

A NEW SPIRITUALITY

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The Source of Power, Truth and love



“The light of heaven is nothing else than Divine Intelligence flowing from the Lord, which also shines before the eyes as light, while the warmth accompanying that light is the Lord’s Divine Love, which is also felt as a radiated warmth. It is that light which provides people with understanding, and that warmth which provides them with both vital heat and a will desiring what is good. In heaven, morning is a state of enlightenment in matters involving goodness and truth.

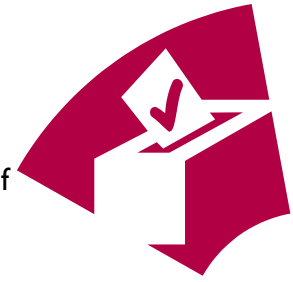
In addition to this, “morning” in the highest sense means the Lord Himself, for the reason that the Lord is the Sun from which all light in heaven flows; He is always a rising Sun and so is always a morning one. He is rising always on everyone who receives truth that is the truth of faith, and goodness that is the good of love; but He is setting on everyone who does not receive these. Not that the Sun there ever sets, for as has been stated, it is always a rising one, but that anyone who does not receive that truth or goodness causes it so to speak to set on himself or herself.” Emanuel Swedenborg (Arcana Coelestia 5097)

The most ancient people knew that all nature is a theatre representative of the Lord’s kingdom, and that each thing represents some specific thing in the spiritual world.

EMANUEL SWEDENBORG

The Elect

John Sutton



I still recall my nervous anticipation while looking at the list of the 1st football team to see if I had been chosen. The Bible has categories of people called the elect, the chosen ones. It sounds exclusive and special. In the Old Testament the chosen were the Israelites. The Lord Himself is the “chosen servant” (Isa 42.1). In Matthew 24:31 the elect are those who the angels will gather from the four winds. Would you like to be one of the elect? Do you know what you have to do to be one?

People through the years have decided that it is by some act of birth, ritual, nationality or particular religious belief which sets them aside as one of the elect. As a consequence they do not see it as anything to do with their attitudes and goals of life.

The New Church offers a very different view of the chosen. In the eyes of the Lord EVERYONE is chosen. In other words He loves all the children He creates. But rather than being puppets, we are given a choice of acknowledging His love or denying it. Thus the elect are those in **all** religions who have love towards the neighbour, (charity) as their elected way of life. This is what governs them. Such people do not love themselves above everyone else. They are honest, have integrity, are just and fair, seeking to support what is good and true in

their life and the lives of others, in their community and their country. The Lord tells the powerful story of the Good Samaritan to illustrate who the elect are.

Soon we will be invited to elect representatives to govern this country. One vote may appear to be insignificant but the responsibility of voting is important for the whole country. Throughout history we see the great struggle so many disenfranchised groups have had for the right to vote. If we do not use it, one day we may find that it has been taken away.

Governance is about ruling others. The love of ruling others is one of the universal loves present in every person. Ideally that love comes from a love to serve others but sadly it can become perverted into a love of ruling for self-centred reasons. We witness it in little children who throw a paddy when they cannot get their own way. It is seen in countries where government and the judiciary have become corrupt. This failing is not peculiar to any particular nation it is a temptation for everyone in authority. We have the right to vote in New Zealand. Let us use it and use it wisely to elect those who want what is just and good for all the people of this country.

Suggestion

Visit the Swedenborg Foundation's website: Swedenborg.com to download a selection of Swedenborg's Writings and related e-books to your e-reader for free.



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ALL WELCOME

The Rising Sun: An Image of the Lord

Peter M. Buss, Jr.

Picture a couple sitting by a lake in the dusky grey of pre-dawn somewhere far away from the bustle of city, or even suburban life. They begin to hear the birds chirping, announcing the imminent arrival of the sun. Pretty soon the first rays of light bridge the horizon. An array of oranges and pinks meet their eyes as the sun appears, looking about three times its normal size as it rises just above the landscape. Think of the peacefulness, the sense of newness, the ominous power represented in this image. It's a morning state, bringing to a close the previous night, and ushering in a new day full of light and promise.

