



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: www.generalconference.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: paul.crone@generalconference.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-Read and E-News email notifications at: www.generalconference.org.uk/signup/

Local News

View local Church newsletters at: www.generalconference.org.uk/resources/newsletters/

Home Worship

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

To subscribe via email, please sign up: www.generalconference.org.uk/hwsignup

Donations

E-Read and E-News 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>

Rise and Shine Radio Show

Revd Jack Dunion broadcasts his own online radio show every Sunday at 9am on Lomond Radio (formerly River Radio): <https://lomondradio.co.uk/shows/rise-and-shine>

The link below allows you to catchup Rise & Shine programs: <https://www.mixcloud.com/RevJack/>



Variety Among Angels

Revd Brian Talbot writes:

Variety among Angels
(Part of the Session on Angels at Conference)

One of the most challenging teachings of our church is that everybody was created to be different and unique.

Angels worship in different ways, which bring benefit, and contribute to heaven's perfection. Perfection "stems from variety in heaven". Each angel (and demon) is unique, and so "there are infinite variations

and differences” in both heaven and hell. The angels were aghast, when Swedenborg thought of two angels being the same.¹

I was brought up in the New Church to believe that all angels were heterosexually married and had only one spouse. Maybe this is the vast majority. However Swedenborg says that there are “spiritual celibates” or singles, and that some Muslim angels have more than one wife, who live honourably, uprightly, decently.² In the higher Muslim heaven there are some angels who believe that God is two people: the Father and the Son.³

Some angels worship the LORD indirectly. The people of the Iron Age, descended from the Ancient Church in Mongolia, “revere and listen” to an angel, “the Ancient Man of the East”. Some have one wife, some have two wives and some have three. The people of the first extra-solar world worship an angel, even though they know that “God Almighty is in the sun of the angelic heaven.”⁴

New-Church people have a very Jesus-centred view of God. He is Yahweh or Jehovah or ‘the Father’ in a human body. He is visible, comprehensible. “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.”⁵ Notice that he is a super-human Divine person, levitating or walking on the water. But this Divine person permeates the whole spiritual and natural universe. He is everywhere.⁶ We are panentheists: we believe that everybody can be under the influence of the LORD, and the LORD is working inside us personally, intimately and constantly.

Talking about the best people that ever existed on the planet, Swedenborg says: “the earliest church, which existed before the Flood, worshipped a God who could not be seen. No partnership is possible with a God like that. The early church, which existed after the Flood, did the same. The Israelite church worshipped Jehovah, who was essentially unable to be seen (Exodus 33:18-23), although Jehovah God did appear in a human form that he took on through an angel.”⁷ Some Africans worship an invisible God and a visible God. For some it is one God, and for others there are two gods.⁸ Swedenborg met departed people from Mongolia who had the Ancient Word. They “worship Jehovah – some of them worshipping Him as an invisible God, some as a visible one.”⁹

¹ *Heaven and Hell* [1758] §§56; 405

² *Love in Marriage* §54(c) ; *True Christianity* §832

³ *Love in Marriage* §343e

⁴ *Love in Marriage* [1768] §76:6-7; *Other Planets* [1758] §130 [Dole] = *Secrets of Heaven* [1756] §§9694-9695) = *Spiritual Experiences* [1751] §4663

⁵ *True Christianity* §787

⁶ for example, *Secrets of Heaven* §940:4e

⁷ *True Christianity* [1771] §786 [Rose]

⁸ *Last Judgment (Posthumous)* [1763] §119 [Rogers], which is §120 in the Swedenborg Society edition.

⁹ *Apocalypse Revealed* [1766] §11:2 [Rogers]) = *True Christianity* [1771] §279:3e [Rose]

Some heavens are ruled by a Prince and have a “highest ranking priest”.¹⁰ I think I would be more comfortable with a more democratic form of government. Some angels have servants and are servants, not just servants of God.¹¹ Again I’m not sure whether I would like a servant, maybe I would get used to it?

Angels from Jupiter do not worship the Lord as their King, “because the notion of kingship feels too worldly to them, but that they do worship him as their Saviour.”¹² Again we need to look more deeply about faith, worship and the LORD.

Angels are members of our family, as we are of theirs. They all worship and are intimately aware of their loving Heavenly Father, working in them and around them, in different ways, but contribute to the well-being of the whole. Some worship the LORD indirectly through an angel. Some angels worship him as invisible, while others worship him as visible. We worship him as the visible God, in whom is the invisible. Most angels are married to one spouse, but some have two or three spouses. Some angels have no spouse.

All the teachings about the variety of angels reminds me that we have to go deeper, to see the LORD working in each person – as we have seen it may manifest in vastly different ways. It reminds me of one of Swedenborg’s visions in 1748 about the most, apparently, superficial and materialistic person in the world, an Indian idolater. He worshipped idols made of wood or stone overlaid with precious jewels or gold. Yet he displayed the most profound grief over the stealing of Micah’s idols by the Danites. (Judges 17; 18) He manifested the deepest humility, innocence and faith, which amazed the Christians around Swedenborg. I’m sure that Swedenborg was absolutely surprised and delighted. This idolater was so teachable and willing to learn, that he was able to be instructed by angels and went to heaven.¹³ Again we need to look at the heart of angels, not their outward circumstances.

“the church in its entirety” is one but varies due to people’s reception” like “the various jewels in a royal crown” or organ in a body. “The perfection of every form arises from various components suitably arranged in their proper order. That is why the seven churches describe the entire New Church in its varieties in what now follows.”¹⁴

¹⁰ *True Christianity* [1771] §661:13 [Rose] = *Love in Marriage* [1768] §266; cf. *True Christianity* [1771] §§ 740; 744; 745; 748 = *Love in Marriage* [1768] §§11; 16; 21

¹¹ *Heaven and Hell* §219

¹² *Other Planets* [Worlds in Space or Earths in the Universe] §65:2 = *Secrets of Heaven* §8544 = *Spiritual Experiences* §1113

¹³ *Spiritual Experiences* §§2411-2413 = *Secrets of Heaven* §2598 = *Heaven and Hell* §324

¹⁴ *Apocalypse Revealed* [1766] §66; cf. §73