainites. They had no settled spiritual habitation. Their understanding had no settled conceptions of right. These are curses, but they were not divine impositions. They came as the result of the rejecting and slaying of the principle of charity. Recall what is said in the Psalms (34:21):

Affliction will slay the wicked.



Cain in the Land of Nod: The Birth of Enoch

After Cain had slain his brother Abel, it is said (Genesis 4:16):

Then Cain went away from the presence of the Lord and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

While the word 'presence' does not express the idea intended to be conveyed - a better rendering is 'face' - it does describe the spiritual result which followed in the Cainite sect consequent upon the destruction and complete elimination of the principle of charity denoted by Abel.

No one can be separated from the omnipresent God; for it is written (Psalm 139:7-12):

*Where shall I go from your Spirit?
Or where shall I flee from your presence?
If I ascend to heaven, you are there!
If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!*

*If I take the wings of the morning
and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me.*

*If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me,
and the light about me be night,"
even the darkness is not dark to you;
the night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with
you.*

From this we see that something deeper is involved in Cain going out from the face of the Lord than is indicated simply by the biblical text. What is the deeper meaning?

The Bible frequently speaks of the Lord's presence, also of his face. Thought of spiritually, these two expressions mean very different conditions. The understanding is the created receptacle of the Lord's truth; and it is by means of divine truth in the understanding that a person perceives the Lord's presence. The will is the created receptacle of the Lord's love; and it is by means of divine love in the will that a person sees the Lord's face. 'Presence', then, refers to the understanding and 'face' to the will.

The sect called Cain, in this story, retained many truths in the understanding; and in that sense did not lose the Lord's presence; for he was present by means of their knowledge of truth; but this sect departed entirely from the principle and life of charity; they averted and turned their wills away from divine love; and that is what is meant by Cain going away from the face of the Lord.

Our face is a mirror of our heart. We may prevent our thoughts from appearing before others, but we cannot prevent the affections of our heart from showing themselves in our face. Modesty cannot do otherwise than blush when it is offended. Guilt, when brought home to us, makes the face turn pale. This is a law. God's face is therefore used in the Bible to denote his love. So all who are in deep charity of life see the Lord's face. The Cainites had departed from charity; they were in mere faith-alone; therefore Cain, the name given to the sect which separated from the Adamic era of humankind, and which exalted faith above charity, lost the perception of divine love - went out or away from the Lord's face.

Going farther and farther away from the thought and practice of charity, they came into a state of mind represented, in this allegory, by the Land of Nod. This land was not a geographic locality. It means almost the same thing that is indicated by the 'far country' in the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15). It is an untranslated Hebrew word, and means literally a state of exile and wandering. The Lord Himself said to Cain (Genesis 4:12):

"You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth."

This, as we have seen, indicated the internal state of the Cainites. Their hearts ran away from every obligation of charity and their understanding had no settled convictions on questions of right and wrong. This was their spiritual state.

Swedenborg clearly presents the spiritual law that our internal state will ultimately lead us into an environment that corresponds to it. This law worked a change in the spiritual environment of the Cainites. They withdrew from the influence of divine love and

came and dwelt in an external state denoted by the land of Nod. Should we give way to doubt and uncertainty in regard to the things of faith, we become a mental wanderer with no spiritual home; and if we exclude goodness from our heart at the same time, we begin to regard all matters of faith and spiritual truth as things of mere human speculation. We cannot retain a clear belief in the truth unless we are endeavouring to live a life of charity. The faith of the disobedient person is a wandering thing, driven about by every wind of spiritual teaching. Faith without charity is therefore weak and unstable, and the heart has no defence against the inrush of evils of every kind. This was realised in the lives of the Cainites. This is what is meant by Cain going out from the face of God and dwelling in the land of Nod.

Notice one thing. The land of Nod was toward the east of Eden. Here we see a great mercy. The east, in which the sun rises daily, is the symbol of the Lord - the source of all spiritual heat and light. Eden is the symbol of the love that turns the mind toward the Lord and disposes it to receive light from him. So when it is said that Cain dwelt in Nod toward the east of Eden, there is conveyed the idea that there still remained with the Cainites the capacity of knowledge concerning what was genuinely good and true. Their understanding was toward the east of Eden. Their minds were not, at this time, wholly closed against the knowledge of truth. They still retained the capacity of knowing the truth.

We can see this today with many who are driven here and there in terms of their spiritual understanding, who are in fluctuating and doubtful states, and yet they dwell toward the east of Eden - have capacity left for believing in the good and the true. All such can be 'rescued' and brought into beautiful states of faith and life. Yet they must be rescued. If not, they finally close the way toward the east of Eden and come into the dreadful state that results from the infernal, hellish marriage of evil and falsity in their minds. This happened to the Cainites. It is told in the story of Cain knowing his wife in the land of Nod. The wife is introduced into the story of the spiritual decline of this sect of the Most Ancient peoples to

represent its state when it went out from what is denoted by the face of the Lord.

The faith that belongs to the understanding is like a husband, and the love that belongs to the will is like a wife. In a state of being reborn spiritually, the faith of the understanding is married to love in the will. This is the heavenly marriage of good and truth. However, in the absence of that state, falsity in the understanding is married to evil in the will. This is the infernal marriage of evil and falsity. The former constitutes the heavenly state, the latter constitutes the hellish one.

The Cainites were in faith-alone; Cain's wife was the affection in the heart for that life according to faith-alone. It was there from the beginning; for it is not said that he found and *married* his wife in the land of Nod, but that he *knew* her in the land of Nod. What does this mean?

It means that the Cainites came into a moral state in which they made the heretical teaching of salvation by faith-alone prominent and confirmed in their thinking, finally becoming united with the affections in their hearts. This became the permanent state of the people called Cain.

The heresy of faith-alone thus became the parent of other heresies. Enoch, who is said to have been born to Cain, was another heresy that sprang up in this schismatic branch of the Adamic Era. From it other heresies descended, like sons from a father. So it is said (Genesis 4:18):

To Enoch was born Irad; and Irad fathered Mehujael, and Mehujael fathered Methushael, and Methushael fathered Lamech.

These names stand for derivative heresies in the Cainite line of departure from Adam.

The city which Cain is said to have built, and named after his son Enoch, represents the spiritual principles selected by the Cainites to construct an intellectual dwelling place for the heresy of faith-alone. This very thing has been done over and over again in the Christian Church. The doctrine of the vicarious atonement, and the imputed righteousness of Christ, whereby the sinner is saved by mere faith-alone, is the city Cain built for his son in Protestant Christianity.



Seth and his Descendants

The Cainitish, or faith-alone branch of the Adamic age, ended in Lamech, who tells his wives (Genesis 4:23):

*Adah and Zillah, hear my voice;
you wives of Lamech, listen to what I say:
I have killed a man for wounding me,
a young man for striking me.*

Again, Lamech is not the name of an individual. The name stands for a process of separation which Swedenborg terms *vastation*. Vastation is of two kinds. With those whose interior life is from good, there takes place a vastation, or separation from any external evils and falsities - things that were not of their inner love or life. On the other hand, with the evil, there takes place a vastation or separation of all good and truth which they may have. This is the judgment into which we all come after death; for in the other life, one is divested of the moral qualities, be they good or evil, that do not form a part of one's inner life.

This same law applied to the Cainites. Having adopted the principle of faith-alone in rejecting charity as of no consequence, they began to undergo the process of spiritual vastation. This

extended through many generations, each generation extinguishing more and more the principle of faith, until the vastation was complete. All faith, among the Cainites, perished; all charity disappeared. This complete vastation was personified under the name Lamech, which in Hebrew means 'overthrown'. The end had come. The very semblance of spiritual life disappeared. This sad state was expressed in the words (Genesis 4:23):

"I have killed a man for wounding me, a young man for striking me."

The very memory of the truth perished among the Cainites and every impulse of charity died. Nothing more is said of this sect. It had its rise, ran its course and died.

The Lord never leaves himself without a witness in the world. So we find that there came what may be called a Reformation in the original Adamic era. We read (Genesis 4:25):

And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and called his name Seth, for she said, "God has appointed for me another offspring instead of Abel, for Cain killed him."

Here arose the Sethite branch of the Most Ancient era. This branch was gifted with a new principle of faith; and from it there was to be developed a true charity of life.

Seth represents not only the new principle of faith and the charity that was implanted in it, but also the people who embraced the new faith. Abel represented the charity which, in the beginning, was regarded as the chief thing of spiritual living, but which was destroyed by the false teaching and evil ways of the Cainites; but now Seth is raised up to take the place of Abel whom Cain slew. A new faith was given, that from it another branch of the original state of people might come into the life of charity.

We are led to believe that charity was cultivated by the Sethites; for we are told (Genesis 4:26):

... people began to call upon the name of the Lord.

This reformed group of people did not fully restore the charity that was represented by Abel; for the charity that came with Seth was not of the same quality as that which was destroyed by Cain. Charity, with the Sethites, arose more from an intellectual dictate and was more external than the charity which Abel represented. The channels and fountains of impulsive love were closed, and as a consequence, spiritual life was lived from a more external principle.

Like all reform movements in bodies which are declining, the Sethite one did not continue in its integrity. It arrested the decline for a while, as did the Protestant Reformation in the Christian Church. But just as the Protestant Church broke up into almost innumerable churches or sects, each one inventing new creeds and forms of worship, so the Sethite reformation gave rise to many sects. Decline continued until it ended among a people called Lamech although these people are not the same Lamech with whom the Cainite branch of the Ancient era ended. They were distinct and separate races, but bore the same name, because they represented the same thing, namely the vastated state of the people individually and collectively.



Separation

As we have seen, at the time treated of in this biblical chapter, there had grown up a great variety of spiritual teachings around which

ranged a great many sects that had severed all connection with the original Adamic era, and which were distinguished from each other by appropriate names. Each sect was personified. Seth represented those people to whom the new principle of faith was given, out of which was to be formed a new charitable life. Those in the genealogy of Seth represent distinct branches and lines of the reformed branch of the Adamic age. Here we reach an important feature of the antediluvian history - the extraordinary ages the story assigns to Seth, Enos, Kenan (or Cainan), Mahalalel (or Mahalaleel), Jared, Enoch, Methuselah and Lamech.

Commentators, both Jewish and Christian, have laboured in vain to reconcile the longevity of these so-called antediluvian patriarchs with science and the dictate of reason, but have utterly failed. In recognising that the number of years given as the age of these supposed patriarchs, when they either fathered sons or died, stands for the moral quality of the sect they respectively represent, a discussion of the attempted explanations by such commentators would not prove useful here. We are not reading of persons but of heresies and sects. One thing, however, is true. As these heresies were embraced by different races of humankind, they must have persisted for many hundreds of years, and some must have lasted longer than others. There might be an historic basis for the idea that the ages assigned in this story cover the periods in which these heresies prevailed, although that certainly was not the divine purpose in the use of the numbers employed. Religious systems are often given the names of their founders and are called by their names long after they have passed away. For instance, Israel is the name given to the descendants of Jacob. Viewed in this light, Israel up to the present time may be said to have lived nearly four thousand years. In the Christian Church, Unitarians and tri-personalists originated in the fourth century, and if we wished to personify them under the names of Arius and Athanasius, we could say that each is sixteen hundred years old. This idea may be useful to those who are not prepared for the more spiritual interpretation of the story of the longevity told in this chapter of Genesis.

Have you noticed the fact that longevity is not predicated of Cain and his descendants, but only of Seth and his descendants? There is a deep spiritual reason for this. Cain represented faith. It was a true faith, but it degenerated into faith-alone. The line of descent from Cain is the story of the decline of faith. Faith is primarily a thing of the understanding. Faith is short-lived when it becomes faith-alone. It depends upon the memory for its continued existence, and therefore soon dies. This is why the Cainitish line is short. The line of descent from Seth is long, and immense ages are assigned to the people said to have descended from him. The Sethites, were, in the beginning, characterized by charity. Charity belongs to the will and its affections. Things that affect the intellect and memory only, die much sooner than do the things that affect the will and the life. The things for which Seth stands touched the hearts of the people. It was therefore longer in dying.

However, divisions came to this branch of the Adamic era, and a time came when charity was on the verge of perishing. Then arose another branch called 'Enoch' that gathered the things of faith and charity into its teaching. Truths that had been perceived in an internal way were collected into a structured form of spiritual principles and taught in an outward way. The doing of this is what is meant by (Genesis 5:24):

Enoch walked with God.

The divine truths which the Enochites collected were from the Lord. They did not pretend to originate them. This is what is meant by (Genesis 5:24):

. . . and he (Enoch) was not, for God took him.

God was in what they did. They were out of it. The divine truths collected by the Enochites into their spiritual understanding were preserved by the Lord for the use of a new age that was to arise. The preservation of these sacred collections is what is meant by God taking Enoch.



Sons, Daughters and Giants

The Most Ancient people were characterised by a genius which has not been possessed by any of the succeeding spiritual eras of humanity. Their will and their understanding were immediately united. Because of this they enjoyed a state of perception and from perception, they had intuition and immediately comprehended the highest forms of divine truth without undergoing the processes of reasoning about them. Good, from the Lord, entering their will, flowed directly into their understanding, and became truth from good to guide them in all the wise and innocent ways of life.

This high celestial state was not suddenly destroyed. The decline was very gradual; but the loss of perception was eventually effected; for evils of life ultimately closed all the inward channels of their souls to the inflowing of divine good. This left them in utter spiritual darkness and as the successive generations came, each was more and more attached to and controlled by evil until the whole Adamic race was involved in the most dreadful forms of wickedness. The people successively shut out good and truth from their minds; both the will and understanding were closed to heaven. What could result from this inner closure of the mind but the inpouring of all sorts of evil and false persuasions? These persuasions were confirmed as good and true things, and there was an unwillingness to recede from them.

So we read (Genesis 6:5):

The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

Everything that entered the thinking of these fallen people was turned into lust by their corrupt will. Their will and understanding acted as one faculty. In whatever direction their will turned, their understanding followed. So when they came to love what was evil, they were, by their very mental structure, compelled to think what was false. Good and truth could not be stored in their minds for later use by the Lord. When they flowed in, they were profaned, and could not be held as a separated plane for the subsequent work of spiritual growth.

The great miracle of the separation of the understanding from the will, thereby making it capable of an elevation above the greed of the fallen will, had not been effected at this point in the history of the Most Ancient peoples. Therefore, with these latter descendants of the Adamic era, there followed the most dreadful states of evils and falsities. This appalling state is therefore portrayed (Genesis 6:1,2):

When man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose.

What does this mean? Literally understood, the whole narrative is unsatisfactory. The Lord's Word is spirit and life. It is only as we see here a divine parable of the deep corruptions of humanity before the great flood that we begin to find within the narrative the instruction it was intended to convey. The multiplication of men caused an increase of the corruptions of the Adamic race. The multiplication of men on the face of the earth is the parable way of stating the wide extent of it. The face of the land is its surface, and this stands for the visible aspects of the religious life as they exist in the lives of people.