The rising sun—it's an image associated with the Lord Himself. It describes His glory arising before us—His light and warmth shining down upon us, reminding us of His infinite power, His constant watchfulness and protection, and the sense of peace which can come from acknowledging these things. The sun of our world represents or reminds us of the Lord (see *Arcana Caelestia* 5704:2). It's not difficult to see why the Lord is represented by the sun. We know that the sun is the source of our warmth and light. We know that it is always shining down on us, no matter how many clouds get in the way. We know that it will continue to rise day in and day out for the rest of our lives. It's one of the most powerful forces of nature, without which nothing on our earth, including ourselves, could continue to live.

The Lord too is the source of all warmth and light, only this time we're talking about the warmth of His love and the light of His truth. His love is like the heat of the sun, encapsulating within it the comfort, hope, and inspiration which He offers us—the sheer desire for our happiness. And His truth is like light shining into our minds, teaching us how to live, and guiding us to make wise choices. Just as the sun of this world is perpetually shining, so the Lord is always present with us, always working to get us to receive His love and be guided by His truth, even when we are entirely unaware of it (see *AC* 5097:2). He is the source of all life, He is all-powerful, He created all things, and nothing could continue to exist without Him. That's what the sun of our world can remind us of—the Lord Himself in all His divine splendour.

It is for this reason that the Lord appears in the spiritual world as the sun. It's useful to note a distinction made in several places within the Writings of Swedenborg that the Lord is not the sun itself, but it is from Him, and

again, represents Him. But the reason He appears as the sun there is that He is the centre of everything—the focal point of all life. He reigns on high, overseeing everything in His vast creation, shining down the warmth of His love and the light of His truth, creating, guiding, and preserving all people.

The Lord appears as the sun in heaven so that the people who live there, called angels, can be reminded every single day of the enormous part the Lord plays in their lives. Our sun can remind us of the same fact.

**The Lord
appears as
the Sun in
heaven**

The image of the Lord as a rising sun is presented by the prophet Isaiah: "The glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; but the Lord will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you." The people being addressed are those who will receive what the Lord offers, who will come to believe in Him, and trust in Him for guidance. The glory here specifically refers to all the truths which the Lord has given to us, which help us to believe in Him. They describe His omnipotence, and His love which causes Him to preserve and lead all people whom He has created—even those who reject Him. They also describe what it is that we're supposed to do in response, which is to accept these truths, to turn to the light, to understand what it is the Lord is teaching us about Himself, and to decide for ourselves to place our trust in Him. Then and only then will we be able to accept the many other teachings He shines upon us, which describe how we are to live, sometimes challenging us to change our ways at times, and other times encouraging us to be caring and thoughtful, all the while explaining what leads to genuine happiness, and what leads to eventual misery. Each one of them is a ray of light from His Sun, which contains within it His intense warmth, or love, which longs for our happiness. He rises upon us, and we see His glory when we accept those truths and live our lives according to them (see *AC* 5097:3).

The more we acknowledge the Lord as the source of everything good in our lives, the more we come to understand His limitless power and infinite love. All these things we can be reminded of every time we see the sun or feel its warmth. It is a perfect symbol for the Lord and what He offers us. (Abridged)

Mastering the Basics

Todd Beiswenger

Several years ago I was told this story about a very accomplished kung-fu student who had the unique experience of meeting a kung-fu master from the Shaolin Temple. It is a very rare occurrence to meet a Shaolin master, and the student was very excited for the opportunity. The master didn't speak English so all communication had to go through a translator.

Nevertheless, the student had something he just had to ask, so he said to the translator: "Please tell the master that I would like to learn some of the special, top secret Shaolin kung-fu." The translator passed the message on and the master responded: "The master would like to teach you a punch." This was not what the student wanted.

