



E-Read



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

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Spiritual and Natural Journeys

Pauline Grimshaw writes:

Most of us today make journeys as a matter of course – short walking journeys or maybe longer journeys. Today, even with cars and trains and planes, route maps and sat-navs, posh hotels along our way, petrol stations and cash cards, we still find journeys stressful. One of the most stressful experiences perhaps that we undergo in life is said to be moving house. The older we get and the more roots we have put down in a place the harder it is to move, especially

if we are going to live in another town or city, or to a country with a different climate, different customs, food or even a different language.

We often think that people of years gone by tended not to travel and remained in the place of their birth until their death. But this has never been the case. Populations have always been mobile. They have moved many miles in search perhaps of adventure, or more likely in search of safety or food or work. In far off times people might have travelled on horseback or by boat but most people travelled hundreds, if not thousands, of miles on foot.

The story of Abraham in the Bible marks the beginning of true historical narrative. The chapters immediately prior to Genesis chapter twelve are not factually accurate, but rather myths of made-up stories which acted as a vehicle for the deeper heavenly sense. The story of Abraham and his family journeying to a promised land also has a deeper spiritual meaning. It details the processes within our soul as we undergo our own spiritual rebirth or regeneration. It also marks the beginning of a new state or a new church, both within us specifically and within mankind generally. This state grows within us as we make greater spiritual progress in response to the Lord's call.

Historically, Abraham and his family were in all probability semi-nomadic tent-dwelling people who travelled around looking for pasture for their animals and moving on when they had exhausted the food supply. Some of the Bedouin Arabs still live today in that part of the world in a very similar fashion.

Yet Abraham journeyed many hundreds of miles not for any of the above reasons but for a unique reason. He travelled because he had been told to do so by the Lord. We are not told in Genesis how God spoke to Abraham, whether it was in a dream or a vision or through an inner voice. God told Abraham to leave his county and his kinsmen and go to the land that God would show him, and that he would become the founder of a great nation.

What a great deal of faith, conviction and courage it must have taken for an elderly man to uproot himself and his household, with all their flocks, and embark on a journey without a map and without even knowing the final destination apart from its being a promised land. Yet whatever doubts or misgivings he might have had, he heard the call of the Lord and he obeyed it.

Throughout the Word of the Lord there are many stories of characters hearing the Word of the Lord and because of it making journeys. The story of Moses is one that also springs to mind.

All of us too, in this world make an unknown journey, the journey through life. We know very little of where we are going in a natural sense; we perhaps are even less aware of where we are going on our spiritual journey in which we develop the potential for angelhood whilst still in this world. Do we in our daily lives hear the call of the Lord to be his disciples, to follow his Commandments and to love Him by loving our fellow human beings? Sometimes we hear the call of the Lord and sometimes we obey it; sometimes we wander in the wilderness and lose our sense of direction.

The journey that Abraham made was not straightforward and to the point. He seemed to have made many detours, including visiting Egypt; he had to overcome many obstacles and

problems. He had to sort out disagreements within his own family and finally when he arrived at the promised land it was not empty. There were still hostile tribes to deal with. Many stories in the Word involve visiting Egypt, and this represents a desire to acquire knowledge so that we may live a life according to it. Even when we eventually reach our promised land, the time in our life when we have put away selfishness and come to know and love the Lord, temptations still come along and try to lead us astray. There is no such thing as an easy life. Yet if we listen for the call of the Lord and we respond to it as we make our spiritual journey, eventually our lives in this earth world will be blessed with true happiness, the happiness that comes from within.

There are natural journeys and spiritual journeys which we all make in the courses of our lives just as there are in heaven. May the Lord be with us all as we make our journeys.

Amen

Readings:

Genesis 12: 1-9

Matthew 2:19-23

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Pauline Grimshaw