The people of this time had abandoned the guidance of the Lord; they had turned to their own evil loves and ways. Their will and understanding were united in evil; and daughters, not sons, were born to them. These daughters born to them were the dreadful

lusts which they originated. The daughters of Zion and Jerusalem, spoken of so frequently in the Bible, represent these genuine affections for goodness and truth. On the other hand, the daughters of Babylon, Philistia and Moab symbolise the evil affections and lusts of the depraved heart. Now, as daughters stand for affections which belong to the will, so sons stand for the thoughts which belong to the understanding. In this narrative, by the “sons of God” are meant the spiritual truths which still remained, at this period, among these last descendants of the Adamic era. These spiritual truths had descended to them from remote and better generations of the race. They had not been wholly dissipated.

Now, we see the meaning. These “sons of God” saw that the “daughters of men” were fair. This means that the remaining spiritual truths which had come down to this generation through the long line of the Cainites and Sethites were drawn down to the level of the lusts that had grown up in the wicked hearts of these people and were so perverted as to favour those lusts. Then the final step was taken; the awful deed was done (Genesis 6:1,2):

And they took as their wives any they chose.

Think of what this means. When the human mind turns away from the Lord’s way of a good life to the hellish way of an evil life, it undergoes a marvellous change both in its will and in its understanding. It thinks continually about the thing it loves supremely and all the knowledge stored in the mind is brought down to serve and favour the thing that is loved. This is the way men and women confirm and fix evil loves in themselves. If any truth is too powerful to lend itself, or to be lent, to favour the chosen evil, it is cast out of the mind and soon forgotten, while all others are drawn into favour with the ruling lusts and made to look upon them as fair and good.

So it was with this last generation of the Adamic peoples. The spiritual truths, which still lingered among them, were drawn down and conjoined to the lusts of their hearts, that is, they took to

themselves wives of the daughters of men. Here was the infernal marriage - a will steeped in evil married to an understanding corrupted by falsity.

What could result from this infernal marriage but gigantic evils and falsities of life? Here we see the meaning of the giants in the Genesis allegory. The mind has dimensions as well as the body. When a person excludes God, revelation and good teaching from the mind, there grows a mighty big intellectual conceit. An infidelistic bombast is regarded as possessing gigantic proportions, and the only bigness which is failed to be seen is the bigness of the fool the person has become. In the Psalms (14:1), it is said:

The fool says in his heart, "There is no God".

Yes, evil puffs people up in their own esteem. They swell up under the imaginary importance of their insane fantasies. This is the inevitable result of evil confirmed in the life.

Now, this condition became universal with the people treated of in this narrative. These giants are called (Genesis 6:4):

mighty men who were of old, the men of renown.

This expresses the might and power of the self-love which they developed. How mighty this love is in every endeavour it makes to attain its end! Self-love is a principle that seeks its own ends, and it is mighty to bring persons and things into a state of servitude to itself. Its friends are those whom it is able to use, and its enemies are those who stand in its way. These giants were of old. These selfish loves were a long time growing. They dated back to the disobedience in Eden. They had been cumulative. Now, they reached the full measure of their iniquity and attained a degree of degradation that left its entire people without even the desire for anything better. The flowing in of evil drove all goodness out of their hearts, and with the loss of goodness, all perceptions of truth perished. Their minds were given over to abominable persuasions - to deadly fantasies. All flesh had corrupted itself. This last

generation of the original Adamic era perished by spiritual suffocation. That is why the end of this era is told under the form of the story of a flood which inundated and suffocated all flesh. The new or Ancient era, which succeeded the Adamic age, was formed among those who had never been a real part of that age.



Spiritual Development Experienced Personally

Cain, Abel and Seth - *Faith, Love and our Self-will*

If we think deeply about the essential qualities needed for a spiritually orientated life, we may readily see that there are two: a firm belief structure formed from the knowledge of truth we have gained over time ('faith') and a desire to put that structure into practice at all levels of life for the good of others ('love'). These are a product of our understanding ~ *Adam* ~ and our motivation ~ *Eve* ~ with both being absolute necessities. However, developing a faith through seeking truth must be the first process we focus on in time ~ *Cain, the firstborn*, meaning 'possession' ~ as this will provide the sure foundation upon which our spiritual life can be built and given direction. But love or kindness must have primary attention for us ~ *the offering of Abel*, whose name means mean 'breath', being accepted by God ~ as intention is at the heart of our being.

In our spiritual development, we must recognise that acquiring truth should have but one purpose - to enable us to give our desire to help others the direction it needs and so be in harmony with the Lord's purpose for our life. Without truth, our intentions will not achieve useful outcomes. Yet, should we simply seek truth for our own edification and aggrandisement, any kindness we might do, even if from apparently unselfish motives, will be extinguished ~ *Cain killing his brother Abel*. Without love, faith becomes unfulfilled ~ *Cain was cursed and*

became a fugitive ~ but it is still better than no faith at all. If, for whatever reason, we find ourselves in this state, the possibility remains that the desire to act from a love towards others will be rekindled ~ the Lord's protective mark on Cain and his resettlement in the east.

However low our spiritual state might fall, the Lord always stands ready to lead us back to the heavenly pathway if we have a genuine desire to be led and to draw on the truth which remains active in our mind ~ *the people of Seth, the third son of Adam and Eve, calling upon the name of the Lord.* Here, self-compulsion becomes essential for developing a sense of spirituality. We are in a state where our faith is not lived out of joy but from more ritualistic principles. This approach can help carry us through extended periods of spiritual upheaval (the dark night of the soul) ~ *the long lives of Seth and his descendants.* Yet, at times we are still unable to withstand the onslaught of our lower natures; we can close our minds to good and truth, choosing evil and falsity ~ *sons of God being attracted to the daughters of men.* By no longer accepting we exist solely from the Divine Source of Life, we live a fantasy based on self-importance ~ *the earth giants.*

The potential for spiritual decline is ever present especially when we allow an intellectual development of our faith to take a higher priority than actually implementing our beliefs in our lives from goodness and kindness towards others. True happiness will always be within our grasp if we begin making use of truth as soon as we recognise it has value for us.

Personal Reflection

When you next become aware of a negative thought about your life or another person, endeavour to see if you can prevent it from negatively affecting your feelings and actions. Replace it with a kind one, draw on an earlier loving affection for the person and be enthusiastic and energetic with work and personal interests. Observe how much better you feel about everything. Our whole experience of life can change, even though the events themselves stay the same.



Noah, the Ark and the Flood

The Wickedness of Man

The final end of the Adamic age is portrayed under the parable of the “sons of God” seeing that the “daughters of men” were fair, and taking the daughters of men as wives. We are told of the result of this state of wickedness (Genesis 6:7):

So the Lord said, “I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them.”

Here again we have a language of appearances, for it was evil that destroyed the fallen people of the Most Ancient era. The Lord seeks to save; he is not a destroyer. It is natural, though, that evil people look upon the Lord as the cause of their misery. The stories of the Bible express in the language of appearances, their thought of the Lord. The genuine truth is expressed elsewhere in the Scripture, where it is said (Psalm 34:21):

Affliction will slay the wicked.

The spiritual destruction that overtook the last generation of the Adamic era, bringing it to an end, came as the result of their own

evil state. The celestial dispensation closed. Yet the Lord never leaves himself without a witness on earth. When one dispensation of spirituality closes, the Lord immediately raises up a new one. In doing so, he begins with a few good people in the closing age who, while nominally of it, are not irretrievably involved in its evils and falsities but are capable of deliverance from them. This remnant constitutes the nucleus of a new age which arises as the means of salvation to humanity.

At the end of the Adamic age, this remnant was represented by Noah. Here, as was the case with Adam, we are not to think of an individual by the name of Noah. We are to think of all the people of the consummated Adamic age who were capable of being saved and brought together to form a new era. These were the remnant who, in this divine allegory, are personified and called Noah. So it is said (Genesis 6:8):

But Noah found favour in the eyes of the Lord.

With the people called Noah, there were remains of good - things that had been preserved and that served as a plane on which the Lord's spirit could act in effecting a new process of spiritual rebirth. These remains are meant by these words (Genesis 6:9):

*Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation.
Noah walked with God.*

This brings us to the consideration of one of the most marvellous things in connection with the divine parable - we refer to the organic and structural change which the Lord, in his divine mercy, effected in the minds of the Noetic people.

As we have seen, the will and the understanding of the Adamic people were united. They acted not as two, but as one faculty. In whatever direction they turned their will, their understanding took the same course. This was their distinctive genius. The two parts of their mental structure cohered and formed one. Good from the Lord flowed directly into their will, and because their

understanding was immediately connected with their will, good passed from their will into their understanding in a direct way and was formed into truth. This peculiarity of mental structure led them, in the beginning, to the highest celestial attainment and life. Yet when they fell away from the Lord, they still retained this peculiarity of mental structure and carried it down with them into all the moral corruptions into which they descended. In loving what was evil they could not do otherwise than believe what was false. Do we see what this led to? Their minds were like a glutinous substance.

When good and truth touched them, they became glued to them and profaned. Remains of good and truth could not be implanted in them, for their genius was such that there was no separate plane in their minds for such goods and truths to adhere to. This was the spiritual cause for the utter extinction, physically and spiritually, of the last generation of the Adamic age. Noah, who is said to have found grace in the eyes of the Lord, represents, as we have said, the remnant in the Adamic age who were not totally involved in this condition. In this remnant, the Lord wrought the mighty miracle of the separation of their intellectual principle from their fallen and corrupt will. This was a great miracle as well as an exhibition of the profoundest mercy, for it at once enabled them to lift their intellects above their corrupt hearts and learn what was good and true, and so have formed in the intellectual part of their minds a new will-principle above and apart from their fallen sense of selfhood.

This made the storing of remains possible and it also rendered an outward revelation of truth necessary. It also ushered into existence an entirely new mental and spiritual genius. The celestial life, as it had been, would be no more. With the end of the Most Ancient era, that plane of the mind closed. A new age for humankind in which the internal mind operated on a distinctly lower plane (the spiritual rather than the celestial) arose. It commenced with the people called Noah. It was instituted by a divine revelation - by a sacred scripture, which we know as the Ancient Word. This sacred Word was a book of divine symbols.

When the intuitive faculty of those in the Most Ancient era was perishing, the inwardly revealed truths collected and preserved by the people called Enoch, were outwardly revealed to the understanding of the Noetic people through this means.

We do not have the time to dwell upon this story of the Ancient Word further than to say that:

- it gave rise to the Ancient or Spiritual era;
- the first eleven chapters of Genesis belonged originally to it; and
- in the Hebrew Scripture, it is quoted and certain of the books that formed it mentioned by name, such as, for instance, the 'Book of the Wars of Jehovah', the 'Book of Jasher' and the 'Book of the Enunciators'.

This outward revelation of the Word was made necessary because of the structural change that was effected in the mental organisation of the Noetic race. With the separation of the intellectual part of their mind from their will, the only light upon spiritual subjects that could reach them had to come into their understanding in an external way. By receiving and obeying the truth communicated to them in this way, they formed a new will, a will of obedience in their understanding, and were, in time, reborn spiritually by the truth.

This is what is meant by the Lord's command to Noah to build the ark. The ark is the symbol of the new spiritual relationship that was formed in them - the state of the kingdom of God then in human souls. This work of building up in their lives the principles of the kingdom of God is told under the allegorical form of Noah building an ark. The allegory is God's beautiful way of telling us of the building of this spiritual relationship in their minds.

The ark was to be built of gopher wood. This was a low order of wood and very inflammable. Do you see the lesson? It stood for the lustful desires and peculiar greeds of the Noetic people. How could these things be built into a spiritual ark of safety? The Lord

begins with us as he finds us. He cannot build with material that we do not possess. In the beginning, he makes use of our selfishness. He appeals to, and works with, the motives we present to him - ever leading us on to higher and better things. So too of the very lustful desires of the people in this story. They were put to use. They could not be led, in the beginning, to grow spiritually by the love of the intrinsic excellence of the truth. At first, their improvement had to be built upon some personal and selfish consideration. It is the same with us today. This is what is meant by the gopher wood. This, however, was a temporary state.



The Ark

Also, with the pitch used; for the ark is said to have been pitched within and without. At first, these people were protected from the outward invasion of falsehood and from the inward seduction of evil by appeals to their selfishness. We are no better; for the Lord does, in the beginning, the same thing with us. Mercifully, he accepts us as we are! Yes, he loved those Ancient people as he loves us, not for what they were but for what they were capable of becoming. The gopher wood and the pitch were all they had of themselves to begin with. However, they did possess remains of

goodness and truth from the Lord. They were what the Lord reached and ultimately unfolded in a life of beautiful spiritual rebirth. While the Lord makes use of what our thoughts and affections are in the beginning, yet he does it merely as the means of reaching and developing what is of his own in us. It was just the same in beginning with the gopher wood and pitch, and ended with a redeemed and regenerated people.

The three decks of the ark, described in Genesis 6:16, are an expression of the three distinct levels of mental life in the men and women of the Noetic age. The clean and unclean beasts stand for the affections and thoughts, spiritual and natural, that were brought under the influence of divine truth in the minds of these people for spiritual rebirth. These facts are the spiritual realities that lie behind the symbols in the allegory.

The ark had one door on its side. Could that door be anything less than hearing, receiving and obeying the voice of the Lord? The window in the top of the ark. Do we not see that it was the elevated intellectual principle which is the spiritual window of the soul, letting in the light of the Father's face to illuminate the minds of these people? How wonderful the story is!



The Flood: Noah and his Family Saved

The deluge was a spiritual catastrophe. This statement instantly provides the divine narrative with a significance making irrelevant objections by scientists and others that the flood could not have been a physical occurrence. Any review of such objections is consequently unnecessary. The Bible is a divine book, and its message is spiritual. It addresses itself to men and women as spiritual beings. Whatever may be the outward form in which it

comes, underneath there lies the spiritual instruction, appeal, warning or encouragement it was intended to bring to humankind. The Lord, who is the divine author of the written Word, said (John 6:63):

It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is of no avail. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.

This is true of every inspired book in the Holy Word. Seen in this light, the Bible vindicates and establishes its claim to divine inspiration.

The outward things of history - things that have been enacted in the natural world - are not, in themselves, divine revelations. Revelation includes the thought of a degree of truth made known to humankind that could not have been discovered by the exercise of any faculty proper to the mind. God is the only way to himself. He lets down the ladder on whose rungs we can ascend to a knowledge of him (1 Corinthians 1:21):

... The world did not know God through wisdom.