"Please tell the master that I've been practising kung-fu for 25 years, and that I know how to do a punch. I would like to learn the special kung-fu. The kung-fu that only a Shaolin master can teach." The translator nodded and seemed to pass on the request. The master then gave a new message to the eager student: "Show me your punch."

The student sighed and was clearly disappointed. He knew how to do a punch, but he figured he might as well comply with the request, show the master his punch and then the master would see that he did indeed know this basic move. Then the master would show him the cool stuff! So he asked the master: "What kind of punch would you like to see? I can do several different kinds!"

The master said he didn't care what kind of punch. He then lit a candle and instructed the student to execute the punch of his choice so that when done, his hand is exactly one inch from the flame.

The student took the challenge, figuring he'd show an outstanding punch and then they could get on to the business of the secrets of kung-fu. The student then executed a perfect punch. He had perfect balance, speed and control, and his hand stopped exactly one inch from the flame. The master then said: "Let me show you my punch." The master executed his punch, stopped *two feet* from the flame and with it a burst of energy was propelled toward the candle, extinguishing it. The student's eyes nearly popped out of his skull, and he said to the master: "That! Show me how to do that!" The master said, "That's what I've been trying to do. I wanted to show you a *punch!*"

Sometimes we do the same thing with our spiritual life. We think we know the basics, and to a certain extent we do. Stop doing evil, learn to do good. If I told you today, "Go out and stop doing evil, and learn to do good," most would probably think, "Yep. Got it. No problem."

Like the kung-fu student, we tend to think that just because we know something, we've mastered it. We would never say that just because we can ride a bike that we could win the *Tour de France*, but often when it comes to spiritual skills we fail to distinguish between competence and mastery.

The Lord tells us that we aren't supposed to just "know" the Word, to have a competence with it, but we are to meditate on it day and night, never veering to the left or to the right. We are to master it. Likewise, the kung-fu master went on to tell the student that the enemy will not be afraid of the 10,000 different punches you've practised once, but he will be deathly afraid of the one punch you have practised 10,000 times. That kind of practice brings mastery.

In your spiritual life, it isn't the 10,000 teachings of the Word you've read once that will impact the hells, but rather the one teaching that you've practised 10,000

In your spiritual life, it isn't the 10,000 teachings of the Word you've read once that will impact the hells, but rather the one teaching that you've practised 10,000 times. When bad times strike, and they will, what is your "go-to" move? When thoughts of doubt, despair and anger come rushing in, what teaching can you execute to diffuse the mental turmoil? You know how to punch, but do you know how to *punch*?

As a youth, David had mastered a couple of fundamental concepts. The Philistine army was marching forward, continually pushing back the Israelite army. They were terrified. The Philistines were far more powerful. King Saul was despondent, and didn't know what to do. When David arrived at the battlefield, he learned that the Philistine warrior, Goliath, had been taunting the Israelites from across the valley, challenging them to a one-on-one fight to determine the victor. The losing nation would become the slaves of the other. On the surface, it isn't a pretty picture.

But David didn't fear Goliath. Why? Because he had mastered the fundamental principle: the battle is the Lord's. (1 Samuel 17:47). How many of us act like the Israelites, captivated by fear and doubt, when the battle is the Lord's?

Some of you will nod your heads, yet think, “Yes, but my problems are different.” Nonsense. I heard a great line from another preacher who said, “We shouldn’t be telling God how big our problems are, but we should be telling our problems how big our God is!” He’s exactly right. That is mastery. It’s a very basic principle: the Lord is infinitely powerful. There the forces for good are infinitely more powerful than the powers of darkness. It really is that simple.

How do you put that teaching into practice in your life? David illustrates it when he chooses his weapon to use against Goliath. If Hollywood were to do this story, the Israelites would have had some untested, super-secret weapon to unleash on the Philistines. It would be like the *Karate Kid* movie in which one of the 10,000 punches that was practised once brought the victory. The Word tells us that victory in reality comes by a different means. It comes from mastery; it comes from the one punch practised 10,000 times. David, a shepherd boy, goes to the skill he’s mastered: using the slingshot. When he’s had to fight off bears and lions to protect the sheep, it is his expertise with the slingshot that has netted him victory in the past. He knows that the battle is the Lord’s, but that he also needs to do his part.

