

THE STORY OF CREATION IN GENESIS THE SEVENTH DAY OF CREATION

**From
"The Seven Days of Creation"
by
Rev. Theodore Pitcairn**

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THE SEVENTH DAY

Rest after combat.

"And on the seventh day God finished His work which He had made; and He rested from all His work which he had made." Gen. 2:2.

The six days of the spiritual creation of man are called days of labor, that is, days of combat. These days are followed by a day of rest, of peace. As we said in our last lecture scarcely anyone arrives at this state of life. It is therefore difficult to illustrate its nature. We can only get some idea from analogous states of peace and rest that follow combat. After a great war when the victory has been won and peace comes, what a great joy fills the heart! So it is with a man. After fighting and overcoming in the spiritual warfare against what is evil and false, the rest and peace bring with them a great joy that fills the heart.

Man must fight against the evil and false things of his own heart and having overcome, fight against what is evil and false in his surroundings. By overcoming what is selfish in one's own heart, by fighting against pride, vanity, greed, one comes into a genuine love of God and the neighbor, into a true and noble life.

In this spiritual warfare a man must not hang down his hands. He must be faithful unto death. He must fight as if from himself, but he must know, acknowledge and believe that he fights against the powers of evil from the Lord God and not from any power of his own.

Much is said in the Writings of Swedenborg about the “as of itself”, or the “as if of one’s self”. This is indeed one of the most unique and important teachings in the Writings of Swedenborg and is the only possible explanation of the old controversy between Catholics and Protestants.

The Protestants said that the Catholics made the works of man meritorious, that the Lord alone saved man, and that we can not save ourselves by our own power by doing works of charity, which would be meritorious. The Writings of Swedenborg agree with the Protestant Churches in saying that man can not merit heaven by works of charity, but they disagree with the Protestant dogma of salvation by faith alone, apart from works of charity. The Writings of Swedenborg teach that a man must not hang down his hands and leave all to God, but

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that he must act as if of himself. He must fight against evil and do good entirely as if he did it from himself, but he must at the same time acknowledge that in so far as what he does is genuine, he acts from the Lord, from His Divine power and not from himself.

We read in the Gospels: “There is none good but one, that is God; but if thou wilt enter into life keep the Commandments.” Matt. 19:17. If there is only one who is good, namely God, how can man who is not good keep the Commandments? Or why should the Lord command man to keep the Commandments if he can not do so? The only possible explanation of this is that man can receive the power and will of the Lord in his heart and act from this, thus act from God, although acting as if of himself.

It is evident that if man hung down his hands and did nothing but say he had faith, he would become as it were dead or act like an automaton. He would not be a man whom God could love and who could love God. A man’s life consists in his loving, thinking and acting as if of himself. Take this away and nothing of human life is left. God to all appearances leaves it to man to act from himself. This is the supreme gift of God to man. But man may know that he acts from the power of God.

Man can use the gifts of God and at the same time acknowledge and believe that they are the gifts of God, or he may claim or as it were steal these gifts which God continually gives to man; he can claim them to himself and abuse them. God gives to man the power to use these gifts as of himself or to abuse them, that is, God gives to man free choice. This is represented by the two trees in the Garden of Eden, the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

A man from the Word of God may know that all that is good, all that is true is of God, and from the presence of God, but he does not feel this. He feels that life and all things of life are his own. It is of the mercy of God that he should so feel, for apart from this he would not feel the joy of life.

In the first six days of creation a man indeed knows that all that is good and all that is true is from God, but because he does not feel this, he does not entirely believe it, believe it to his very bones. He has to fight so hard that he does not often reflect on the presence of God; but if he arrives at the seventh day, he comes to actually feel this. He perceives and feels that what he does is done from the power of God within him, and feeling the presence of God, he comes into rest, into peace.

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Let us illustrate this by an example: A musician if he is to become a real musician must work and struggle. He must master the technique of music. He must acquire a mastery of his subject. After having done this he may receive an inspiration. He may come to realize, to feel that all that is valuable in music comes from inspiration. Yet he would never have received the inspiration unless he had first gone through the labor and hard work required. On looking back he may also see that an inspired love gave him the will and energy to master the difficulties so that the time came that inspiration had full play.

It is the same on the seventh day of man's spiritual creation. On looking back man can see how the Lord has guided him, led him, given him courage, given him strength and the will to persist, in a word has labored for him in a way that man was not aware of at the time, and could not have been aware of. It is obvious that if a man hangs down his hands and does nothing but say he believes, the victory will not be won. To hang down one's hands would be to refuse the gift of God, to hide one's talent in a napkin.

If a man refuses the gifts of God, if man does not accept the powers which God gives him, God will not force these upon him. But while man must labor and struggle to overcome his faults, to overcome what is evil and false, and to do what is good and true, at the end he acknowledges that these struggles and labors are really the work of God, although they appear to be his own.

In the Writings of Swedenborg the man who has reached the seventh state or day is called celestial or heavenly. We read:
"When the spiritual man becomes celestial or heavenly, he is called 'the work of God', because the Lord alone has fought for him, and has created, formed and made him; and therefore it is here said, 'God finished His work on the seventh day', and twice that God 'rested on the seventh day' ". *Arcana Coelestia* No. 88.