So with the story of the flood. If it is believed to be the record of outward happenings, there is not in such a belief one single element of spirituality, nor one single thing that tends to give the mind an exalted conception of God. It is only when we regard the narrative in the light of a divine parable that we find the ground of its spirituality and learn from it the deep things of God. It is a parable. It describes spiritual things under the form of natural and corresponding things in the visible world of nature. Let us think of it in this way. In general the story of the flood is God's own way of telling us of the spiritual destruction of the last generation of the Adamic era - in a flood of dreadful persuasions and abominable evils that they brought upon themselves. It is the story of how they were carried down to destruction by the falsehoods which they believed and the evils which they loved. A natural inundation is used to represent a spiritual inundation.

The effect of this spiritual inundation was:

- to destroy and utterly sweep away the corrupt people of the dead and fallen era, and
- to act as temptations by which those of the succeeding age could grow spiritually. A flood is one of the most familiar symbols used in the Bible to denote a state of deep and interior temptation.

The Psalmist prayed (69:1,2):

*Save me, O God!
For the waters have come up to my neck.
I sink in deep mire,
where there is no foothold;
I have come into deep waters,
and the flood sweeps over me.*

David was not speaking of natural water, nor of natural floods. He was using the language of correspondence and was praying for deliverance from the evil and false principles which were infesting his soul.

The temptations that arise from the sphere of naturalism, with which we are all surrounded, are described by the prophet in the following language (Jeremiah 46:8):

Egypt rises like the Nile, like rivers whose waters surge. He said, "I will rise, I will cover the earth, I will destroy cities and their inhabitants."

The Lord said of the house built on the rock (Matthew 7:25):

And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall.

Of the house built on the sand, however, he said (Matthew 7:27):

*And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew,
and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the
fall of it.*

It is clear that by the house built on the rock is meant a human character founded upon divine truth which the 'flood' of temptation is unable to move; and that the house built on the sand is a human character built on wrong principles, which falls under the power of temptation as the house on the sand was swept away by the flood.

From these instances, it is easy to see that the Scriptures use natural floods as the expressive symbol of spiritual trials and temptations which prove the destruction of the wicked but which serve as purifying experiences for the good. This is the light in which to view the story of the deluge. Further, two sources are assigned for the flood in Genesis 7:11:

- the breaking up of the fountains of the deep; and
- the opening of the windows of heaven.

These two sources of the flood are clearly spiritual. The windows of heaven stand for the understanding or intellectual principle of the mind, and the fountains of the deep stand for the will or voluntary principle of the mind.

The windows of heaven! They are the perceptions of the understanding, for it is through intellectual perceptions that a person sees the things of heaven. In good people, these spiritual windows of the heaven that is within are opened to admit the light of truth into the mind. Yet in the story of the flood, these windows admitted rain which was one of the principal sources of destruction. Consequently, they denote the understanding given over to falsehoods and destructive reasonings by which the whole intellectual life of the fallen age was inundated and destroyed.

The fountains of the deep! These deep fountains, or fountains of the deep, picture to us the will and its loves. In the Bible, the will

is compared to the deep because it is the receptacle of the deep things of a person's life. With good people the will is the deep place of their life; all that is thought and done comes out of the deep places of the heart. The same applies with the evil person. The corruptions are *deep*. Out of the fountains of the deep love the good person has for the Lord, arise all the holiest joys of their life, and, in like manner, out of the fountains of the evil person's deep love of themselves arise all the dissatisfactions and unrest of their life.

In the case of the flood (Genesis 7:11):

... all the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened.

This means that the will, as a will for goodness, was disrupted and became a deep lust in the people of the fallen Adamic era. The will of good was broken up and the entire voluntary life of those evil people was given over to lusts of every description. Everything good and true in them perished; not a vestige of spiritual life remained. This spiritual destruction is described in correspondential language as the covering of the high hills under the whole heaven, the submergence of the mountains, the death of all humans, fowl, cattle, beasts and every creeping thing. All things of heavenly life perished. This was the effect of the flood upon the incurably wicked. These evils and falsities that end a fallen dispensation act as temptations through which the members of the new and succeeding one are to grow spiritually. So the flood, which ended the Most Ancient era, operated to purify the affections and thoughts of those members of the succeeding one. They resisted these evil and false things. They had not closed the way to remnants of good and truth becoming active in their lives; they were capable of spiritual rebirth. All such were represented by Noah and his family. They endured these dreadful temptations and were saved. With them, the spirit of the Lord - a wind - passed over the earth of their minds, and the waters, the falsities of the dead era, were calmed. Their understanding and will became receptive of truth and love. A new will of obedience was formed in their understanding. New influences operated upon them, and

the waters of temptation gradually abated. They came, at length, through hard and bitter trials, into a state of spiritual love. They reached it through daily obedience to the truth. This happy state is beautifully described in the allegory (Genesis 8:4):

... and in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat.



The Waters Abate

Three distinct things are mentioned in connection with Noah:

- he was *righteous*;
- he was *blameless*; and
- he *walked with God*.

These three are said to be the generations of Noah. Now, in what sense were righteousness, blamelessness and obedience, or what is the same, walking with God, the generations of Noah? If Noah is to be understood as standing merely for an individual person who may have possessed these moral excellences it is difficult to see how righteousness, blamelessness and obedience can be called the generations of Noah. The passage reads (Genesis 6:9):

These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God.

There is no difficulty here when we recognise that Noah is not an individual, but the new spiritual era for humankind which was being raised up. Consequently, the generations of Noah were the great cardinal principles of that new spiritual era for humankind. These are what is meant by righteousness, blamelessness and

obedience. These virtues as cardinal principles, are called nativities or generations, because they were to result from the spiritual rebirth process which the Noetic people would undergo.

There is a divine order observed in these generations of the Noetic era. Righteousness, or being just, is mentioned first because it belongs to the heart life consisting in the very good of charity. Blamelessness, or being upright, is mentioned next because it has to do with the law and order of truth, by which charity is formed and exercised. Lastly, walking with God is mentioned because it stands for the principle of obedience in the daily life. These were the generations of Noah.

These three graces were not existing in a full state of development at the time it was said (Genesis 6:8):

But, Noah found favour in the eyes of the Lord.

The capacity for them existed, as is always the case with the remnant at the end of a spiritual era; but their development was to be realised in a subsequent state of that new, Noetic era. We must also remember that the people who formed this era, in the beginning, were the descendants of a corrupted and fallen race of the previous Most Ancient or Adamic era. They shared these corruptions and differed from them only in the sense of having a plane remaining on which could be built a spiritual life. It was through deep spiritual work that the principles denoted by the generations of Noah were so far developed as to be capable of distinct presentation to the outlying world.

Here we reach an important fact. The Adamic age did not include the whole of humankind then existing on the earth. There were immense populations who had never sustained any vital relations to the Adamic age. They were what we would call Gentiles - people in the great body of humanity but outside the influence of the Adamic spiritual genius, the remnant of which Noah represented. This outlying mass of people, having no vital part of the Adamic era and not involved in its moral corruptions, were

those in whom the spirituality of a more broadly based Ancient spiritual era was established. These outside people were not all of the same spiritual character. Their dispositions were various; each had their own individuality, peculiar bent and capacity of mind. In general they constituted three distinct classes. Each class received from the teaching of the Noetic tradition that which was best suited to its genius. Now, to get a concrete idea of all this, the Ancient era, as we have said, contained three cardinal principles, called the generations of Noah, which were justice, uprightness and obedience. The three classes into which the people were divided, who were capable of being influenced and saved by these principles were called Shem, Ham and Japheth. These are said to be the sons of Noah because they stand for the three kinds of people who were reached and brought into the Noetic era.

The teaching concerning justice, or the principle of true charity, appealed most strongly and was most attractive to the people called Shem. They were brought into the Ancient spiritual era by it. The teaching concerning uprightness, the principle that revealed right laws of truth to enable an awakening of the understanding to an intellectual appreciation of the truth, appealed to, reached and gathered together, the people called Ham. The teaching concerning obedience, the principles which clearly defined one's walk with God, or religion in daily life, attracted those who are called Japheth. So Noah, Shem, Ham and Japheth stand, not for individuals, but for distinct classes of individuals in whom the Lord formed the Ancient spiritual age of humankind. This is what the story means. By Noah's wife and the wives of his sons are meant the affections with which each class of individuals received its teaching. All of these were saved in the ark, that is, by the state of good and truth which was built up in their minds. The flood came but they were saved. They endured temptations and were purified.

Think now of the wind that passed over the earth and dried up the waters, and you will see that it is used as the symbol of the truth. For as a natural wind evaporates water, so divine truth disperses falsities and restores the mind to health and vigour. The truth gained daily in its power over the minds and lives of these people;

like a spiritual wind, it dried up the waters of falsity and brought to view the landscapes of a new life. The waters receded. It was achieved, though, through mighty and prolonged struggles from which they were eventually brought. Then, in their hearts, there grew up from the Lord, a great love for him and for each other, and for all the world. It lifted up their minds; it filled them with deep thankfulness; it elevated every phase of their life. They had been exposed to great spiritual danger but now they felt secure in the great love that had come to them. They had struggled; now a sweet rest had come to them. How beautifully the divine allegory tells us of it (Genesis 8:4):

. . . and the Ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat.

What a delightful ending!



The Raven and the Dove

In discussing the story of the flood and the ark, we have purposely avoided calling attention to the discrepancies and contradictions and physical impossibilities that are present if the account is taken literally. These things are apparent to all who read the story, and calling attention to them would prove a wearisome task as well as a fruitless one. Besides, it might prove harmful to those who are unable to rise to the plane of the spiritual interpretation of the story. For many in this world, reading the Word and understanding it according to its literal narrative is sufficient for their religious life. One of the very beautiful teachings to be found in the spiritual writings of Emanuel Swedenborg is that people who simply read the biblical text, but with reverent minds, enable the angels to instantaneously evolve the spiritual sense and thereby connect them

with heaven and conjoin them with the Lord (see Swedenborg: *Secrets of Heaven* paragraphs 4670 & 10604). This is a beautiful and catholic teaching.

For those who have reached a plane in the development of their intellectual life where they must see and have a rational basis for faith, all that is necessary to lead them to an acknowledgment of the Divinity of the Bible is the simple and direct opening of the lessons of its spiritual sense. Truth is its own witness and its own authority. It is so of this story. It need only be opened in its spiritual sense to be seen and acknowledged by all who are prepared for a reasonable faith in revelation.

One question which might be asked: Why is it that nothing is said about the admission of air into the ark? The ark is the symbol of the relationship between the men and women of the Noetic age, and their Creator. It was formed in them by the slow process of spiritual regeneration. Air is wind in a gentle and quiet state and is the symbol of the spiritual influences which operate to draw people closer to the Lord. These influences are continually supplied by the Lord as each person cooperates with him, but no one can know of their operation through the five senses alone. Spiritual life comes moment by moment, but we are not conscious of its constant communication. The Lord is the giver of those holy and interior spiritual influences. He secretly, and in a manner wholly unknown to us, supplies the life for spiritual rebirth. No individual can do this. It was to represent this great fact that in this allegory nothing is said of Noah making provision for the airing of the ark.

The other question which doubtless has occurred to many: Why were the two lower decks of the ark left in darkness for there was only one window, and that was in the top of the ark? We need to look within for the answer. The ark tossed on the waters! Do you not see that it is the picture of the people in whom a new spiritual life was being formed undergoing severe trial and temptation? Think of a state of deep spiritual temptation. In such a state of trial, are not the lower levels of our mind - the faculties that pertain to the merely natural and rational departments of the soul - in a

state of darkness? Evil and false influences are operating upon them and the light of heaven is, for the time being, shut out. Who has not experienced this? At such times, the lower parts of the mind entirely lose their hold on spiritual consciousness and the religious life. They are in darkness. However, there is a window above in the ark. It is the intellectual faculty belonging to the spiritual mind. Light enters there; so that while in a state of temptation, the lower and more external planes of the mind are in darkness, light shines in the interior regions of the soul. If this were not true, no one could do otherwise than fall in temptation. When in a state of temptation, everyone is wholly unconscious of the flowing in of this interior light. While the trial lasts even this window seems shut. Yet when the temptation ends, this seemingly closed window appears open again to the spiritual consciousness. This is what is meant where it is said (Genesis 8:6):

At the end of forty days Noah opened the window of the ark that he had made.

The number forty stands for a full state of trial and temptation. When this passes away, the window - the interiors of the mind - opens and we are made conscious of the loving hand that upheld and guided our soul in the hour of temptation. As well as for the individual, it was also true of the collective peoples represented by Noah in the ark. Think now of the sending forth of the raven. In this allegory, the raven, unlike the dove, was not sent forth to see if the waters had dried up. It was sent forth as a thing to be gotten rid of. The raven is a black and voracious bird and it therefore symbolises a false principle in the understanding. The raven in the ark! It stood for a false idea that adhered to the minds of the Noetic people, which was disclosed to them, when, after temptation, the spiritual part of their minds was illumined by divine truth.

Truth is spiritual light. When this light shines in the mind it reveals falsity in all its horrid blackness and there comes an effort to expel it. This is what is meant by Noah sending forth the raven. However, the raven did not go away at once. True, it never got

back into the ark again, but it did go “to and fro”. It flew away and then came back. It continued to do this until finally it disappeared forever. Almost without being told, we can see what this means.

Perhaps you can relate to this experience yourself. Many have struggled with religious dogmas portraying God as existing in three divine persons, of atonement as the placating of divine wrath by the death of Christ and of salvation by faith-alone. In terms of accepting that there is only one God and that God is never angry, but rather mercy itself - what are these dogmas but ravens? These ravens can be removed from our spiritual understanding and replaced with more wholesome truths, but they may continue to take our attention while we assimilate the new possibilities, which are:

- Jesus Christ as God in a Divine Humanity in whom is the divine trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit as divine essentials
- the atonement as our union with the Lord
- the salvation as the Lord’s deliverance of our souls from sin and its power

In this way the Lord is forming a new spiritual understanding in us. We have undergone much trial in the reception of new truths and come out of it. Light has come. The raven - the false dogma on these subjects - has been sent out of the ark. Yet we do continue to reflect on our old thinking like the raven going “to and fro”. The old ideas come back, and we are distressed by them at times. However, the more we hold onto what we genuinely believe to be good and true, eventually our raven will go for good, never to return again. Now such was the experience of the people in whom the Lord formed the new Ancient spiritual era. They did not free their minds of false things suddenly. The raven, when sent forth from the ark, went “to and fro” for a long time. Yet finally it disappeared never to return again. The truth finally expelled it forever.

Then a new experience came to them. It is told through the beautiful parable of the sending forth of the dove to see if the waters had dried up. That was its mission. The dove represents the truth. However, the truth is from the Lord and to be effective, it must be done in the acknowledgment of him as its author. In the beginning of spiritual growth, we are not in this acknowledgment. We act from our selfhood. We believe we have discovered the truth and that we have the power to execute its commands. This, in the beginning, was the state of the Noetic people. So we read of Noah (Genesis 8:8):

Then he sent forth a dove from him.

