

## **Correspondences - Part 2.**

### **The key to unlocking the meaning of the Scriptures**

My talk tonight is a continuation of the talk I gave a week ago, the second of two, on the relationship which exists between the things of the natural world with things of the world of the spirit, the way in which one images, or is a mirror of the other. The technical term to describe this relationship is "correspondence". "Correspondence", wrote Swedenborg, "is the appearing of what is internal in what is external, and its representation there." (*Arcana Caelestia* 5423). And as we also noted, "All things which come forth in nature, from the least to the greatest of it, are correspondences". (*Heaven and Hell* 106). Everything which appears in nature, its moods, its seasons, its weather, the vegetation and the animals, are an image or a mirror of the world of the human mind and the things of the spirit.

I'll illustrate the relationship by referring to a smile. A smile, if it is genuine, corresponds to the happy state of mind a person is in. A frown corresponds to the worried and anxious state of mind the person who is wearing it is in. A sorrowful face images, or corresponds to some sadness which at the time the person is going through. In each case, something on the natural, bodily level reflects, or mirrors something higher, internal or of the spirit. Using Swedenborg's own words, we have the appearing of what is internal in what is external. The one corresponds to the other.

This relationship between internal things and external things, or correspondences, goes far beyond a smile, a frown, or a sorrowful face. It extends to all things of the body and to all things in nature. And though we don't think of it in this way, yet we all have a common perception of such a relationship and, by the way we talk and in our use of certain expressions, give a tacit recognition to it.

For example, you may be watching someone at work and make the observation that his or her 'heart' is not in it. Or, as you see things, their 'heart' may be very much in it. You don't, of course, mean the actual organ of the body, protected by the rib cage, which performs the vital function of pumping blood around the body. As everybody knows who hears you, you are talking about the person's interest in what they are doing. You are talking about whether they are really liking or enjoying what they are doing. When someone really loves what they are doing their heart is fully in it. When they don't, their heart is not in it. They would rather be elsewhere, doing something else.

This leads me back to our common perception where correspondences are concerned, or where these relationships between things external and natural with things internal and of the spirit are concerned. We don't call them correspondences, yet we instinctively acknowledge that they are there.

Other examples help illustrate the point. A father tells his son to use his "head". Physically, the boy is using it all the time. He hears and sees and smells and all the rest. But the boy knows that his father is telling him to think. Perhaps to think more carefully. Perhaps to make better use of his powers of understanding.

How many times do we talk of people, or of a nation, or of a competitor, having "the upper hand". Well, it's a figure of speech, you say. Yes, it is. But more than that, we perceive it to be a way of expressing on the natural plane some inner reality. When we say someone has got "the upper hand", whether it is a nation, a competitor, a football or a cricket team, we mean that they are prevailing. We mean that the power is on their side. We mean that the action is becoming one sided.

Correspondences, however, go beyond the human body and into all things of nature. And, once again, many expressions in common use tacitly recognise this. We talk about "high" and "low", for example. "He's a low sort of fellow" or "That's a low thing to do". Or, "That person has very high principles". The words "low" and "high" are taken straight from nature. We know of low valleys and high mountains. But what is "low" and "high" in nature seems to perfectly image or mirror certain human states or activities, and this is why we use the expressions.

Then again, we talk about ideas germinating, growing, and bearing fruit. That, as is only too obvious, is something also taken straight from nature. We have no difficulty whatever in relating the way ideas are received in the human mind to the processes of nature. The one is a mirror of the other. There is a correspondence between the two things.

And when it comes to animals, think of all the different expressions we use. "Someone" we say, "is as sly as a fox". A child as "innocent as a lamb". We might, in a moment of exasperation or deep disappointment, call someone a "pig" because of their selfish and totally uncaring ways.

Where does this lead us? What are we getting at here? Why is it important for us to know, let alone learn, about these matters?

The answer is that the Bible is itself written by correspondences. As we shall see, Jesus constantly used language which involved correspondences. And much of what is said in the Bible is no more meant to be taken literally than the expressions we use in everyday speech, involving correspondences, are meant to be taken literally.

"The Word (of God)" wrote Swedenborg, "is so written that every most minute thing in it corresponds to the things of heaven, hence the Word has divine force, and conjoins Heaven with the earth." (*Arcana Caelestia* 9615-3).

If I take up one or two of the examples of correspondences already mentioned in this talk, and relate them to the Bible, we begin to see how this is so.

One of the examples cited was "hands". We use the expression, he or she or that country or that team has "the upper hand". All the action lies with them. If we are in trouble over some matter, or need assistance with some legal problem, we usually decide to put it in the "hands" of a solicitor. He or she will take the necessary action and do what is necessary.

Although we don't speak of it as such or refer to it in these words, hands correspond to actions and deeds. And it is this correspondence which is to be thought of where hands are mentioned in the Bible.

Take, for example, Psalm 24, verses 3 and 4: "Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? and who shall stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart...." In other words, he whose deeds and actions are pure, being from the Lord working in his life.

In Deuteronomy Chapter 6, the Lord urges His followers to bind His laws upon their hands. The actual words are, "And You shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes." What the Lord is saying to us is that His laws and commandments should be impressed on all our deeds and actions.

Then we have the teaching, if your right hand causes you to sin cut it off and throw it away". (Matthew 5, 29). Everyone knows the Lord didn't mean that literally. Here again, however, He was talking about our deeds and actions. If they offend then we are to get rid of them. We are to reject them from our lives.

And this leads on to the miracles which Jesus performed involving hands. In Luke Chapter 6 there is the story of the man with the withered hand. "On another sabbath when Jesus entered the synagogue and taught, a man was there whose right hand was withered. And the scribes and the Pharisees watched Him, to see whether he would heal on the sabbath, so that they might find an accusation against Him."

More than just tell us about the miracle, the Lord meant this story to be an assurance for all times that if our deeds and actions are lifeless they can be given new life and vitality when they are done from Him. Things that are dead and lifeless and useless, like the withered hand, can become full of new life and vitality. Whereas we did things once only for ourselves and to get on in the world and to be thought of in a good light by other people, now we do things from the Lord and because of genuine concern for the well being of others.

Another example of a correspondence which is commonly perceived and reflected in certain expressions we use, is the heart. We say of someone that 'their heart rules their head', or that 'their heart is or is not in what they are doing'. What we are referring to, of course, is to their emotions, or their feelings, or their loves. When we talk of someone's heart ruling their head we mean that their feelings, or their emotions, or their love for someone over rules their good sense.

In the prophecy through Ezekiel the Lord promises to replace a person's heart, taking away the one and giving them another. Chapter 11, 19: "I will take away the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh." And, in Chapter 18., "Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed against me, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit!" We know what the Lord means, don't we? He is calling upon us to get rid of the old loves, feelings, emotions, desires, inclinations and loves we have and to replace them with spiritual and heavenly ones from Himself.

Let me remind you again of the teaching given.

"The Word of God is so written that every most minute thing in it corresponds to the things of heaven." Everything. When we approach the Bible with this realisation and understanding, its meaning unfolds in a way we never thought possible.

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