

# Real Religion

Roland Smith

## Foreword

The New Church in its broadest sense is a new era of spiritual life for mankind, giving a new opportunity for freedom of belief and for true Christian living and a new and reasonable understanding of our relations to the Lord, His love and care for us and our dependence upon Him and duty to Him.

As an organization, the New Church aims to be the herald and cultivator of this new age.

The teachings of the New Church have been revealed by the Lord in the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg; they embody a complete Christian theology and give a new view of the Oneness of God, the inspiration of the Scriptures, the holiness of true marriage, the purpose of life, the world hereafter and the Lord's Second Coming.

These teachings invite thoughtful consideration: we owe it to ourselves to know something about them. It is only possible to give an outline of some of the more important within the physical limits of this brochure, but it is offered in the hope of arousing interest to seek further information.

Swedenborg, Scientist, Philosopher and Revelator, Emanuel Swedenborg was born in Stockholm in 1688 and departed this life in London in 1772. Throughout his long and useful career he was a seeker after truth, the meaning of life and the nature of the soul.

A valued servant of his country, a scientist of the highest repute, a philosopher of keen discernment, he was also a diligent student of the Word of God.

In earlier times the Lord opened the spiritual eyes of the apostle John to behold visions of the other world. In a similar way Swedenborg's spiritual senses were opened and it was given to him to become the agent through whose illumined understanding the Lord could give to men a new and needed revelation of Himself, could make the Bible a new and living book and could show more clearly than was before possible the relations between God and man, between heaven and earth.

That the Lord manifested Himself before me His servant and sent me to this office and that He afterward opened the sight of my spirit and so has admitted me into the spiritual world and has granted to me to see the heavens and the hells, also to converse with angels and spirits and this now continuously for many years, I testify in truth; likewise, that from the first day of that call I have not received anything which pertains to the doctrines of that church (the new Church) from any angel, but from the Lord alone while I read the Word. Swedenborg in "True Christian Religion" No. 779.

## **The New Church of the New Jerusalem**

*And I, John, saw the Holy City, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven. Revelation 21: 2*

In John's vision of the Holy City is foretold the establishing by the Lord of a New Church, to include all who worship the Lord Jesus Christ as the one only God and who earnestly endeavour to live a life according to the Ten Commandments as His laws.

Many among the Churches of today would claim that they are in such worship and life, but their written creeds or articles of faith, without exception, either deny the Deity of Christ or separate the Godhead into a plurality of persons, or place salvation in faith alone rather than in a life of use based upon obedience to the Commandments.

The membership of the New Church organization is composed of those who have made public profession of the Lord Jesus Christ as the only God of heaven and earth and of their intention with His help to live a life according to the Ten Commandments as His laws; this organization

is called "The Church of the New Jerusalem" or more briefly "The New Church", a term used by Swedenborg to express the idea of the Church born again. (It is known by some as the "Swedenborgian Church.")

*"And I, John, saw the Holy City, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven" (John 21:2) signifies the New Church to be established by the Lord at the end of the former church, which will be consociated with the New Heaven in Divine truths as to doctrine and as to life.*

Swedenborg in "Apocalypse Revealed" No 871.

## **Jesus Christ, The One God.**

*"Whoever has seen me has seen the Father." John 14: 9.*

*"Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" Matthew 28:18.*

The New Church teaches that God is Infinite Love, Wisdom and Power: He Himself was the infilling soul of the "Son," Jesus Christ: He clothed Himself with human form and life: He met and overcame as a man every temptation to which man is subject: Thus by His life on earth, His death and resurrection, He glorified His Humanity and so made manifest the God-Man nature of His Deity.

We can think of the Saviour as He walked in Galilee, healing and teaching, as God personally revealing Himself to man in human form and so can have a realization of His presence with us which would otherwise be impossible. And we can understand that the real trinity in God, of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is pictured in our own persons in soul, body and activity.

