

The Meaning of New Church Day

by the Rev. Karl R. Alden

The Nineteenth of June is the birthday of the New Church. Now in the New Church we try to educate every child who is born to us for heaven; and the more earnest we are about this, the more will we want to celebrate the Nineteenth of June, for that beautiful day stands for all that is holy and sacred.

In the New Church we have three great celebrations. Christmas is the first. We celebrate this because on that date the Lord was born into the world as a little babe. And in the New Church this makes us rejoice, because God Himself came to His people. We can see Him talking, walking, and healing the sick. We can feel His love. And the heart of our rejoicing is the oneness of God—that God Himself came to people to lead and comfort them.

Easter is the second great event. We celebrate this because on that day the Lord rose triumphant over death, conquered the grave, and showed all people that we too shall live after the death of the body. Heaven is the real thing; earth is only a preparation. In Easter we see the completion of a Divine work: the full union of the Divine and the Human in the Lord. Before our eyes that glorious object of worship stands forth, the Divine Human of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

It is fitting that the New Church should celebrate the Lord's entrance into the world and His departure from it. But the third great New Church celebration, the Nineteenth of June, has to do entirely with the spiritual world. As we celebrate the Lord's entrance into the natural world and His departure from it, it is right that we should also celebrate His reign in heaven and on earth. That is what we do on the Nineteenth of June; and our vision of the Lord in heaven as the everlasting Divine Human Father fills us with wonder, love, and admiration.

After the Last Judgment the evil were separated from the good, and the good were for a time as sheep without a shepherd. But with the arrival of the Nineteenth of June, 1770, these sheep, we are told, were given wonderful shepherds to lead and feed them and form them into heavenly societies. For it is declared that the Lord Himself sent His own twelve disciples to them, and they preached the glorious message that the Lord God Jesus Christ reigns, whose kingdom shall never end. As soon as this gospel was preached a New Church began to be formed in the spiritual world. Its growth there was very rapid, because a vast multitude of spirits had been prepared to receive it; and when the new light burst upon them, they were gathered into societies which are now called the New Heaven.

You will remember that the New Jerusalem was seen by John descending out of heaven from God. That is the order of our church. Everything we have and love comes first from heaven. That is why it is so pure and holy. And shortly after that Nineteenth of June in the spiritual world, people began to read and believe the Heavenly Doctrines in this world. So the New Church began to be formed here on earth, too.

The New Church that was started then has been growing ever since. As we celebrate the birth of the New Church let us think always of the message the disciples were to preach, the message which is the song of songs in the New Heaven: "The Lord God Jesus Christ doth reign, this gospel doth the Word proclaim; His kingdom on this rock secure, ages of ages shall endure."