The dove found (Genesis 8:9):

. . . no place to set her foot.

How could it? Truth believed and done from oneself has no power to change life. The dove returned and Noah brought her back into the ark, so runs the story. There is still here the idea of a mental ownership of the truth - the thought that one is doing good of oneself. The raven has gone; falsity is expelled, but the dove of truth has not attained the full liberty of life.

It is sent forth again, and again comes back to be taken into the ark, but it brings back an olive leaf! How beautiful this symbolism is! The olive tree, from which the holy oil was derived, is the symbol of the perception of the indwelling of divine love. The olive leaf symbolises the truth of the awakening of that love in people's hearts. This had become, by this time, the spiritual state of the people of the Ancient era. On this occasion, the dove was not brought back into the ark. The selfhood was finding its true place; the Lord was being acknowledged.

The third time the dove was sent forth, it did not return. The waters had dried up and it found a place for the "sole of its foot". This is telling us that the truth was able to be fully accepted into the

hearts of the people, that is, the truth produced goodness in the form of right action so it was completely absorbed interiorly.



The Rainbow

In the divine allegory we are considering, the ark is said to have rested on the mountain. When the waters were fully abated, we are told Noah uncovered the ark. Then God is said to have commanded Noah and his sons to leave the ark, bringing with them the living creatures they had taken into it. It is then said that Noah built an altar and made an offering to the Lord of every clean beast and fowl. After this offering, the Lord is described as establishing a covenant with Noah and every living creature of all flesh. The token of that covenant was a bow in the cloud (Genesis 9:13):

I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.

As we have seen, Noah and his family were not so many individuals. They stand for the great spiritual era which was forming in the world. It had passed through trying ordeals; it had suffered bitter trials and temptations; but *now* rest had come, the waters of turmoil and strife had abated and it was in a state of peace. Coming out of these great temptations, the minds of the Noetic people were clearer on all spiritual subjects. Things that had been in a state of obscurity to them were now openly seen. This is what is meant by Noah uncovering the ark. Out of this brighter and better state, there arose in their hearts a sense of deep thankfulness to the Lord for his divine protection in the time of their danger and a desire to express that holy sentiment in genuine

worship of the Lord. In the allegory, this is portrayed in these simple words (Genesis 8:20):

Then Noah built an altar to the Lord and took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

The altar that was built to the Lord was the high state of love formed in their hearts. The altar was within them - the altar of a pure and consecrated heart. The clean animals and birds and the burnt offering mentioned in the allegory stand for the good affections in the hearts and for the pure thoughts in the understanding of the people of this Noetic era. For at the period being described, the people were not external enough to call for the actual killing of animals in sacrifice. That practice arose later when worship among them became sensualised. The clean animals and birds that Noah is said to have taken into the ark were not natural animals; they were the clean affections and thoughts of the people who were being formed into the *new* spiritual era of humankind; and they were called animals and birds because animals and birds represented them precisely in terms of their natures and activities.

It was after this state of freedom in worship was formed with these Noetic peoples that we read of the bow being set in the cloud as the token of the Lord's covenant with them. We might think of this bow in the cloud as the creation and first appearance of the rainbow. However, the bow in the cloud is a natural phenomenon and is always caused by the shining of the sun through the drops of descending rain. It was not a new creation in the day of Noah for such a phenomenon has always appeared whenever the proper physical conditions existed. The story, however, does not imply its creation or appearance for the first time. It rather conveys the idea of appointment or establishment. What had been a well-known and beautiful appearance - a thing so frequently seen - was now appealed to, set apart and dedicated as a token and symbol of the establishment of a covenant between the Lord and humankind.



The Covenant

A covenant is a conjunction or union of two parties so that a covenant between God and humankind means a coming together, making a living, vital and personal relationship between the Divine Creator and his human and responsible creatures. The natural object used as the symbol of that personal relationship must perfectly represent it. The rainbow does this absolutely.

From the earliest times, the typical character of the bow in the cloud has been recognised. The early Rabbinical writings traced the resemblance of the bow to the Hebrew letter 'caph' and supposed it to be a token of certain remarkable events in the civil history of the Jewish people. It was regarded as a sign among the ancient Greeks and called Iris. In Greek mythology the office assigned to Iris was to cut the thread which was supposed to hold the soul in the body of those who were dying. Here we see a little hint of the covenant of which Iris was supposed to be the token: she removed out of the way the thing that prevented the soul's union with God. This, like many other ideas in Greek mythology, was derived from the correspondences of natural things to spiritual things - a knowledge which had come down from the time of the Noetic era.

The early Christian Fathers, especially Origen (185 - 254 AD) and Tertullian (155 - 230 AD), regarded the bow in the cloud as the symbol of the covenant of grace which came with the incarnation of the Logos. In relation to the Noetic era, the bow had a twofold meaning:

1. It represented the spiritual meaning of the Divine Word which was revealed to these people, for we must remember that the Ancient Word, by which the Noetic era was instituted and established in the world, had its 'cloud' or literal description. The text of the Ancient Word was formed from carefully preserved correspondences through the ministry of the Enochites of the Adamic era. These correspondences were more *remote* than the correspondences of the literal sense of the Hebrew Scriptures. They formed an expression of a revelation which treated only of spiritual things. This text of the Ancient Word was the cloud and the spiritual meaning within it, which treated of the Lord and the rebirth and growth of people, was the beautiful bow set in that cloud. Therefore to the people of the Noetic times, the bow set in the cloud was the token of the covenant which God made with them by means of the outward revelation of truth in a divinely given book of Scripture. The rainbow, which is distinguished by a series of harmonious colours, was the symbol of spiritual truths within the literal text of the Ancient Word. These spiritual truths in all their diversities were the real sign of the covenant which God made with the Ancient peoples.
2. The bow, as it respects the people living at the time we are considering, who by the work of spiritual growth were having the principles of the higher life implanted in their minds, represented the perception of the spiritual sense of their Scripture. As the Word has its cloud, or literal level, in which the spiritual sense appears as a bow, so the person developing higher loves and truths in life has a cloud - a natural mind, with its obscure perceptions of spiritual truth. Everyone, even the most spiritually advanced, has dark and

cloudy states. In this cloud, though, God sets his bow of promise and covenant. For in our darkest hours there is present some perception of spiritual things that spans the cloud. It was the same for the people from whom the Noetic age was formed. They had their dark background, their heredity from the long ago, their obscure states. Yet, because of the separation of will and understanding in them, they had perceptions of spiritual truth. These were their bow of promise. These perceptions of spiritual things kept them in touch with the Lord. A new will of obedience could be formed in their separated and elevated understanding and therefore a covenant could be established between God and themselves. They could learn his will and do it. They could be united to him. This faculty would preserve them from the dreadful evils and falsities which inundated and destroyed the Adamic era. So it is also with us. We have the Bible which has its obscuring cloud - the literal words - and it also has its bow or spiritual sense, and is therefore God's covenant with us. Also, we have our cloud of naturalism - our dark side - but going on to know the Lord, we can also have a beautiful bow of spiritual perceptions. This bow will span our mind. One end of it will rest on the natural mind and, arching our being, the other end will rest on our spiritual mind. What a beautiful bow! Yes, and it is the promise that in the end our two minds will be harmonised and act as one.



Spiritual Development Experienced Personally

Noah, the Ark and the Flood -*Temptation and Protection*

Our aspirations for attaining a state of spiritual maturity inevitably meet setbacks requiring us to reassess the direction we need to take with specific aspects on which we are working. At

times we can fall back on spiritual motivation ~ *Adam in the Garden of Eden*; at other times we can draw strength from a truth we have learned and simply implement that ~ *Cain, after the death of Abel, and Seth and his descendants*.

However, the desires of our lower nature are very strong and the biblical episode of the ark and the flood help us to understand what is happening at that level of our mind and how we can best deal with them. Our lower, worldly and self-driven feelings will endeavour to rule what we know to be true in responding to the experiences we meet in life by distorting our power of reasoning to justify actions we take. Higher, heavenly principles we have learned and accepted are in danger of being swamped by false ideas and evil inclinations ~ *the destructive flood of turbulent, muddy waters*. All is not lost though while some inclination for goodness remains, sufficient for developing spiritually ~ *Noah and his sons building an ark to the Lord's specifications*.

The Lord is able to ensure that our mind remains properly structured with a separation between what we desire and our understanding (knowledge, reason and real intelligence) of how we should live ~ *the ark with its rooms and three storeys*. The Lord can also assemble and protect all those thoughts and feelings which are able to continue serving a higher purpose for us ~ *two of every kind of living thing being taken into the ark*. In this state, we can withstand the temptations to be selfish in life or to believe in false principles by allowing our senses to rule our minds ~ *as Adam and Eve did by listening to the serpent* ~ rather than accepting true ideas we have learned ~ *the forty days on the flood waters being buffeted by wind and waves*. If we remain focussed on heavenly purposes, the power of all those aspects of our lower nature that cannot serve anything higher, and which evoked the temptation, will be removed ~ *all living things except those with Noah in the ark were destroyed*. We will be strengthened in our spiritual resolve by this necessary time ~ *the waters subsided and the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat*.

We will then be able to understand more and more about the truth which we have accepted ~ *light entering through the one window in the roof of the ark opening to the heavens*. Yet we cannot totally refrain from reflecting on some of the old principles we have given up, wondering whether they might still bring us more happiness ~ *the raven leaving and returning* ~ although their influence will dissipate by continuing to focus on what we know is really true ~ *the raven never returns*. So begins the new phase in our spiritual journey ~ *the dove sent out* ~ but it will only develop into something of lasting value if we acknowledge that it is the power of divine love which provides the firm support needed ~ *the dove first finding no resting place and then returning with the olive leaf* ~ for we have no resources of our own by which to achieve our desired end.

From that point, genuine spiritual growth recommences with those good thoughts and feelings sourced in our inmost being actively working again in our life for the sake of others ~ *Noah, his family and all the animals freely coming out of the ark to roam and multiply*. However, we will continue to face difficult times when our perception of the true pathway becomes dimmed causing us to question the presence of the Lord in our life ~ *the dark clouds over the earth*. All the truths about right living will still be available for us to draw upon and when we do, the Lord's love and light will illuminate them in myriads of ways ~ *the rainbow in the cloud* (created by the sun shining through water droplets). We then have a bridge between what we know to be true and the desire to implement it ~ *the rainbow arch* ~ together with the unforgettable knowledge that the Lord is present to protect us through all negative states ~ *the covenant between God and his creation*.

Personal Reflection

Sometimes life feels overwhelming, swamping us with difficulties and anguish apparently too great for us to cope with. When they occur, imagine taking a golden light of pure love into your heart, letting it warm you and giving

you strength while the storm rages. Try to constantly focus on this golden light while involved in your daily activities. Always see it there, spreading from your heart. Often during these terrible times all you can do is allow your faith to stand you in good stead. Knowing that you have come through such episodes previously, you can wait for it to end accepting that the Lord will protect your spiritual life if that is what you truly want. It is better to wait in love rather than despair.



Noah's Descendants

A Vineyard

The Adamic era was celestial but the Noetic era was spiritual. These two terms, celestial and spiritual, indicate and point out differences and distinctions that are organic and far reaching. Those forming the celestial era were in the goodness of love; those in the spiritual were in the truths of faith. This means that those men and women in the earliest times of the Adamic age derived truth from good, and that those of the Noetic age derived good from truth. The will and the understanding of the celestial person acted as *one* faculty, the understanding being formed from the will and thinking always as the will loved. The will and understanding in the spiritual person were separated. They were not one faculty but two, and because of the corruptions of the will, a new will was formed in the intellectual part, in which a distinctly spiritual life was implanted, to be formed and guided by the truth which from revelation entered their understanding from without. Such was the organic difference between the two eras.

The imagery of the divine allegory clearly points to this difference. Adam was placed in a *garden*, Noah planted a *vineyard*. Adam fell through *eating*, Noah fell through *drinking*. Eating is an act which indicates a state of the will; drinking is an act which describes a

state of the understanding. The Adamic people, by listening to the pleadings of the sense-life, fell away from the purity of love. The Noetic people, by the inflation of self-intelligence, fell away from the purity of truth. Adam's fall took place in a *garden*; Noah's fall took place in a *vineyard*. It would be interesting to follow up and dwell upon these correspondences, but enough has been said to indicate and fix the spiritual meaning for the enquiring mind.

We have seen that the ark resting on the mountain is the beautiful picture the Lord gives us of those who formed the new spiritual era, following the destruction of the old one, resting in the heights and quiet of divine love after its long state of trial and temptation. The waters of temptations have abated: the dry ground appears. Now, we come to a very remarkable statement, one that, in its spiritual meaning, reveals the first step in the spiritual decline of the Noetic era. We read (Genesis 9:20):

Noah began to be a man of the soil; and he planted a vineyard.

The origin of the words "man of the soil" is the Hebrew *ish adamah*, which can be more literally translated as "a man of the ground". This brings out more clearly the spiritual meaning. The ground referred to is the external mind and by that statement we can see that the people of this new Ancient era began to be external in their approach to life. The literal picture of Noah coming down from the summit of the mountain and planting a vineyard in the plain describes how these people began to be external - "of the ground". It is therefore telling us how they descended from the mountain heights of love to the Lord and their neighbour into the more external things of spiritual living; how they began to cultivate them, to give them undue importance and finally to prefer and place them above internal, spiritual things. Here was the beginning of the fall of this new Ancient era. It began to be one of the ground - to look down and out instead of looking up and within.

There is always danger ahead when that begins to happen. External practices and worship are not spiritual living *per se*. They

have a very important place and serve a valuable use, but if they are allowed to absorb the thought, if they are taken out of their subordinate position and given undue prominence, nothing other than a decline of spiritual life can result.

Beginning as a 'man of the soil', the allegory goes on to tell us that Noah planted a vineyard. Of the Garden of Adam, it is said: "And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden." The garden in Eden was planted by the Lord, but the vineyard of Ararat was planted by Noah. Here is brought out another important spiritual teaching. The planting of this vineyard was one more step in the decline of the Noetic era; for it represents the establishment of a people that became involved in the more external or outward aspects of truth and its application rather than of love and the life of charity. This was really the case. For as the people of this Ancient era moved away from a life based on higher spiritual principles, it began to give loud expression to the things of mere faith and to pay less and less attention to the life of charity. It finally became an era "of the soil".

The planting of a vineyard is a regular occurrence throughout the Bible. One instance is the parable in the Gospels (Mark 12:1) where the Lord tells of a man who planted a vineyard and leased it out to tenants. Clearly from the parable text, it is the Lord God who plants the vineyard and lets it out to us. The vineyard refers to all those spiritual attributes of goodness and understanding with which the Lord provides us, enabling our lives to grow and develop into useful service. We can tend this well or poorly. Here, though, Noah plants the vineyard. Noah having become "a man of the ground" tells us that the hearts and minds of the Noetic peoples were ruled by the mere knowledge of the truth, which became regarded as the chief virtue, with charity of life as an inferior. This is the dreadful thing that happens when we attempt to contain the essentials of spiritual life within just a belief structure.