We know what he does next: he gathers five smooth stones. Dr William Kinter describes them like this in a 1985 *New Church Life* article, *Written by the Finger of God*:

These stones were not taken from a desert or from a wall or from a stagnant pool, but from a brook. The selected stones signified truths not of the memory alone, not merely from tradition nor from a persuasive faith; but truths perceived in the Word when this is looked to as a source of living intelligence and inspiration—homely truths of common sense rounded out by experience and frequent usage; polished and cleansed by uncounted waves of Divine instruction; truths which belong to the wisdom of a good life, and are collected into the shepherd’s bag which we may identify as a personal concept of charity.

Such truth is not mere sentimentality. It is militant, powerful against falsities of evil, penetrating to the very head and principle of falsity; more effective than a whole artillery of theological learning based on a literalistic and pedantic interpretation of the Word. And it cannot be reached by the sword of the Philistine.



These stones are a simple teaching that you have mastered. Feeling unloved? Remind yourself that God loves you—that He loves you all the time, no matter what. Period. Is that a smooth

stone for you? Maybe you’re jealous because a friend has gotten a great new, high-paying prestigious job? Or maybe a new house in a great neighbourhood? Tell yourself, “Thou shalt not lay up for yourself treasures on earth.” Perhaps instead you choose to think about eternal life, and take the opportunity to put the focus back on your spiritual development.

Make these simple teachings a smooth stone for you. Don’t just have the teachings rattling around somewhere in your memory banks! Polish them with repeated use. Master them.

In sports, people love the highlight-reel plays, but despite that, games are won and lost based on the fundamental execution of the plays. I’m a big baseball fan. Professional players in the United States can make millions of dollars a year but, no matter their accomplishments, every year at spring training all these millionaire athletes take to the field and practise fundamentals. This is because when the ball is

thrown at 90 miles per hour, or is hit at you even harder, you must have the fundamentals mastered so that the reaction is swift and precise.

When you are in the parking lot and somebody swipes that spot you’ve been searching for, what is your response?

When you’re stuck in an unexpected traffic jam are you instantly inflamed, or do you have that one teaching you can call on to release the anger and frustration that is pouring in on you?

In those moments it won’t matter that you once read the third chapter of *Lamentations* as a kid going through school, but it will matter if you’ve mastered the idea that all anger comes from hell, and that it is hell that is pouring that emotion into you. Once you realise that it isn’t you that is angry, but hell, then you can close the door to that line of thinking. As I see it, though, we often leave that line of thinking open because while we’ve heard the teaching, we haven’t mastered it. That’s because we’re more interested in learning the 10,000 other punches and practising them once.

What does the Lord want from you? “He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” (Micah 6:8)

That’s it. Master these basics. Learn how to *punch*. Find your smooth stones. Polish them frequently and you, too, will find that the battles you fight you will no longer fight alone, for the battle is the Lord’s.

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The Power of the Angels

Donald Rose

In Heaven and Hell there are paragraphs (228-233) about the great power of the angels. Swedenborg witnessed the power of the angels that goes beyond belief. They can chase away thousands of evil spirits. “Numbers are of no avail against the angels; neither are devices, cunning or combinations; for they see through them all and shatter them in a moment.” We are told that what we read in the Psalms is so true. “Bless the Lord, you His angels, most powerful in strength” (Ps 103:20)..

But following this emphatic paragraph about great power we have the following: “It must be known, however, that the angels have no power whatever of themselves, but that all their power is from the Lord; and that they are powers only so far as they acknowledge this. Whoever among them believes that he has power of himself instantly becomes so weak as not to be able to resist even a single evil spirit. For this reason angels ascribe no merit whatever to themselves, and are averse to all praise and glory on account of anything they do, ascribing it to the Lord” (HH 230).