If a man has fought, labored, and struggled to order his life, changed his life so that it has become a life in the image and likeness of God, and has finally come to the feeling and perception that this labor and struggle is from the presence and power of the Lord in him, he comes into the fullness of life and freedom; but he could never come into this fullness of life unless he had struggled as if of himself. This may again be compared to a musician, who having by struggle overcome and mastered the difficulties of his calling, receives inspiration, hears music in his soul and gives it free expression. He then is in the freedom and joy of the music, which he feels is inspired into

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him. If he had not struggled and labored as if of himself, he could never have felt this joy.

There are three words frequently used in the Writings of Swedenborg which it is necessary to explain, namely, “spiritual”, “celestial”, and “perception”.

By spiritual is meant the spirit of truth; a man who lives in the spirit of truth is called spiritual. Such a man does not regard the letter only but the spirit of truth and he lets this spirit guide all things of his life. A man comes into the full spirit of truth, that is he becomes fully a spiritual man, on the sixth day of creation.

On the seventh day he is said to become a “celestial” or heavenly man. The celestial man is one who is in the fullness of Divine Love, a fullness of love to God and the neighbor. This celestial or heavenly love is a dwelling in the mercy of God. It is a love which looks to the Lord God and from looking to the Lord God looks to what is eternal in the things of life. It looks to the salvation of the human race, a salvation from Divine Love. When a man is filled with such a love, he is at rest or at peace. Things that are merely temporal, things of the world, no longer trouble or distress him, do not disturb his mind, for he lives in the Divine Love which looks to the eternal salvation of the human race, a salvation which consists in turning the heart to God. The love for such a salvation is so great that time is of little importance; the difficulties, the sorrows of life are overshadowed by the living presence of the love of God, which he perceives working towards eternal ends in ways that other men can not see or feel.

Concerning the seventh day of creation we read: “A dead man (spiritually) when in combat almost always yields, and when not in combat, evils and falsities have dominion over him, and he is a slave. His bonds are external, such as the fear of the law, of the loss of reputation, of wealth, of gain, and of the reputation which he values for their sake. The spiritual man is in combat, but is always victorious; the bonds by which he is restrained are internal, and are called bonds of conscience. The celestial or heavenly

man is not in combat, and when assaulted by evils and falsities, he despises them, and is therefore called a conqueror. He is apparently restrained by no bonds, but is free. His bonds, which are not apparent, are perceptions of the good and the true." *Arcana Coelestia* No. 81.

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Here we have described the three kinds of men, first the spiritually dead, who is guided in his life by merely material ends, the desire for wealth, power, friendship, praise, anything which flatters his vanity. Nothing pleases such a one but that which gives him self-satisfaction. He may indeed appear to be a good citizen, and perhaps a good churchman, but he appears this because he loves to act and speak in such a way that men will speak highly of him and say what a fine man he is. Thus no matter how generous and kindly he may appear, he is animated by vanity and egotism. Such a man the Lord said is a slave, for he is carried here and there by vain emotions, by impulses over which he has no control.

The spiritual man is of an entirely different nature. The spiritual man has principles of truth, and a conscience which guides him and by which he guides his life. He is not carried here and there by passions, feelings, disordered emotions like a vile slave. He has within himself a mastery, because he has something higher by which he is master of himself. He has a firmness and strength and does not let himself be carried away by blind emotions and impulses, nor does he let himself be swayed by mass reactions, by popular trends, by blind impulses; in a word, he is a man.

The spiritual man is indeed at times in temptations. He holds the mastery over his disordered emotions, his inordinate impulses, by a force of character. He severely disciplines the things of his own life. Thus he is victorious.

The celestial or heavenly man, the man of the seventh day of spiritual creation is different. He is one who has already conquered in the things of life and is free. He is one who is no longer troubled by selfishness, vanity, pride, the desire of the things of this world; for having conquered, he is so filled with the Divine Love of God and of mankind, that this love is as it were the whole of his life, his only joy. He is so filled with this love that he can not think of acting from any other motive. He is thus a sabbath of rest. He is in the peace of God. His only bonds are perceptions of what is good and true. To perceive in this sense is to feel what is good and true from the presence of God, and not only to feel but to feel with the greatest delight and joy.

There are indeed few who arrive at this seventh state of regeneration, so few that we have to form our conceptions of such a man from an idea of what a man would be like if filled with the love and spirit of God, rather than from experience.

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The Divine Providence, the Divine Love of the Lord looks to the time when on earth such men will not be so exceedingly rare.

In these lectures we have treated of the seven days of creation. Only a few things of the profound secrets involved have been presented. For the Word of God contains an infinite depth of wisdom.

Of the relatively few things here presented, a real and living understanding can be had only to the extent that they are applied to life. A man who has not gone through some of the profound experiences described in these days of creation can have only a superficial knowledge. All profound knowledge is based on a living experience.

In so far as we are led through these days of creation by our Lord and Saviour, so far the wonder of their meaning will open up to us.

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