We come now to Noah's intoxication, where we are told (Genesis 9:21):

He drank of the wine and became drunk and lay uncovered in his tent.

Wine is the symbol of spiritual truth. For this reason, the Lord used wine in the institution of the Holy Supper. The Lord established the Christian era as his spiritual vineyard, and the spiritual truths which he reveals are the wine of the vineyard. The opening of the minds of people to Christian teaching and instruction is spiritually to drink of the wine of the vineyard of the Lord's planting. In receiving Christian teaching and in living it, though, we must remember whose vineyard it is that we are 'tending', and from whom the wine of spiritual truth is derived. Every movement of self-intelligence must be quelled - all pride of intellect must be shunned as sin against God. If these evils are not shunned, we are sure to fall into errors that will confuse and bewilder our judgment and lead our intellects astray. This state is described in the Bible as spiritual drunkenness.

Here we find the meaning of Noah's intoxication. His sin was not that of natural inebriety. There are forms of intoxication other than the one produced by the excessive use of wine. We often indicate certain states of mind by the term intoxication, saying of an enthusiast that they are intoxicated with an undue zeal for the cause they are advocating. The worldly mind is often intoxicated with the success which attends its efforts and achievements.

The Bible frequently speaks of drunkenness to denote a state of spiritual pride. Ariel is said by the prophet Isaiah to be drunk (Isaiah 29:9):

Be drunk, but not with wine; stagger, but not with strong drink.

Again he says (Isaiah 28:3):

The proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim will be trodden underfoot.

So we come to see that the story of Noah's drunkenness, considered spiritually, is the description of the state into which the people of that Ancient era fell when they began to pervert and falsify the truths that had been revealed to them. Over time they became dulled, intoxicated with the passion for just truth and something separate from the life it taught. They laid in a state of spiritual stupor.

Think now of Noah's exposure. He lay uncovered in his tent. The first consequence which followed Adam's sin was that he discovered he was naked. Here, Noah lies uncovered. Adam seeing his own nakedness is the symbolic way of telling us of the revelation to the consciousness of those in the Most Ancient era at the loss of the innocence which they originally possessed. The same applies in the case of Noah. His nakedness was the coming to the surface of that inward guilt which arises when there is a falling away from a more internal life to an external one, something which certainly occurred amongst those of the Ancient era.



The Sin of Ham: the Curse on Canaan

The story of Noah's drunkenness and his exposure by Ham, and the charitable treatment he met with at the hands of his sons, Shem and Japheth, relates a domestic incident in a way that presents a divine picture, designed to convey to us the most important lessons. It is a domestic parable.

By Noah, as we have seen, is denoted the Ancient era of humankind. His drunkenness symbolises the errors into which the people of that age fell, when they departed from their high principles and began to cultivate spirituality as a mere philosophy

of truth. To do this is to become spiritually intoxicated. Noah became drunk with the wine of his own vineyard. Self intelligence had found its way into the life of those people. Following the dictate of self intelligence led them into all manner of errors. Noah lay drunk in his tent. Revelation from the Lord is the only safeguard, for without it there is only self intelligence left which will inevitably lead itself into errors.

This same process may also be seen in the history of the Christian Church. The early Christian Church - the church of the Apostolic age - accepted the Lord's guidance in his Word and had spiritual power and intelligence from him. However, as that age of the church closed, the Christological and trinitarian controversies arose, and the age of the councils marks a long period of spiritual inebriation. Noah, again, lay uncovered in his tent. It was all due to self intelligence. Noah's drunkenness was this very thing - the fall through self intelligence of those in that Ancient era into all manner of erroneous persuasions. Further, his being uncovered in his tent is only the symbolic way of describing the shame and disgrace to which those errors and false persuasions exposed the Ancient people. Have not the formulations of the councils of the Christian Church - the cruel and debasing doctrines of the post-Nicene Church - been a disgrace and a scandal to Christianity? Could a sober church ever invent the doctrine of the tri-personality of God, the vicarious atonement, salvation by faith-alone, predestination, infant damnation, and a hell of everlasting burning? Truly, any sober-minded person is able to see that those doctrines have exposed the church's shame to the gaze of the world. This, only on another plane and in a different form, was Noah uncovered in his tent, the Ancient era disgraced by the errors which resulted from its own intelligence.

The sons of Noah are not to be thought of as individuals. They stand for the three classes of principles which entered into the constitution of the Ancient age, and also for the three classes of persons by whom they were embraced.

Ham, who went into his father's tent, saw him naked and told his brothers about it, stands for those who accepted and received the truths of spirituality because of the light they afforded to their understanding and for the worldly advantage they derived from them. They had only a scanty regard for the *good* in which they originated - for the high spiritual use they were designed to serve.

Now, the people called Ham, soon began to fall away from the truths they had accepted. Regarding the love of goodness and obedience from interior and spiritual motives, as inferior to the cultivation of mere knowledge, their truth soon lost all connection in their minds with its divine origin in revelation, and soon failed to see any real connection between knowledge and conduct.

Here we see a divine law, which is this:

Spiritual truth, if it is not connected in the mind with its source in God and revelation, is soon turned into intellectual speculation. This leads to a separation of religion from life.

Therefore, being the genius of the Hamites, Ham is said to be the one who exposed Noah; for it was a part of their disposition to detect every fault or error which was manifested. The Hamites were the rationalists of the Ancient era. They were quick to observe every discrepancy and to hold it up, and speak of it. This they did, with no intention of correcting error, but only to expose it to the gaze of others.

The people of the Noetic age denoted by Shem and Japheth, acted differently. They were in simple good and obedience. When errors relating to truth and good began to arise, they endeavoured to excuse them and put a favourable construction on them. This effort of the charitable people to protect spiritual life from scandal is represented by Shem and Japheth covering Noah with a garment. Their disinclination to raise enquiry into the errors that were arising is what is meant by their turning their eyes away from their father's nakedness and going backward as they covered him in his tent. Here is a great lesson in charity, and there is ample room and

opportunity for the practice of it in our own day and in our own communities.

Shem stands for those who placed the worship of the Lord in the foreground - who regarded it as the first principle of spiritual life. They, however, did not attach much importance to the element of spiritual intelligence in directing and forming that life. They were not people who concerned themselves with understanding spiritual principles, nor did they see the importance of such true principles as a qualifying factor in their acknowledgment of the Divine.

Japheth stands for those who were in simple obedience to the laws which commanded the life, and inculcated the moralities of spiritual life. To them, this was the principal requirement. They did not see, though, a necessary connection of the moralities of spiritual life with the good and the truth of God, from which all the outward moralities and utilities of life must get their true inwardness.

What happened next? (Genesis 9:24):

. . . Noah awoke from his wine . . .

How can we understand this? It tells us that these Ancient peoples came into a realisation of the dreadful error into which they had fallen. Just as we may make a mistake individually and afterwards come to see it, so a whole race of people may fall into errors of interpretation, and afterward awake to a full sense of the nature and consequence of such errors.

When Noah awoke, we are told that (Genesis 9:24):

. . . and he knew what his youngest son had done to him.

This is strange language; and it is impossible to think of it only in a figurative sense; for Ham, according to the literal sense, was Noah's second, and not his younger son. As we have shown, the awakening of Noah was that Ancient race of people seeing the

errors into which it had fallen. Noah, seeing what his younger son had done to him is a way of telling us, in the form of a parable, that the errors of spiritual life and understanding which began to come to light were, in fact, the basis for the corrupt religious practices which had arisen as a consequence of the Hamites being a people of mere knowledge. The corrupt practices of acknowledging God had arisen during Noah's state of intoxication. He saw it when he awoke. The people who adopted such practices and made it their religion, are called Canaan, which is the reason for Noah saying (Genesis 9:25):

... "*Cursed be Canaan*".

They are spoken of as Noah's younger son, because they adopted and carried into practice the religious corruptions which had last descended from that Ancient era. In the story, Canaan is said to be the youngest son of Ham. Therefore, Canaan represented the last and youngest heretical worship that descended from the declining Ancient era. This means that from the Hamitish branch of the Noetic era, which had so perverted divine truth, arose a new corruption called in the text 'Canaan'.

Here we see why the curse for exposing Noah's nakedness was pronounced against Canaan and not upon Ham. The curse upon Canaan means that the people, under that name, who had adopted such corrupt worship and turned themselves away from the Lord had closed themselves off to all the avenues of divine inflowing bringing the life of heaven to them. This curse - this closure of the minds of the Canaanites to the Lord - was fully realised in their history as a people; for it was this people with their corrupt worship that were long afterwards destroyed by the Jews when they came in to possess the land of Canaan.



The Generations of Shem, Ham and Japheth

The sons of Noah represent the distinct spiritual groupings amongst those of the Ancient era. By thinking of Noah, not as an individual, but as the Ancient or Spiritual community of men and women, there will be no difficulty in opening our mind to this spiritual interpretation. The name Noah stands for the remnant, left in the Most Ancient era, in all of whom the Lord commenced a different process of spiritual growing - one which consisted in the forming of a new will in their intellectual parts. Shem, Ham and Japheth denote not only the three cardinal principles of the Ancient age, but the different classes of people who accepted them and by loyalty to them propagated them among humankind.

We may find an illustration of this in the history of the Christian Church. That church, as early as the second century, was called the Catholic Church. It was so called because to the early Fathers the word 'catholic' expressed the true conception of Christianity as the universal religion, differing from the ethnic or race religions in that it brought to the world a religion for all sorts and conditions of people. After the first general council in 325 AD, however, the original Catholic Church began to depart from the faith once delivered to the saints, and branched out into three parts, which church history calls the Roman, the Greek and the Anglican Catholic Churches. The Roman, Greek and Anglican Churches are the three sons of the original Christian Catholic Church. Each distinct branch retained something of the parent church, but each departed in many particulars from the original church.

So it was of the sons of Noah. Shem was the branch that received and accentuated the life of charity. Ham was the branch that received in a special way the teaching that revealed the laws of divine truth. Japheth was the branch that received and laid emphasis on the need for obedience in spiritual matters. Starting out, in this way, these three branches of the Noetic age began to propagate the special things they stood for. As they did this, there

arose among their members many and various opinions concerning the principles for which they stood, especially as to the methods of propagating them.

The descendants of Shem, Ham and Japheth are not individuals either but forms of belief: their names indicate the people who embraced them. This is all clear enough if we keep in mind that we are reading about the history of the spiritual relationship between peoples living in early times and their Creator, and not about the natural population of the world.

We can calculate that seventy sons descended from Noah's three. This number is very significant. Seven, such as the seven 'days' of creation which was the subject of earlier chapters, stands for what is full and complete. Seventy comprises seven times ten reinforcing the sense of fullness and completeness (the Ten Commandments provide all the truths necessary for spiritual life). We get from it, spiritually understood, the idea of the full development of the principles derived from the three cardinal teachings of the Ancient age. One thing, however, we must keep in mind - the Noetic period was in the process of decline. The descendants of Shem, Ham and Japheth, or the beliefs that were originated and propagated in these branches of the Noetic era, were getting farther and farther away from the original deposit of the true faith. As a whole, in its three branches, the era was going on to its judgment and end. At this point, the story tells us that Noah dies, which effectively portrays the end of that Ancient era in terms of the total lack of a spiritual life and meaningful religious practice among the people.

The story of the peoples of this Ancient era does not end just yet. After the descendants of Japheth are enumerated, we meet with a remarkable statement where it is said (Genesis 10:5):

From these the coastland peoples spread in their lands, each with his own language, by their clans, in their nations.

From the Hebrew text, the coastland peoples can also be referred to as Gentiles or mariners, that is, people outside the Ancient peoples we have been considering. They were already in existence, showing in the story itself that the record is not treating of the natural history of humankind. The lands were already full of inhabitants, but as the teaching of the Noetic era, in its three great branches, was brought to them, they were divided in their lands - distinguished in their lands by the several notions of spirituality which began to prevail among them. Think of this same thing as realised in the propagation of Christianity. The first Christian Church was organised in Jerusalem and was under the pastoral care of James. From this centre, Christianity was planted in the Holy Land. Missionaries went out proclaiming its doctrine and they fathered, as spiritual sons, all the nations of western Europe. They were not the colonizers of those countries, but they were the ones who converted their inhabitants. Europe became Christian, but each nation has been distinguished by some peculiar feature of Christianity. The people were divided in their lands. So of this Noetic age. The various nations that were influenced by the doctrines of that Ancient era - the distinct forms of spiritual life and practice that were developed among them - are what is meant by the Gentiles being divided in their lands. The respective receivers of the various teachings in the course of time separated and propagated their opinions. The names of their *spiritual characteristics* were fixed upon the nations that received them.

One may ask how so many nations could have been so distinctly characterised by spiritual beliefs. Yet, we have had the same thing in the history of Christianity and Islam. For instance, it is easy to find lists which give the description of a whole family of national churches springing from and being related to the original Greek Church.

So the divine purpose in the list of names of nations descended from Shem, Ham and Japheth is to express the origin and character of the various spiritual sentiments springing out of the three families of belief structures which grew up in the Noetic era, and which, in the allegory, are called Shem, Ham and Japheth. The

purpose was also to indicate the propagation of those varieties of spiritual teaching and practice among the nations and their adoption of the names by which those teachings and practices were expressed, (and we have the same thing today in the many forms of Christianity, Islam, etc). We can see from this the great variety of the forms of spiritual belief and practice in that Ancient period. Each of these beliefs was adopted by certain numbers of individuals, who, as a family, a house, or a nation, was called by the name of the special spiritual doctrine that they accepted.

We have three lines:

1. The nations descended from Shem stand for the peoples who accepted the principles concerning goodness of life, which they derived from those of the Noetic era who were in spiritual and internal life. These principles gave a distinct character to the people that accepted them. They took the name of them so that the nations descended from Shem are the people whose spiritual characteristics may be traced back to the distinctive religious teaching in the Ancient era that was personified under the name Shem. The true evidence of Shemitic origin was their spiritual characteristics and not their descent from an individual called Shem.
2. The sons of Ham stand for teachings which were derived from those in the Ancient era among whom there had prevailed a corrupt form of internal spiritual practice. They also stand for the nations by which the knowledge of such teachings were received. Therefore, the sons of Ham denote the teachings and the people who placed the knowledge of spiritual life, and especially emphasising ceremonial ritual, above the principles of the life of charity. The nations that embraced these teachings were called by the name which was given to it in the Ancient era. It is the spiritual generation of these teachings and not nations that is told us in the allegory.
3. Those who are described as the sons of Japheth stand for teachings that were evolved from those who, in the beginning, held true views of practising the requirements of genuine spiritual life in an external way, and for the

communities and nations that adopted them. When we contemplate a nation, we think of it as one. There is a national character, and this national character gives a peculiar quality to the spirituality that prevails in it. However, the inward quality of spiritual life differs, because of its inward reception into different minds in the nation. So all the nations said to be descended from Japheth symbolise the different inward reception of the belief that evolved from the original teaching in the Ancient era which was personified by the name Japheth.