It is an angelic truth repeated in the Writings of Swedenborg that strength is to be ascribed to God, and that we are strong or weak depending on our doing our ascribing or not ascribing, according to the text, “Ascribe ye strength to God” (Ps. 68:34).

This angelic truth has found its way into human affairs and has been the way of uplifting for countless thousands who seemed hopeless. We refer to the 12-step programmes. It began with alcoholics anonymous. The twelve steps actually mention alcohol only very little. There is an acknowledgement that one does not have power from one’s self and therefore emphasises turning to a higher power. It ascribes our strength to God. This attitude has been the foundation of several successful 12-step programmes.

The Writings give the striking teaching that if we come through temptation with a feeling that we merit the victory because of our strength, we are going to have to endure similar or worse temptations until we are reduced to the sanity of

mind in believing we have merited nothing (see AC 2273).

People who had personal experience of their own lack of power are testimony to this fundamental truth. The same is true of people who have known paralyzing illness or those whose bodies have grown old and feeble and yet who have found a higher strength. This is in accord with the words of Scripture: “He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall. But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint” (Isaiah 40:29-31).

It is an angelic truth repeated in the Writings of Swedenborg that strength is to be ascribed to God.

We see the power of the Lord in His Word, as in Psalm (84:5, 7): “Blessed is the man whose strength is in You ... They go from strength to strength.” And we take strength in the words of David when he has been delivered from the giant (2 Samuel 22): “Then David spoke to the Lord the words of this song.. The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer, the God of my strength; in Him will I trust ... He delivered me from my strong enemy, from those who hated me; for they were too strong for me. They confronted me in the day of my calamity.”

“He is a shield to all who trust in Him. For who is God except the Lord? And who is a rock except our God? God is my strength and power, and He makes my way perfect. He makes my feet like the feet of deer, and sets me on high places. He teaches my hands to war so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze. You have given me the shield of Your salvation, and Your gentleness has made me great.”

“You have armed me with strength for the battle.”
“You have delivered me from the violent man. Therefore I will give thanks to You, O Lord, among the Gentiles, and sing praises to Your name.”.

Acknowledging that all power comes from God is fundamental to us becoming spiritually powerful. Making it a reality takes us a lifetime of trial and error.

The Firth of Forth Bridge

Donald Russel Robertson

Near the city of Edinburgh, Scotland, stands the majestic Firth of Forth Bridge. Completed in March, 1890, it has a center span of 1710 feet. It was then the longest cantilever bridge in the world. At that time, it was one of the engineering wonders of the world.

The day for the completion and dedication of the bridge arrived. For many long months, two separate work crews had been working toward each other from opposite sides of the bay. Now the time had come when the two huge steel structures would be connected in the middle of the bay.

Everyone who could find a way to come was there for the great day. Countless boats bobbed on the water, people by the thousands lined the shores, dignitaries from various parts of the world came together to witness the joining together of the two sections of the bridge.

Then came the giant shock! The two sections of the bridge would not come together. Officials began to squirm in embarrassment and humiliation as the steel workers sweated futilely under the overcast sky. But there was still a gap that refused to be closed.

The bridge builders tried everything they could think of: tugboats tugged, cables strained, tractors pulled, cranes lifted, but the gap remained. They rechecked the blueprints. Everything seemed to be correct. So why the gap? Despair set in as they ran out of options. Their spirits were as low as the clouds hanging in the sky.

Suddenly something happened! The warm sun broke through the overcast. The warm rays beamed down on the cold metal of the bridge. As the officials watched, an apparent miracle took place before their eyes. The gap between the two sections of the bridge began to gradually close. Warmed by the sun, the two long sections of the bridge began to inch toward each other high above the bay. In a while, the two sections came flush together. Hurriedly, the work crews put in the bolts and the bridge was finally fastened together. An enormous cheer went up along with a great sigh of relief.

Don't miracles show up in the darndest places?



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A New Spirituality

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