

E-READ

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

About Us

To find out more about The General Conference of the New Church, including the locations of our Churches, visit our web site at: gcnc.org.uk

Contributions

If you would like to contribute a letter or article to future issues of e-Read, please send it via email to : gemma.mclean@gcnc.org.uk

Please note that publication is at the discretion of our Spiritual Leadership.

Share E-Read

Feel free to print and share this publication.

Sign up

Sign up for E-News and E-Read email notifications at: gcnc.org.uk/signup

Home Worship

To download the latest Home Worship material please visit: gcnc.org.uk/resources/home-worship

To subscribe via email, please sign up at: gcnc.org.uk/hwsignup

Donations

E-News and E-Read are provided completely free of charge.

If you would like to donate to support this ongoing resource, please do so here:

<https://www.generalconference.org.uk/resources/donations>

Three Planets Day *by Revd Brian Talbot*

Why don't we New-Church people celebrate the 23rd September?

On the 23rd September 1748, Swedenborg saw the Lord as a Divinely Human Person appear out of the sun of the spiritual world to spirits from 'Mercury', spirits from our planet who had known him during his earthly life, which I assume includes the disciples, and spirits from the planet 'Jupiter' (SE 3292; 1446; AC 7173 = EU 40; EU 170:2). I think that it could be argued that this was a significant date, because spirits from three different planets recognised the same Lord as a Divinely Visible Person, within whom was the Invisible Divinity. This is the most universe-al vision of the One God I know of.

The extra-terrestrials taught Swedenborg about their one visible God, in whom was an invisible God. It was also the earliest members of the human race that taught Swedenborg that the infinite, incomprehensible Creator God appeared as an

accessible, available human being, Swedenborg would go on to explain these occurrences as the Lord infilling or possessing an angel.

I would suggest these experiences helped Swedenborg get around or beyond 18th century European Christian philosophising and theologising about the triune God of Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19). He no longer needed to believe that God was three persons, whatever that means. All Christians believe that Yahweh, the God of the Old Testament, came as Jesus. After all, Jesus is Lord, or Jesus is Yahweh (Acts 10:36; Romans 10:9; Philippians 2:11).

We New-Church people or Swedenborgians believe in a “Monopersonal Trinity”, that is, the one God is one and only one Person, and so don’t suffer the challenging questions from Jews and Muslims about how many gods we believe in. Some Christians will point to Jesus’ baptism and say that there was Jesus, the Holy Spirit appeared as a bird, and there was a voice from heaven, which was the Father. The only problem with this interpretation is that we cannot hear or see the Father. “And the Father who sent me has himself testified on my behalf. You have never heard his voice or seen his form” (John 5:37; cf. John 1:18). Another problem is why the Holy Spirit is represented by a bird. The oneness of the Divine Jesus can be seen at the Transfiguration. He is the Divinely Human being: glowing face, shining clothes, and a voice from heaven (Matthew 17:1-8; Mark 9:2-8; Luke 9:28-36).

To finish this article, here’s one of my favourite descriptions of the one God in *True Christianity* or *True Christian Religion*:

“Establishing contact with a God we can see is like making eye contact with a person in the air or on the sea, whose arms then reach out, inviting us into an embrace.” (TCR 787:1 [Rose])

Notice, a human being with super-powers! A Divinely Human person. He healed the deaf, dumb, blind and crippled, and raised the dead during his earthly life. But in this picture, he can levitate or fly, but he loves us and wants to have personal, intimate contact with us!

¹ The reason I’ve put the planets in inverted commas is to cover the possibility that Swedenborg was misinformed about the identity of the planets the extra-terrestrials he met, came from. (“See Some Theories about the Problems Posed by Swedenborg’ *Other Planets*” in Swedenborg’s *The Shorter Works of 1758* (West Chester, PA: Swedenborg Foundation, 2018) 99-100)

² AC 9971; 10159; 10737 (= EU 141; 158; 165); AE 957:4; TCR 111:10; 339:3; 647:3; 787; cf. AR 11:3 [=TCR 279:3]; HH 79e; 514e; NC 54(14); LJ(P) 119; SE 5809-5810

³ AC 1894:2; 1990:2; 5663:2; 6876:2 against TCR 786

⁴ AC 1925; DP 96:6; AE 412:16; 1228; AR 465; TCR 109:1; 188:6e; 691:2; 786

⁵ D. W. Diehl (1984) “Emanuel Swedenborg” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (edited by Walter A. Elwell) (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press, 1984) 1060b