In short, it is of the descent and propagation of spiritual beliefs and practices that is contained within the inner meaning of the story of the generations of the three sons of Noah.



Nimrod and his Kingdom

Nimrod was descended from Ham. By Ham was represented the teaching of an external form of living and ceremonial rituals in which there was, in the beginning, a true internal spirit. As we have seen, though, in the process of the decline of the peoples from that Ancient era, external living was separated from true internal processes, and external religious worship was adopted by large communities of people. Nimrod was the name given to the teaching which grew out of the Hamitic branch of the Ancient era, making everything of spiritual life into simple external religious rituals and observances. He does not, therefore, stand for an individual, but for a belief structure and for the communities that adopted and were influenced by it.

Simply applying spiritual principles in outward life (an external approach) without acknowledging their Divine Source is unholy or

profane. It consists in mere formalities and practices. It is soulless. It is sheer idolatry. It is paying tithes of mint, anise and cummin, but omitting the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith (Matthew 23:23). It makes formalities the essential and places the body above the soul. It appeals to and captivates the senses but does not reach the heart and mind. It is really a ceremonial tyranny and sets aside, as of little importance, the real inward spirit of higher life. It is a dead and cold formalism. All this is true of any form of spiritual living and practice, be it elaborate or simple, in which there is lacking the depth of true faith and humility. Internal spiritual living consists in love to the Lord and charity toward the neighbour, and this can enter into and dwell in all manner and forms of external living. It is the essential; the internal is what the Lord sees and the main thing is to have the internal right in the sight of God.

Now the Nimrod teaching did not involve this great conception. It ignored the internal altogether and paid only lip-service to what was really required for a true spiritual life. It reached its height of power as the Noetic era approached its judgment and end. Indeed it is remarkable that each spiritual era of humankind has experienced, at its close, this same thing. As the Adamic era neared its end, there arose in it an externalism represented by the giants who became mighty in the earth. As the Ancient era was coming to its end, Nimrod arose - a time when life lacked a true spiritual motive. Then, when the historic Jewish Church was at its end at the time of Christ, there arose the same state as represented in the Pharisees, who placed heavy and grievous requirements on the shoulders of their people to be carried out without exception and deviation. When the real inward life of a spiritual era dies out, people seek to 'make good' the 'loss' by directing their focus into ceremonials. This is the state of the Ancient era that is represented by Nimrod.

Think of what is said of Nimrod (Genesis 10:8):

... he was the first on earth to be a mighty man.

This is not the story of the rise of a man with a mighty and commanding influence. It is rather the story of the rise of a perverted and utterly false belief structure that grew into favour among men and women, becoming regarded as a mighty power at the end of the Ancient era.

The earth, or world, is the symbol of the state of a person or people before commencing the work of spiritual transformation. The reference to Nimrod is that of a principle that became prominent in its sway and that was mighty in its influence. The Ancient era had grown to be external. Its spiritual life had waned and died, and here was a teaching of external worship that strongly appealed to the natural state of mind into which the people had descended. Their natural hearts embraced it eagerly. It made no demands upon their life, for they had put away the vital things of faith and life and had come to regard the mere formalities and ceremonies required by a supposedly religious life as having saving power. Descending into this condition, people readily turned to a teaching that eliminated charity and substituted for faith a mere formalism of worship. So Nimrod gained dominion - spiritual tyranny grew up and externalism was all-important. This is what is meant by Nimrod's might in the earth. This same condition developed during the history of the Christian era. As the inward and beautiful life of the Apostolic age waned and died, there were gradually developed the imposing ceremonials of the Roman Catholic Church. The ordinary person was not allowed to question anything related to the church, especially those things connected with faith. So, in effect, true spiritual thinking was banished from that Church. In a real sense, religion, as a life, died, and in its stead there grew up a vast system of superstition which held the nations of the Christian world in bondage.

It is said of Nimrod that (Genesis 10:9):

He was a mighty hunter before the Lord.

This means that the system called Nimrod had a powerful sphere of persuasion about it. There was something in the Nimrod

teaching that captivated and held people's minds, alluring them on to accept a belief structure totally lacking all spiritual vitality.

The very nature of an external religion is persuasive and people are easily ensnared by it because, having become external, they easily accept what appeals to their sight and natural feelings. They are easily caught and captivated by a religion of mystery which is really one on the natural plane. They leave alone pathways that call for thought, reflection and spirituality of character. It is powerful in its persuasiveness and does not call for any spiritual thinking. Both aspects appeal to the natural person for they offer the bait of promises of relief from the duty of repentance and spiritual purification. This is the mighty hunter, great in persuasiveness and utterly lacking in rationality, of which we should avoid becoming *prey* through not using our rational faculties.

Think of what is said of Nimrods' kingdom (Genesis 10:10):

The beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar.

The idea is not that of the founding of these cities by a man named Nimrod; the idea is that of the beginning and extension of the principles which placed everything of spirituality in mere external things.

These cities with their inhabitants already existed, but Nimrodism began in Babel and extended its harmful influence over all the places mentioned. Can we not see the same development in the Christian Church? The beginning of the Papal dominion was in Italy and it gradually extended itself over Europe. Things have a beginning somewhere. Something more than a natural locality is meant by Babel. Babel is the Scripture name for the self-love out of which grow all the forms of practices to bring about spiritual dominion over people's souls. The Babel of Nimrod was the selfish love of the natural heart in which the principle that a spiritual life consists solely in the observance of ceremonies found its beginning. It is the same today as it was in the Ancient era. We

must be on our guard against the Babel of a selfish heart, which if we let it, will begin to dominate those spiritual principles we hold and then, like the power of Nimrod, extend its influence to all aspects of life. Clinging to the internal things of true spiritual life and regarding all external aspects as helpful when carried out in the right spirit will prevent this occurring.



Spiritual Development Experienced Personally

Noah and his Descendants -*Self-intelligence, Forgiveness and Distorted Faith*

After successfully passing through the trials and tribulations which a period of temptation inevitably brings ~ *Noah, the ark and the flood* ~ our motivation and understanding of truth are working in harmony to bring creative positive results for spiritual advancement ~ *Noah working the ground to plant a vineyard*. Of necessity we must expand our discernment of what we believe to be true ~ *Noah drinking the wine* ~ but if we allow our self-intelligence to make an individual truth more important for us than all others, our consciousness of the spiritual pathway becomes unbalanced ~ *Noah being drunk* ~ and we easily fall into a self-serving faith ~ *Noah being naked*. Instead of using even a self-serving faith from a beneficent standpoint, the tendency is to deploy it in looking for faults in others which is an ever-present danger we all face ~ *Ham leaving Noah, his father, uncovered and pointing out the nakedness to his brothers, Shem and Japheth*. We can avoid this danger by excusing any faults seen in others and placing the best possible interpretation on them, as do the angels ~ *Shem and Japheth walking backwards and covering their father's nakedness*. Any perverse erroneous beliefs causing our self-

serving faith will be withheld from damaging our spiritual progression ~ *Noah awaking refreshed.*

This is yet another experience we can call upon to help us in our work of spiritual growth. The folly of focussing on particular truths to the exclusion of others we have come to know will give us a distorted faith potentially leading to spiritually destructive results ~ *Noah proclaiming the curse for allowing his drunken state to be known.* On the other hand, measuring the truths we accept against the divine standards of the Ten Commandments or the Golden Rule will provide us with a firm foundation on which to build our spiritual life ~ *Noah lived another 350 years and then he died.*

Growing spiritually involves all levels of our being, from the innermost part of our soul, to our conscious thoughts and feelings, to our outward actions. These should operate as a whole and in harmony but often they do not ~ *the descendants of Noah and all their offspring scattered throughout the land.* We also need to again bring to mind that we are working on many aspects of our spirituality at the same time which gives the appearance of a lack of overall cohesion. If we do not, we will be in danger of once more losing what should be our main focus - our innermost thoughts and motivation - and we are likely to fall back into pursuing those powerful worldly, sense-based goals ~ *Nimrod, the mighty man, the hunter, founder of Babel.*

Personal Reflection

We often blame or condemn others, even in our thoughts! Observe when this happens and ask yourself: how much do I really know about this person and their reasons for being like this? Can I find similar features in myself? Can I find any instances today in my own attitudes or behaviour that may have caused unhappiness or anxiety in others?



Babel and its Tower

One Language

The supreme purpose of revelation is to teach spiritual truth. This is done by the employment of symbols. So divine revelation is structured according to a definite law - the law of correspondence - which expresses the causal relation between spiritual truth and the natural symbols by which it is clothed and through which it is expressed.

Among the people in the earlier times of the Ancient era, during which there was spiritual integrity, a natural language prevailed universally. The unity of language was a result of an internal unity of affection and thought between the people in connection with it. What their natural language was must be left for philology to decide, if, indeed, it can be decided. It would prove of no special spiritual use for us to know what it was.

The unity of language is used as a symbol of the unity of a deeper and profounder language - the language of the soul, the utterance of the divine manifestation within. This is our concern in the statement (Genesis 11:1):

The whole earth had one language and the same words.

We can translate this as telling us that those who formed that Ancient era at its beginning all accepted one body of spiritual teaching and lived it. It is true its members did not know the Lord in the interior way he was known in the Adamic age. Yet, they did all know him and see him in the light of the revelation which was made to them. They loved him. He stood out before their thought as a glorious being, a divine person who they could see and approach through the angel of his presence. They lived their life from him and loved him from the faith of their hearts. This looking up to him and love of him opened in them the deep fountain of love for one another, for they were all children of the good Father in heaven and therefore brothers and sisters in the bonds of an abiding deep spiritual affection. In other words they were a brotherhood loving each other in the beautiful life of charity. Their very life was love to the Lord and to the neighbour. In that sense, the language of their inner spiritual life was the universal language of love to God and to each other: "The whole earth had one language and the same words."

Students of the Bible will recognise that the term 'language' is employed to mean spiritual teaching. In treating of the future state of people's relationship with their Creator (the heavenly state meant by Canaan) in which science (Egypt then being the place of worldly learning) will be regarded as serviceable to their intellectual life, the prophet Isaiah says (19:18):

In that day there will be five cities in the land of Egypt that speak the language of Canaan.

In another place it said of the Lord (Zephaniah 3:9):

For at that time I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech, that all of them may call upon the name of the Lord and serve him with one accord.

No reference is made to natural language or speech in any of these instances. The meaning becomes clear only as we think of natural

language and speech as the symbol of the universal and true principle of love to God and the neighbour.



Moving from the East

While those at the beginning of the Ancient era knew and used this soul language, over time it became lost, the reason being clearly stated in the divine allegory (Genesis 11:2):

And as the people migrated from the east . . .

How expressive the symbolism! This one universal principle remained with the people as long as they lived near the Lord by loving his ways and cultivating in their minds a knowledge of, and love for, the internal qualities of a true faith. The Adamic era fell away when it left the Edenic state. The Noetic era fell away when it left the east - that is by moving away from a focus on the true and universal spiritual principle to life. The east, where the sun rises, is the symbol of the Lord from whom comes the light of life. Therefore, to live in the east, spiritually understood, is to live near the Lord and derive from him the life of love to him and to our fellow men and women. To journey from the east, spiritually interpreted, is to close one's mind to the Lord and the internal things of his kingdom.

This is what the Noetic people did. This has been the sad history of every spiritual era that has declined and passed away. Every such era to date has departed gradually from its original state of love into the mere observance of rituals and ceremonies until it has been brought to an end in some way by a divine process which has at the same time introduced the seeds for a new era to commence, albeit with different loves. This turning of minds from serving the

Lord and the neighbour to an external form of life is a sad state and is pictured in what is said of the people who journeyed from the east (Genesis 11:2):

. . . they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there.

A mountain, as an elevation in nature, represents a high state of spiritual life. The plain in the land of Shinar was actually a valley, a depression in nature, and in the symbolism of the Bible is used to represent an external life. When it is said they found a plain and settled there, the truth expressed is that in departing from the internal things of spiritual life, the people of the Ancient era came into a low external state. Here, they cultivated a love for ritual and ceremony as things of more importance than the inward and enduring things of the spirit.



A City and a Tower

There is a great warning in this story. Those who incline to the ornate and the beautiful in worship, who see that there may be great power in such ultimates of worship, should be careful not to give such externals too great an importance; for there does lurk a mighty danger in them - the danger of allowing them to obscure in the mind the deeper and real essential thing. We are told in this allegory that when the people migrated to the plain of Shinar, they said (Genesis 11:4):

"Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower".

Here we have the story of one more step in the spiritual decline in the people of the Ancient era. In departing from the Lord, the people renounced the high things of ideal and life; they became

external. What could grow out of this state other than the desire to build up a system of teaching with lofty pretensions of spirituality, but utterly lacking all the elements of love and truth? This is what is meant by the city and towers said to have been built on the plain of Shinar. In this last stage of decline, the people of that Ancient era invented false religious principles and adopted artificial methods of salvation. Its teachings fostered the love of self and inflated human intelligence with the thought of its own greatness. Above all, they encouraged and developed the worst forms of spiritual dominion over human souls.

We should remember that the people who journeyed from the east, when they came into the valley, said (Genesis 11:3):

“Come, let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly”. And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar.

Stones are divine creations, and in the Scriptures, in a good sense, represent divine truths revealed by the Lord to humankind. As no individual can make a stone, so no one can make a truth. On the other-hand, bricks are artificially made stones and God never, in any direct way, made a brick. Therefore, bricks portray falsities that look like truths but reveal their true nature when examined in the light of heaven.

So this biblical account of the peoples settling in the land of Shinar and the building of the tower of Babel tells of the peoples of the Ancient era, in the final stage of its fall, turning entirely away from the Lord and his truth to self-love and self-intelligence. It constructed its city of teaching and its tower of life from the fabrication of its own depraved will and fallen intellect. Bricks and mortar were the materials used. Then came the final end - the judgment on this spiritual era. It is told in allegorical form under the story of the confusion of languages and the dispersion of the people (Genesis 11:7,8):

“Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another’s speech”. So

the Lord dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city.

Any sense of cohesion collapsed and those Ancient peoples broke up into sects, each spreading out to propagate its own religious principles.



