
E-READ

The General Conference of the New Church **Articles and Letters**

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What's the weather going to be like?

by Revd Clifford Curry

“The harsh reality we are being confronted with is that if we don’t take care of our planet it won’t be able to continue to take care of us.”

As a minister I sometimes jokingly get the blame or the credit for the weather at a social event. The Lord is seen as governing the state of the weather and, as a minister of the church, it is suggested I might have some extra influence due to my role in life!

Certainly for the biblical people, the weather was seen under direct Divine control. It indicated the Lord’s pleasure when the rains came at the right time and conditions favoured a good harvest. On the other hand, dramatic and terrible weather often expressed the Divine displeasure; so the psalmist writes

“He made darkness his covering, his canopy around him – the dark rain clouds of the sky. Out of the brightness of his presence clouds advanced, with hailstones and bolts of lightning.” Psalm 18v11

To take two examples from the Word, we have the story of Noah and the flood and that of Jesus calming the storm on the Sea of Galilee.

Nowadays with the advent of meteorology and weather forecasting, we probably don’t think of the Lord’s role in the changes of the weather in quite the same way. But it has come as a reality check - a shocking wake up call - to realise that whilst we don’t control the weather day to day, we are collectively having a harmful effect on the climate of our

planet. Today dramatic and terrible weather is increasingly being recognised as a sign of human greed and irresponsibility. The storms and other extreme weather events that the insurers blurb calls ‘acts of God’ we are now starting to realise, are in part at least due to ‘acts of man’.

In the Genesis creation story mankind is to rule over all the living creatures and to eat the fruits of the plants and trees, but there are responsibilities too.

“The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and **take care of it**” Gen 2 v 15.

The harsh reality we are being confronted with is that if we don’t take care of our planet it won’t be able to continue to take care of us. One of the things the Lord does not control are the choices we make. We are now being made aware of the consequences of the way we are choosing to treat the planet; too often doing the opposite of taking care of it.



Psalm 24 begins “The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it;” The Word teaches us we are stewards, and not the owners of creation who are free to behave as we like. There are spiritual principles involved. For example, the concern should be to provide the greatest good for the greatest number and not the greatest profit for the privileged few. We also need to learn from the ways of our Creator, in whose creation everything is reused and recycled. Jesus calls us to consider the ‘lilies of the field how they grow’. We probably know more about nature’s recycling processes than any other generation that has lived, yet it could be argued we have learnt the least true wisdom from the knowledge we have. How tragically have the Lord’s words been fulfilled - “seeing they do not see and hearing they do not understand” Matt 13v13.

During two world wars the cry was ‘everyone must do their bit’. The same principle of ‘united we stand divided we fall’ applies today. The world needs to grow up and recognise the primary importance of the teaching that we are to love our neighbour as ourselves. In the present case this not only includes every part of the family of mankind, but perhaps most especially the next generation who will inherit the consequences of our efforts to take care of the earth as the Lord has called us to do from the beginning. Others far wiser have seen climate change is becoming fundamentally a spiritual crisis.

Our church's teaching declares the Lord is bringing into being a "New Church". By this Swedenborg does not mean a new worldly organisation, but a heaven sent, spiritual awakening that renews mankind's relationship with the Divine. The biblical picture representing this is the New Jerusalem. John sees it in a vision "**coming down** out of heaven from God" Rev 21v2.

So I wonder, is the upcoming generation's change in attitude to God's creation and to our stewardship of the planet, an aspect of this new spiritual awakening? Climate change has highlighted a spiritual crisis, but let us take courage in the Lord's words to Peter, "I will build my church and the gates of hell will not overcome it" Mt 16v18.