

THE LANGUAGE OF HEAVEN

by the Rev. George de Charms

Fifty days after the Lord had risen from the grave a wonderful thing happened in the city of Jerusalem. The Lord's Apostles were meeting privately to discuss what they might do to spread the news of the Lord's resurrection. Suddenly they heard the rushing sound of a great wind, and flames of fire appeared over their heads. They did not know what this meant; but they felt a strong desire to go out and teach people about the Lord. They arose and went out into the streets, going in different directions, and standing on street-corners they began to preach in a loud voice, so that all who were passing might hear them.

Now Jerusalem was a great city. People passed through it from all the countries of the world. Some had come from Egypt, some from Greece, some from Babylon, and some from Rome. Each one spoke the language of his own country, and most of them did not understand any other language. But as they listened to the Apostles, who spoke in the language of Galilee, every one understood what they were saying just as if they had been speaking the language to which he was accustomed. At this they were astonished, saying "Behold, are not these Galileans? And how then hear we every man in his own tongue to which he was born?" (Acts 2:7,8)

This was indeed a marvelous thing. No one even at this day understands how it could possibly be done. But the Lord now tells us that what they heard came to them from the spiritual world. We are told in the Word that sometimes the Lord opened the spiritual eyes of men living on earth, so that they could see into the other world. This was true of the prophets who saw the Angel of Jehovah, and it was true of the Apostles when they saw the Lord after He had risen from the tomb. In this case, however, although they did not see into the other world, they heard angels speaking, just as they would have heard them if they had been in the other world. They heard in the language of heaven.

Every one who comes into the other world speaks the same language. It makes no difference what language they had spoken on earth. As soon as they enter the spiritual world, they speak the language of the angels. They do not have to learn it. They know it already, and, although they did not realize that they had done so, they had been speaking this heavenly language in their minds all the time. How is this possible?

The language of heaven is the language of ideas that is of pictures that you form in your mind. If you love something you think about it, that is, you make a picture of it in your mind. Suppose Christmas is coming, and you want someone to give you a sled. You may lie in bed all alone at night, and before

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you go to sleep you think about a sled. You see it in your mind, and imagine the fun you will have with it. Or suppose you are going to have a birthday, and you hope some one may give you a toy train to play with. You think of it, and see the cars and the engine going round the track, just as if you already had it. Such a picture in your mind is an idea. You do not need any words to form such a picture. If you spoke English you would not know the French, or the Swedish, or the Italian word for "train." But a child living in any country could picture a train in his mind, if he wanted one, just as easily as you can. Whatever he loves he can think about, and picture in his mind.

The language of heaven is the language of ideas. Love brings pictures into the mind without the need for words. After all, words are only signs that make us think of things. There are many different signs that make us think of the same thing. If you hear me say "horse" at once you picture a horse in your mind. If a French child heard me say "horse" he would not know what I meant. But if I said "cheval" he would think of a horse. If I wrote the word "horse" on the black-board, you would know at once what it meant, although the letters spelling "horse" do not look at all like the animal they represent. If you saw the name printed in a book, or if you saw a drawing of a horse, or a painting of the same animal, they would all mean the same to you. In each case you would be seeing only a *sign*, that would cause you to think of a horse. The signs might be very different, but they would all mean the same thing.

This is the thing to remember: Love is the language of heaven. Whatever we love we think about, and whatever we think about we picture in our mind. So, when the people on the streets of Jerusalem heard the Apostles speaking about the Lord, the angels present with them in the other world, inspired them with love to the Lord, and caused them to think about Him. They pictured Him in their minds and understood what the Apostles were saying about Him. To do this they needed no words, and for this reason it made no difference what natural language. The angels were present with the Apostles, and were speaking through them, or by means of them. Very much as the Angel of Jehovah spoke to the prophets of old.

In this world words are very important. People cannot understand one another unless they speak the same language. For this reason books must be written in different countries. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew, and the New Testament was written in Greek. Both had to be translated into English or you would not understand a word of what they say. For the same reason, the Word has to be translated into French, and German, and Swedish, and Italian, so that the children living in Europe may understand it. But when it has been translated into these languages, the people of all these countries can think of what it means. They can form pictures of what the Lord says. They can learn the stories of the Word, and what they see in their mind will be just the same as what we see, when we read the Word. Because we can think the same things, and love the same things, we can understand one another. We can

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know what the Lord teaches. We can love Him, and keep His commandments. We can worship Him together no matter where we live in the world. We can belong to the same church, and can love one another as if we were brothers and sisters, having the same Father, and belonging to the same family. So it is that New Church: people in every country, though they speak different languages, nevertheless can understand one another because they think the same things, believe the same things, picture the same things in their minds. And when we come into the other world, we can be together in the same society of heaven, because we have been in the same church on earth, and have all worshipped the Lord in the same way. This is because in that world everyone speaks the same language, the language of heaven. This is the wonderful meaning of what happened so long ago on the day of Pentecost.