As the Lord alone is the Saviour and the Redeemer and as it is said (see Isaiah 14. 21, 22) that Jehovah is that Saviour and Redeemer and that there is none beside Him, it follows that the one God is no other than the Lord.

Swedenborg in "Doctrine of the Lord" No. 45.

## **The Sacred Scriptures - The Inspired Word of God.**

*And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. Luke 24: 27.*

The New Church regards the Sacred Scriptures with the deepest reverence as the inspired Word of God. They contain in their letter the most valuable precepts and instruction for living a heavenly life. They have moreover a connected spiritual sense which treats of °the Lord, of the Church, of man's battles against evil and of his regeneration.

This spiritual sense has been made clear and thus all parts of the Scriptures, even those which have seemed obscure or contradictory, are shown to contain vitally important Spiritual truths.

The teachings of the New Church are throughout drawn from the Sacred Scriptures, are in perfect harmony with them and may be confirmed from their literal sense. With those who love truths because they are truths and make them of use in their life, there is enlightenment from the Lord as they read the Word.

The style of the Word is such that there is holiness in every sentence and in every word and in some places in even the very letters. This is why the Word unites man with the Lord and opens heaven. . . . It follows that the man who reads it from the Lord and not from himself alone is filled by it with the good of love and the truths of wisdom.

Swedenborg in "Doctrine of the Sacred Scripture" No.3.

## **Marriage**

*Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.* Genesis 2: 24.

*What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.* Matthew 19: 6.

Because the world so little understands what true marriage love is, we are witnessing a growing disregard for its sanctity.

The New Church teaches that in the Lord there is a perfect union of love and wisdom and that this is the holy origin of true marriage. True marriage love between one man and one woman is based upon the spiritual union of minds and hearts. For every one there is a true marriage mate and everyone who looks to the Lord will find his or her

mate, in this world or the next. True marriage love is holy and pure above all other loves and continues to eternity.

Marriage has been thus instituted by the Lord for the purpose of building up a heaven of angels from the human race. But so long as earthly marriages are contracted for convenience, or because of mere attractions of beauty or of wealth and without regard to what lies within, there will be in them disorder and unheavenly conditions. When men learn that marriage is of the Lord and obey His laws regarding it, they will begin to follow the upward path which leads to heaven on earth and hereafter.

Conjugal love from its origin and correspondence is celestial, spiritual, holy, pure and clean above every love which is from the Lord among the angels of heaven and among the men of the Church.

Swedenborg in "Conjugal Love" No. 64. (Swedenborg uses this word from the Latin "Conjugalis" to distinguish true marriage love from the mere legal union denoted by "conjugal.")

## **The Purpose of Life**

*He hath showed thee, O man, what is good and what doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God.* Micah 6: 8.

"Why was I born?" the dissatisfied or disappointed person complains. "How can the seeming hardships and inconsistencies of life be explained?" another asks. "Is there a purpose in life, or is it all an accident, without order and without reason?" "Is this life the only one there is and what are we to do with it?"

The New Church teaches that man was created to be of use to others in this world and so to prepare for a life of use in heaven. This world is a training school for heaven. The seeming hardships and reverses which come to us are the lessons we must study, the problems we must solve, the temptations we must overcome, to build our characters and make us ready for our place in heaven. It is our part, in whatever walk of life we are placed, to do the work before us faithfully

and earnestly, remembering the Lord's words to His disciples, "*And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.*"

*Man is born for no other end than that he may perform use to the society in which he is and to the neighbour while he lives in the world. It is with men just as it is in the human body: whatever there is in it must perform some use.* Swedenborg in "Arcana Caelestia" No. 1103.

## **Death and Resurrection**

*I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death; O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction.* Hosea 13: 14.

*Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life.* John 11: 25.

To the man whose thoughts are solely of the world, who feels that he must get all his pleasure and enjoyment from the things which appeal to his bodily senses, the thought of death is terrible. It seems to mean annihilation, the end of all things. So he grieves when loved ones are taken from him and looks forward with fear to his own death.

