

WAYS OF RECEIVING THE WRITINGS

By Rev. Donald L. Rose

[It is interesting to think about how the seeds (truths from the Word) were received in the parable of the Sower in comparison to how the Heavenly Doctrines or Writings were received when first published on earth in the 18th century.]

Once Swedenborg experienced a sadness but did not know the cause. He learned that it was caused by the reception of the Heavenly Doctrines by people who favor them intellectually but want nothing to do with them in application to life (see SE 5540). This reminds us of that striking passage in *Spiritual Experiences* that speaks of five different kinds of reception. It reads as follows:

I talked to spirits about how my books may seem to be accepted when they are published. Evil spirits sometimes insinuated that nobody would understand them, and that people would reject them. But while I was in the street talking to some spirits, the realization came to me that books are received in five different ways: Some people totally reject them because they have a different belief system, or they are opposed to any belief. These people reject the books; they can't accept them because the ideas do not sink into their minds. Some people accept them as knowledge. They enjoy the books for the information and unusual things they contain. Some people accept them intellectually, receiving the ideas eagerly enough, but they keep on Living the same way they had before. Some people are influenced by them enough that the ideas sink in and change their lives for the better. This happens when they are in particular states of mind and it is helpful to them. Some people accept them joyfully and gain confidence in them (SE 2955).

Not as well known is the passage that follows:

HOW THAT WHICH IS FROM HEAVEN IS RECEIVED BY THOSE OF THE CHURCH AT THE PRESENT DAY

I heard that many have looked into my books on heaven and hell, etc., and yet have not been satisfied; wherefore, they leave them alone, when, nevertheless, they are arcana of heaven. As I wondered at this, many Christians now in the world, differing as respects life, were instanced: some who do not care for such things; some who care little; some who are in worldly pursuits, which they prefer; some who attend churches only from habit—some one way and some another—and it was discovered that there are very few who receive anything which is from heaven, and that many nauseate and reject it (SE 5931).

In another passage we are told of the experience of one who read some books of the Writings and had a very favorable impression. But later in another state of mind he read some again “and said that they had no merit at all, and would be accepted by nobody.” This illustrated the difference

when one reads in a state of enlightenment from heaven. See SE 5908. The two-page piece called *Ecclesiastical History of the New Church* is largely about different ways of receiving the Writings. They seem to shine brightly “before those who believe in the Lord and in the new revelation.” One reader said: “[T]hey were preferable to all other books, except the Word.” And, of course, there have been for years people who regard these books as coming from the Lord Himself and who regard them in this sense as “the Word.”

One of the places where the Lord talks of spreading the truth as being like sowing and reaping is John chapter 4. He told the disciples that others sowed what they reaped. Others labored, "and you have entered into their labors" (verse 38). The Writings tell us that before the disciples reached certain people, the Lord prepared those people by means of angels. (*Apocalypse Explained* 911:16). When we plant a seed, and it bears fruit, we can reflect that there was invisible preparation that made it possible.