Spiritual Development Experienced Personally

The Tower of Babel -*From Unity of Spiritual Purpose to Inner and Outer Separation*

When our endeavours to live spiritually are based on a love for our Supreme Creator and directed towards the good of others, which is genuine charity, we will experience peace and contentment as we allow our thoughts and feelings to respond to all the many and diverse aspects going on in our life at the same time ~ *the whole earth had one language and one speech*. While this charitable disposition exists, we will be able to clearly perceive the true nature of our external life ~ *the nations living near the Mountains of Ararat in the east* ~ but it can be something very difficult to maintain with our lower nature, with all its self-centred living and thinking, beginning to take priority again ~ *the people journeying to the land of Shinar and settling on the plain there*. The need to pursue the divine way of life fades from our consciousness ~ *the people building the city of Babel* ~ and we even adapt the truth we have to purely external ways of thinking ~ *bricks held together by bitumen* ~ rather than those we have learned from divine sources ~ *stones available in nature not hewn to shape*.

We even sense through the pride of our own self-intelligence that we have the ability to reach heavenly happiness by

ourselves ~ *the people building a tower to heaven to make a name for themselves* ~ but in doing so, the cohesiveness between our inner and outer lives previously present becomes distorted ~ *the confusion of languages between the people making them unable to understand one another's speech*. Our spiritual life is left seemingly directionless and in crisis ~ *the people leaving their city and becoming scattered across the face of the earth*. This is actually a blessing because there is a separation between our inner and outer lives ~ *the language confusion and the scattering of the nations* ~ giving us the opportunity to once again reform our life and rejoin the pathway to spiritual maturity.

Personal Reflection

Think of a time when you felt a sense of responsibility that your life's opportunities and success, both worldly and spiritually, rested on your efforts alone? Can you determine the cause for this - a sense of self-importance, a need for self-gratification? Did it bring satisfaction or grief for you? If the same circumstances recurred, would you now draw on the assistance of a higher power through meditation or prayer?



Epilogue

So concludes the record of the first two periods of humankind (the Adamic and the Noetic) as presented through the symbolic language of myth. As we have seen, it gives a clear picture of a steady decline from a time of perfect connectedness between people living in the earliest period of humankind and their Creator, when there was a universal acceptance of the Divine providing all that was necessary for spiritual and natural life, to one of dependence on self and a personal interpretation of truth in its myriad of varieties. What began as an uncomplicated and idyllic life - the Garden of Eden state - slowly changed through various stages to one of hard work and confusion - Babel, its tower and the separation state. This pattern of decline is a perfect reflection of the spiritual journey which confronts every individual wishing to exercise their God-given freedom to choose selfishness in life, and therefore separation from the Divine. It also shows that despite the choices made, God will never step in to suspend freedom of choice but will provide opportunities for less damaging consequences to our spiritual welfare.

What of the rest of the Bible? Swedenborg tells us that following the allegorical episode of the language confusing and the dispersing of the peoples throughout the earth, the biblical text then follows history as recorded at the time. Still, its literal text contains an inner meaning which provides a source of the spiritual truth needed

for right living. This truth can be drawn forth in exactly the same manner as achieved in the first eleven chapters of Genesis - using the law of correspondence between spiritual and natural realities. It matters not whether the text is mythological, the history of the Jewish nation from Abram to the time of Christ (a Jew himself), the Gospels or the strange and seemingly predictive Book of Revelation.

To examine the biblical text in detail subsequent to Genesis chapter eleven is well beyond the scope of this work. However, with a most dramatic spiritual decline for humankind which occurred in those two periods, one might think that it could go no further. Swedenborg shows this not to be the case.

Abram, together with his family, is introduced into the biblical narrative and from the outset we appreciate that he, like Noah, is not entrenched in a life based on non-genuine spiritual truths but very much open to the Lord and divine leading. Yet, over time, Abram's descendants gradually became very external in their approach to spiritual life. Commandments were required to ensure their lives remained in some sort of order. At first, the real reason for carrying out the commandments was known - a reminder of underlying spiritual laws - but even this knowledge became 'lost' through the rigidity of practice. This is what is meant by the almost continual slavery and defeat in battles. Warnings by the prophets of the dire consequences for mindlessly following religious practices rather than returning to a life supported by divine truth went unheeded. Eventually, this more ritualistic and external approach marked an all-time low point for humankind. It reflected what happens when the search for spiritual truth, and a life of good according to it, is abandoned (Matthew 15:6):

So for the sake of your tradition you have made void the word (Law) of God.

These words of Christ, directed at the Jewish religious leaders who were using their position to dominate the lives of the people in their congregations, are something of a turning point. He was well

into his three year ministry and through actions, miracles, parables and specific expressions of love towards others, he was teaching a better way. The whole of the Gospel record is an expression of love in action. That is certainly very apparent in the deeper, internal, meaning contained in the literal words. It signalled a renewal of spiritual love and truth which would eventually become known throughout the western world. However, putting aside mere external religious worship, which is empty and without life (essentially selfish), and opening up to a life from principles inherent in loving others brings many challenges. The puzzling, dramatic and often bizarre sections of the last book of the Bible present, in symbolic language, these challenges. The text of Revelation holds little which makes any sense on the surface. At a deeper level, it shows a realistic divine message which recognises the pain and terror that evil can bring forth. Yet, it also reveals there are deeper, angelic resources of love and peace consistently available to all seeking to live a life with the attributes which Christ expressed. The overall message is one of hope and the general prospect is optimistic because the real clash between good and evil is spiritual and the power of the angels is very strong when called on.

At the end, there is no return to the Garden of Eden state for which many perhaps hope and long. We are left with the image of a city descending from God out of heaven. This again must be seen symbolically as a life which is firmly based on principles which are good, true and divinely inspired. Everything recorded about the city relates to a different aspect of that good and truth which, when known, accepted, and practised, enables a life that is perfectly in accord with the Divine Life. People in this state will enjoy inner peace and tranquillity in the same way as those living in the Garden of Eden state, the tree of life at the centre of both being the common image of focus on the Divine as the source of all goodness and truth. Having completed the spiritual journey with its ups and downs, highs and lows, the desire to serve the Lord and others is now fed by an understanding of the divine purpose for us as individuals and humanity in totality.

Apart from the interpretation gained of these early Chapters of the Bible as given by Swedenborg, there is no other account available of the beginnings of heavenly life in both humankind or men and women as individuals. Now that science has rendered a literal interpretation of them impossible, this opening of their inner meaning by the Lord restores them to their rightful place as essential and vital knowledge for people now and all time. As a part of God's divine revelation in the Sacred Scriptures, it can establish a rational faith in them.

When understood spiritually, the Genesis mythological account of the earliest era of humanity connects with the historic Israelitish dispensation of religion (from which the Jewish race emanates) giving unity to the Old Testament. That Testament is seen as one of decline but the New Testament points to a spiritual reconnection of humankind with the Divine which can never be broken despite all the appearances we may gather from the world about us. Every individual now holds the key to their own spiritual destiny.

Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Matthew 6:33



Appendix - Correspondences

Swedenborg's statement that books of the Bible contain a continuous spiritual meaning may initially seem highly improbable. It has left him open to the potential charge of undoing or violating the literal meaning of the biblical text. However, other than suggesting the first eleven chapters of Genesis are mythological stories or fables, he does not challenge the historical or scientific accuracy of the narrative but simply uses it to present a meaning at a higher level of humanity's being. Such a charge is therefore not valid. Just consider fables. The literal events, while fascinating to the imagination, are not what draws the reader into them. It is their psychological import which enables identification with the hero or heroine, or with the perpetrator of negative acts. We relate it to inner experiences which we have faced. In this sense it is parabolic. Another criticism often levelled is that Swedenborg simply draws on chance connections. For those who have taken the time to study his works, it becomes quite apparent that the spiritual meanings he draws from the biblical text are not artificial or arbitrary and his methodology is uniform throughout.

His essential premise is a living relationship between the natural and the spiritual objects and processes which correspond to each other - the Law of Correspondence. This is the case whether talking about the material world in which we live - the outermost part of divine creation - or sacred scriptures recorded by humans

yet with a divine origin. The first step to understand specific relationships or correspondences is to study that of which we have direct experience - this world. We need to examine and understand the inherent qualities, the processes involved and the usefulness served by any natural object or phenomenon, and relate them to some aspect or activity of our mind - our thinking and feeling states. We can look at anything in the animal and vegetable kingdoms and see how it corresponds with, and is an ultimate sign of, a spiritual process. We can examine in detail the form, colour, fragility, fruitfulness (or lack thereof), etc., of a rock or a tree and then begin to sense those aspects of ourselves that empathise with the object. It may be some ruling principle that guides our motivation or the slow, gradual building of a structured mind which gives our mental facilities strength and maturity. We begin to appreciate those higher, internal processes which the natural world reflects or mirrors.

Body language and common speech often provide direct clues of the relationship. A very easy example to understand is a smile. It can be artificially generated but usually a smile is a direct result of the inner happiness a person is feeling at that moment. Something on the natural plane corresponds to a process on the level of the spirit. The frown conveys a different relationship between the person's inner and outer worlds. So far as language is concerned, numerous examples could be cited. When carrying out a task which goes wrong through lack of concentration, the person involved may be told to 'use their head'. They have been using their head all the time, of course, but what is meant is to think more carefully about what is being done. We might say of someone 'he is as sly as a fox' or 'as strong as an ox'. Equally, we can talk of being 'as innocent as a lamb'. We might also use the term 'pig' if we feel people are being selfish and totally uncaring. Thinking of the vegetable and mineral kingdoms, sayings like 'the idea grew, eventually bearing fruit' and 'as calm as a millpond' quickly come to mind. Such analogies did not arise through chance. It all has to do with the observed quality, process and usefulness of the objects and seeing this reflected in the way the individual is going about life, generated from inner desires and thoughts. It is

this latter which generates the analogy. Using terminology more closely associated with Swedenborg's writings, we can refer to this process as 'from internals to externals' which is the same as saying 'as above, so below'.

This methodology has direct application with the literal text of the Bible. By examining the objects, events and progressions mentioned in the same way as briefly explained above - finding their inherent qualities, the processes involved and the usefulness served - and relating that to thinking and feeling states and activities, the biblical text will unfold beautiful and helpful spiritual lessons from which we can begin to draw. These newly-discovered symbols will be found recurring throughout the Bible. They will not always be in the same context, something which will change their spiritual connection. Think of the tranquil waters of the stream in the Garden of Eden and compare them with the torrent of water in the flood. Both are the same substance but one is constructive, the other totally destructive. Just as water in its pure form cleanses and refreshes the body, so truth brings clarity to thought and a purification of affections. Yet, if the truth is used for selfish ends, the imagery of the flood takes on special significance for us. We can be carried away in a torrent of false ideas, losing our foothold on the path of spiritual growth.

Swedenborg's thesis of inner meaning is decidedly too rich, too extensive, and too important to be dismissed out of hand. He almost requires the reader to be in a real spiritual search, to learn the symbolic language of the inner life, and then to study the Bible and its inner meanings at great length before a judgment can be made. But this much can be said. Those who have found this inner thread of meaning find that the Bible is incredibly rich, accurate, and relevant to our everyday life.

The Presence of Other Worlds by Wilson Van Dusen, page 202
(see Recommended Reading)



Recommended Reading

Arcana Caelestia (or *Secrets of Heaven*) - Volume 1

Emanuel Swedenborg

673 pages (Swedenborg Foundation - hb ISBN 0 87785 213 8)

476 pages (The Swedenborg Society - hb ISBN 0 85448 088 9; pb ISBN 0 85448 089 7)

An exposition of the spiritual (symbolic) sense within the allegory of the first eleven chapters of Genesis plus numerous references to other parts of the Bible. This work stands apart, unique and unparalleled, as a systematised explanation of the spiritual impact contained within the imagery and fable of the Old Testament.

Eve: The Bone of Contention

Michael Stanley

91 pages (Seminar Books- pb ISBN 0 907295 19 31)

A most helpful and clear psychospiritual interpretation of the story of creation and the Garden of Eden. The author's essential purpose is to show how the first three chapters of the Book of Genesis can be understood in answering the question "How could evil come into existence when, by creation, nothing but good existed?" He draws on the works of Jung and Assagioli, the channelled material *A Course in Miracles* and Swedenborg's spiritual teachings to present the beginning of the Bible as the origin and dynamic development of the human psyche.

Heavenly City, The

Emanuel Swedenborg

112 pages (Swedenborg Foundation Inc. pb ISBN 0 87785 144 1)

A 1993 modern and lively translation by Lee Woofenden of *The New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine*. Sub-titled 'A Spiritual Guidebook', this edition makes an excellent and challenging introduction, and a handy reference, to his major spiritual concepts by Swedenborg himself.

Presence of Other Worlds, The

Wilson Van Dusen

240 pages (Swedenborg Foundation Inc. pb ISBN 0 87785 312 6)

A fascinating account of the monumental journey of Swedenborg through the depths of his own mind to spiritual worlds beyond and back again. In detailing Swedenborg's spiritual voyage, Van Dusen presents the reader with the awesome opportunity for self discovery. There are also very useful sections on biblical interpretation and the law of correspondences included.

Swedenborg Life and Teaching

George Trobridge. Revised by Richard H. Tafel, Snr.

156 pages (Swedenborg Foundation Inc. hb ISBN 0 87785 139 5; pb ISBN 0 87785 144 1)

The most widely read biography of Emanuel Swedenborg with summaries of his theological, scientific and philosophical works.

World of Spirit, The

John H. Spalding

400 pages (Arcana Books pb ISBN 1 883270 18 9)

While written nearly 100 years ago, this book previously titled *Introduction to Swedenborg's Religious Thought*, really is an excellent and thought-provoking look at the major areas of the spiritual teachings found in Swedenborg's writings - for those well acquainted with those teachings as well as for newer readers.



Biblical Text - Genesis Chapters 1 to 11⁹

Genesis Chapter 1

¹ In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. ² The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. ³ And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. ⁴ And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day. ⁶ And God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." ⁷ And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. ⁸ And God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day. ⁹ And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. ¹⁰ God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. ¹¹ And God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth." And it was so. ¹² The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ¹³ And there was evening and there was morning, the third day. ¹⁴ And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the

heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years,¹⁵ and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth." And it was so.¹⁶ And God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars.¹⁷ And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth,¹⁸ to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good.¹⁹ And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.²⁰ And God said, "Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens."²¹ So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.²² And God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth."²³ And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.²⁴ And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds." And it was so.²⁵ And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.²⁸ And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."²⁹ And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food."³⁰ And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so.³¹ And God saw everything that he had made, and

behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Genesis Chapter 2

¹ Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. ² And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. ³ So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation. ⁴ These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens. ⁵ When no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up—for the Lord God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground,⁶ and a mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground - ⁷ then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. ⁸ And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. ⁹ And out of the ground the Lord God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. ¹⁰ A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers. ¹¹ The name of the first is the Pishon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. ¹² And the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. ¹³ The name of the second river is the Gihon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Cush. ¹⁴ And the name of the third river is the Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates. ¹⁵ The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. ¹⁶ And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."¹⁸ Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."¹⁹ So out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And

whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. ²⁰ The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. ²¹ So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. ²² And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. ²³ Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." ²⁴ Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. ²⁵ And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

Genesis Chapter 3

¹ Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?"