The New Church teaches that man is a spirit, clothed with a material body for life in this world. Death is but the putting off of this material body and bringing into activity the spiritual body. It is as orderly a step in man's real life as birth. It is the gateway into the spiritual world. When we think of death the angels think of resurrection. We should not grieve unduly therefore when the Lord takes our loved ones to Himself, as the separation is but temporary. Nor should we dread the coming of death to ourselves, realizing that if we have lived truly and faithfully what we have known to be right, death is as the stepping from a lower room into a higher one.

When the body can no longer perform its functions in the natural world, answering to the thoughts and affections of its spirit which it has from the spiritual world, then man is said to die. Yet the man does not die, but is only separated from the bodily part which he had for use in the world: the man himself indeed goes on living. Man when he dies, only passes from one world into another.

Swedenborg in "Heaven and Hell" No. 445.

## **Heaven and Hell**

*In my Father's house are many mansions. John 14. 2. If I make my bed in hell, behold Thou art there. Psalm 139: 8.*

Some think heaven and hell are far away, both in time and space and that angels and evil spirits are beings of another form of creation. In reality heaven and hell are about us and within us as we invite heavenly or unheavenly feelings and thoughts into our hearts and minds. We have within us the possibility of becoming angels or evil spirits, as we will.

The New Church thus teaches that heaven and hell are states or conditions, but that these tend to produce like surroundings even in our earthly life and much more so in the life which goes on after the death of the material body.

As we strive to learn the Lord's will and faithfully to do it, we become ready at death to enter into the uses and happiness of heaven and to be angels there, while if we ignore the Lord's will and deliberately and persistently choose evil instead of good we carry such choice into the future life and of our own desire are associated with our like. But the Lord is with all, even those in hell and draws them to Him as far as they will permit.

All, in heaven as well as in hell, are from the human race; in heaven those who in the world lived in heavenly love and belief, in hell those who lived in infernal love and belief.

Swedenborg in "Heaven and Hell" No. 311.

## **Intercourse with Spirits**

Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them. I am the Lord your God. Leviticus xix. 31.

There are today many who from curiosity in regard to the future life, or in the hope of learning about dear ones who have left this world, have been led to consult mediums or have sought in other ways

communications with the spiritual world. Some, through ignorance, have thought of the New Church as a spiritistic body and of Swedenborg as a spiritist or a medium.

In exceptional cases the Lord may comfort the bereaved by granting them the consciousness of the presence of dear ones who have gone before, but the New Church teaches that intercourse with spirits, deliberately sought, is disorderly and may lead to the most serious consequences to man's sanity.

The New Church further teaches that the spirits who may be reached through such intercourse are usually evil spirits who delight in deceit.

To speak with spirits, however, is at this day seldom given, since it is dangerous, for then the spirits know that they are with man which otherwise they do not know; and evil spirits are such that they hold man in deadly hatred and desire nothing more than to destroy him, both soul and body.

Swedenborg in "Heaven and Hell" No. 249.

## **The Lord's Second Coming**

*They shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. Matthew 24: 30.*

The New Testament in many places refers to the Lord's Second Coming as an event to be looked forward to. These texts have by some been taken to mean that the Lord was to make another physical appearance upon this earth and dates have from time to time been set for such appearance.

The New Church teaches that the Lord has made His Second Coming in the new and fuller revelation of Himself and of true Christian doctrine which has been given in the opening of the spiritual sense of the Sacred Scriptures through the Writings of Swedenborg.

The Second Coming is the direct cause of the new era of spiritual life for mankind. As the Lord in His Second Coming is acknowledged and



worshipped, this new era will unfold increasing material and spiritual enlightenment and blessing.

*"They shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory"*, signifies that the Word will then be revealed as to its internal sense, in which the Lord is.

Swedenborg in "Arcana Caelestia" No. 4060.

obtainable from the

Swedenborg Centre

4 Shirley Road

ROSEVILLE, NSW, 2069