² And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, ³ but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.' " ⁴ But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. ⁵ For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." ⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

⁷ Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. ⁸ And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. ⁹ But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" ¹⁰ And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself." ¹¹ He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" ¹² The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate." ¹³ Then the Lord God said to the

woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." ¹⁴ The Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life." ¹⁵ I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." ¹⁶ To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you." ¹⁷ And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; ¹⁸ thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field." ¹⁹ By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return." ²⁰ The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. ²¹ And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them. ²² Then the Lord God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever -" ²³ therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. ²⁴ He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.

Genesis Chapter 4

¹ Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord." ² And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground. ³ In the course of time Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground, ⁴ and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, ⁵ but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. ⁶ The Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? ⁷ If you do well, will you

not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it."⁸ Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.⁹ Then the Lord said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" He said, "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?"¹⁰ And the Lord said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground."¹¹ And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand.¹² When you work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth."¹³ Cain said to the Lord, "My punishment is greater than I can bear.¹⁴ Behold, you have driven me today away from the ground, and from your face I shall be hidden. I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me."¹⁵ Then the Lord said to him, "Not so! If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold." And the Lord put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him should attack him.¹⁶ Then Cain went away from the presence of the Lord and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.¹⁷ Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch. When he built a city, he called the name of the city after the name of his son, Enoch.¹⁸ To Enoch was born Irad, and Irad fathered Mehujael, and Mehujael fathered Methushael, and Methushael fathered Lamech.¹⁹ And Lamech took two wives. The name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah.²⁰ Adah bore Jubal; he was the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock.²¹ His brother's name was Jubal; he was the father of all those who play the lyre and pipe.²² Zillah also bore Tubal-cain; he was the forger of all instruments of bronze and iron. The sister of Tubal-cain was Naamah.²³ Lamech said to his wives: "Adah and Zillah, hear my voice; you wives of Lamech, listen to what I say: I have killed a man for wounding me, a young man for striking me."²⁴ If Cain's revenge is sevenfold, then Lamech's is seventy-sevenfold."²⁵ And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and called his name Seth, for she said, "God has appointed for me another offspring instead of Abel, for Cain killed him."²⁶ To Seth also a son was born, and he called his name Enosh. At that time people began to call upon the name of the Lord.

Genesis Chapter 5

¹ This is the book of the generations of Adam. When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. ² Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they were created. ³ When Adam had lived 130 years, he fathered a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth. ⁴ The days of Adam after he fathered Seth were 800 years; and he had other sons and daughters. ⁵ Thus all the days that Adam lived were 930 years, and he died. ⁶ When Seth had lived 105 years, he fathered Enosh. ⁷ Seth lived after he fathered Enosh 807 years and had other sons and daughters. ⁸ Thus all the days of Seth were 912 years, and he died. ⁹ When Enosh had lived 90 years, he fathered Kenan. ¹⁰ Enosh lived after he fathered Kenan 815 years and had other sons and daughters. ¹¹ Thus all the days of Enosh were 905 years, and he died. ¹² When Kenan had lived 70 years, he fathered Mahalalel. ¹³ Kenan lived after he fathered Mahalalel 840 years and had other sons and daughters. ¹⁴ Thus all the days of Kenan were 910 years, and he died. ¹⁵ When Mahalalel had lived 65 years, he fathered Jared. ¹⁶ Mahalalel lived after he fathered Jared 830 years and had other sons and daughters. ¹⁷ Thus all the days of Mahalalel were 895 years, and he died. ¹⁸ When Jared had lived 162 years he fathered Enoch. ¹⁹ Jared lived after he fathered Enoch 800 years and had other sons and daughters. ²⁰ Thus all the days of Jared were 962 years, and he died. ²¹ When Enoch had lived 65 years, he fathered Methuselah. ²² Enoch walked with God after he fathered Methuselah 300 years and had other sons and daughters. ²³ Thus all the days of Enoch were 365 years. ²⁴ Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him. ²⁵ When Methuselah had lived 187 years, he fathered Lamech. ²⁶ Methuselah lived after he fathered Lamech 782 years and had other sons and daughters. ²⁷ Thus all the days of Methuselah were 969 years, and he died. ²⁸ When Lamech had lived 122 years, he fathered a son²⁹ and called his name Noah, saying, "Out of the ground that the Lord has cursed this one shall bring us relief from our work and from the painful toil of our hands."³⁰ Lamech lived after he fathered Noah 595 years and had other sons and daughters. ³¹ Thus all the days of Lamech were 777 years, and he died. ³² After Noah was 500 years old, Noah fathered Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

Genesis Chapter 6

¹ When man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them, ² the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose. ³ Then the Lord said, "My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years." ⁴ The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of man and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown. ⁵ The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. ⁶ And the Lord was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. ⁷ So the Lord said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them." ⁸ But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord. ⁹ These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God. ¹⁰ And Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. ¹¹ Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. ¹² And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. ¹³ And God said to Noah, "I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth. ¹⁴ Make yourself an ark of gopher wood. Make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch. ¹⁵ This is how you are to make it: the length of the ark 300 cubits, its breadth 50 cubits, and its height 30 cubits. ¹⁶ Make a roof for the ark, and finish it to a cubit above, and set the door of the ark in its side. Make it with lower, second, and third decks. ¹⁷ For behold, I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life under heaven. Everything that is on the earth shall die. ¹⁸ But I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you. ¹⁹ And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every sort into the ark to keep them alive with you. They shall be male and female. ²⁰ Of the birds according to their kinds, and of the animals according to their kinds, of every creeping thing of the ground, according to its kind, two of

every sort shall come in to you to keep them alive. ²¹ Also take with you every sort of food that is eaten, and store it up. It shall serve as food for you and for them." ²² Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him.

Genesis Chapter 7

¹ *Then the Lord said to Noah, "Go into the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you are righteous before me in this generation. ² Take with you seven pairs of all clean animals, the male and his mate, and a pair of the animals that are not clean, the male and his mate, ³ and seven pairs of the birds of the heavens also, male and female, to keep their offspring alive on the face of all the earth. ⁴ For in seven days I will send rain on the earth forty days and forty nights, and every living thing that I have made I will blot out from the face of the ground." ⁵ And Noah did all that the Lord had commanded him. ⁶ Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters came upon the earth. ⁷ And Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him went into the ark to escape the waters of the flood. ⁸ Of clean animals, and of animals that are not clean, and of birds, and of everything that creeps on the ground, ⁹ two and two, male and female, went into the ark with Noah, as God had commanded Noah. ¹⁰ And after seven days the waters of the flood came upon the earth. ¹¹ In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened. ¹² And rain fell upon the earth forty days and forty nights. ¹³ On the very same day Noah and his sons, Shem and Ham and Japheth, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons with them entered the ark, ¹⁴ they and every beast, according to its kind, and all the livestock according to their kinds, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, according to its kind, and every bird, according to its kind, every winged creature. ¹⁵ They went into the ark with Noah, two and two of all flesh in which there was the breath of life. ¹⁶ And those that entered, male and female of all flesh, went in as God had commanded him. And the Lord shut him in. ¹⁷ The flood continued forty days on the earth. The waters increased and bore up the ark, and it rose high above the earth. ¹⁸ The waters prevailed and increased greatly on the earth, and the ark floated*

on the face of the waters.¹⁹ And the waters prevailed so mightily on the earth that all the high mountains under the whole heaven were covered.²⁰ The waters prevailed above the mountains, covering them fifteen cubits deep.²¹ And all flesh died that moved on the earth, birds, livestock, beasts, all swarming creatures that swarm on the earth, and all mankind.²² Everything on the dry land in whose nostrils was the breath of life died.²³ He blotted out every living thing that was on the face of the ground, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens. They were blotted out from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those who were with him in the ark.²⁴ And the waters prevailed on the earth 150 days.

Genesis Chapter 8

¹ But God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the livestock that were with him in the ark. And God made a wind blow over the earth, and the waters subsided.² The fountains of the deep and the windows of the heavens were closed, the rain from the heavens was restrained,³ and the waters receded from the earth continually. At the end of 150 days the waters had abated,⁴ and in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat.⁵ And the waters continued to abate until the tenth month; in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains were seen.⁶ At the end of forty days Noah opened the window of the ark that he had made⁷ and sent forth a raven. It went to and fro until the waters were dried up from the earth.⁸ Then he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters had subsided from the face of the ground.⁹ But the dove found no place to set her foot, and she returned to him to the ark, for the waters were still on the face of the whole earth. So he put out his hand and took her and brought her into the ark with him.¹⁰ He waited another seven days, and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark.¹¹ And the dove came back to him in the evening, and behold, in her mouth was a freshly plucked olive leaf. So Noah knew that the waters had subsided from the earth.¹² Then he waited another seven days and sent forth the dove, and she did not return to him anymore.¹³ In the six hundred and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried from off the earth. And Noah removed the covering of the ark and looked,

and behold, the face of the ground was dry.¹⁴ In the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth had dried out.¹⁵ Then God said to Noah,¹⁶ "Go out from the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons' wives with you."¹⁷ Bring out with you every living thing that is with you of all flesh—birds and animals and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth—that they may swarm on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth."¹⁸ So Noah went out, and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him.¹⁹ Every beast, every creeping thing, and every bird, everything that moves on the earth, went out by families from the ark.²⁰ Then Noah built an altar to the Lord and took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar.²¹ And when the Lord smelled the pleasing aroma, the Lord said in his heart, "I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done."²² While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease."

Genesis Chapter 9

¹ And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth."² The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth and upon every bird of the heavens, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea. Into your hand they are delivered.³ Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything.⁴ But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood.⁵ And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning: from every beast I will require it and from man. From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man.⁶ "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image."⁷ And you, be fruitful and multiply, teem on the earth and multiply in it."⁸ Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him,⁹ "Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your offspring after you,¹⁰ and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the livestock, and every beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark; it is for every beast of the earth."¹¹ I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh

be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth."¹² And God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations:¹³ I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth."¹⁴ When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds,¹⁵ I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh. And the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh.¹⁶ When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth."¹⁷ God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth."¹⁸ The sons of Noah who went forth from the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. (Ham was the father of Canaan.)¹⁹ These three were the sons of Noah, and from these the people of the whole earth were dispersed.²⁰ Noah began to be a man of the soil, and he planted a vineyard.²¹ He drank of the wine and became drunk and lay uncovered in his tent.²² And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father and told his two brothers outside.²³ Then Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces were turned backward, and they did not see their father's nakedness.²⁴ When Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his youngest son had done to him,²⁵ he said, "Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be to his brothers."²⁶ He also said, "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem; and let Canaan be his servant."²⁷ May God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem, and let Canaan be his servant."²⁸ After the flood Noah lived 350 years.²⁹ All the days of Noah were 950 years, and he died.

Genesis Chapter 10

¹ These are the generations of the sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Sons were born to them after the flood. ² The sons of Japheth: Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras. ³ The sons of Gomer: Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah. ⁴ The sons of Javan: Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Dodanim. ⁵ From these the coastland peoples spread in their lands, each with

his own language, by their clans, in their nations. ⁶ The sons of Ham: Cush, Egypt, Put, and Canaan. ⁷ The sons of Cush: Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabteca. The sons of Raamah: Sheba and Dedan. ⁸ Cush fathered Nimrod; he was the first on earth to be a mighty man. ⁹ He was a mighty hunter before the Lord. Therefore it is said, "Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before the Lord." ¹⁰ The beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. ¹¹ From that land he went into Assyria and built Nineveh, Rehoboth-Ir, Calah, and ¹² Resen between Nineveh and Calah; that is the great city. ¹³ Egypt fathered Ludim, Anamim, Lehabim, Naphtuhim, ¹⁴ Pathrusim, Casluhim (from whom the Philistines came), and Caphtorim. ¹⁵ Canaan fathered Sidon his firstborn and Heth, ¹⁶ and the Jebusites, the Amorites, the Girgashites, ¹⁷ the Hivites, the Arkites, the Sinites, ¹⁸ the Arvadites, the Zemarites, and the Hamathites. Afterward the clans of the Canaanites dispersed. ¹⁹ And the territory of the Canaanites extended from Sidon in the direction of Gerar as far as Gaza, and in the direction of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, as far as Lasha. ²⁰ These are the sons of Ham, by their clans, their languages, their lands, and their nations. ²¹ To Shem also, the father of all the children of Eber, the elder brother of Japheth, children were born. ²² The sons of Shem: Elam, Asshur, Arpachshad, Lud, and Aram. ²³ The sons of Aram: Uz, Hul, Gether, and Mash. ²⁴ Arpachshad fathered Shelah; and Shelah fathered Eber. ²⁵ To Eber were born two sons: the name of the one was Peleg, for in his days the earth was divided, and his brother's name was Joktan. ²⁶ Joktan fathered Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jeraah, ²⁷ Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, ²⁸ Obal, Abimael, Sheba, ²⁹ Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab; all these were the sons of Joktan. ³⁰ The territory in which they lived extended from Mesha in the direction of Sephar to the hill country of the east. ³¹ These are the sons of Shem, by their clans, their languages, their lands, and their nations. ³² These are the clans of the sons of Noah, according to their genealogies, in their nations, and from these the nations spread abroad on the earth after the flood.

Genesis Chapter 11 (to verse 9)

¹ Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. ² And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the

land of Shinar and settled there. ³ And they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly." And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. ⁴ Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth." ⁵ And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built. ⁶ And the Lord said, "Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. ⁷ Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech." ⁸ So the Lord dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. ⁹ Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth. And from there the Lord dispersed them over the face of all the earth.

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The stories in the early chapters of the Book of Genesis have captured the imagination of people over many generations. The last hundred years have seen them embroiled in controversy and much questioning over their relevance in our modern world. *Can they still speak to us today? Do they contain ageless wisdom which has contemporary relevance?*

Our Soul's Awakening: Allegory of the Genesis Story endeavours to achieve a reconciliation of the inconsistencies, and even absurdities, found in the early chapters of Genesis using divine inspiration as the key. The purpose is to unveil some of the deeper, or inner spiritual meanings contained in them utilising the relationship of natural objects to spiritual realities, a principle called the law of correspondences expounded in 1749 by Emanuel Swedenborg, the Swedish scientist and Christian seer. Each chapter reveals unsuspected treasures which lie deep within the literal text. The awakening of our soul to a higher life force, which can lead to spiritual transformation and rebirth, and the subsequent trials and tribulations that surface while we endeavour to develop this new state, is shown to be the all-embracing subject matter of the biblical stories of Creation, the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah and his sons, and the Tower of Babel.



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