

## DOCTRINE FOR THE YOUNG

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# WHY IS THE WORD HOLY?

by the Rt. Rev. George de Charms

We think of the Word as a book. Indeed it is a very special book, which must be treated with reverence at all times because it is dedicated to the worship of the Lord. For this reason it should be kept apart from other books, and should be placed in a repository in the home, or upon the altar in the church. This is true of the Old and New Testaments, but the Word included many other books, which have been written at different times, some of them long before the time of Moses. And now there are the books, which we call the Heavenly Doctrine, consisting of many volumes, all of which are the Word. What makes these books so different?

Have you ever tried to write a book, or even a short composition in school? If so you must realize that before you can write any thing at all you have to think of something to write. In other words, what you write must first exist in your mind. In fact, the only reason why any one writes a book is because he wants to make known to others something he knows, or thinks, or feels. Thousands of books have been written which are outwardly similar to the Word. They are written in different languages, and on thousands of different subjects, all of which have existed in the mind of the writers. No one could know what these things are unless they had been either spoken or written down.

So it is also with the Word, It existed in the mind of the Lord before it was written down. Therefore it is said in the first chapter of John: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (verse 1). The Lord is a Divine Man. He is wonderfully loving, and wonderfully wise. From His Divine love, according to His Divine wisdom He created the whole universe, and perpetually maintains all things in being and existence. Last of all He created man—human beings who could live, not only in the natural world but also in heaven after the death of the body. Everything was created for the sake of men in order that they might come into the kingdom of the heavens, there to enjoy ever increasing happiness and blessing to all eternity. The only things that can make men truly happy are those that exist in the Lord’s mind. No one could know what these are unless the Lord should tell them, or write them down.

Because the Lord wills to give men life and happiness He has always given His Word in order that they might know how to think, and how to live in order to be happy. But no one can possibly know what is in the Word unless he reads it. If the Word is kept closed, in a repository, or on a shelf, or even on an altar, its wonderful secrets would remain unknown. Furthermore, there is so much to be learned from the Word that no one can discover it in a moment. We have to read the Word many times. Indeed we should read it every day, and if we do we will find out that we are discovering new and wonderful things in it all the time.

But if we merely read the Word, even though we commit it to memory, we may not truly understand it. We have to think about it, and reflect upon it, and search out its meaning. More than this we must do it. We must live according to what the Lord commands in His Word. Only this will lead to the happiness for the sake of which the Word is given. That is why the Lord says: "If ye keep My commandments ye shall abide in My love, even as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love. These things have I spoken unto you that My joy might remain In you, and that your joy might be full" (John 15: 10, 11).

Of all the thousands of books in the world, the only one that is written by the Lord Himself is the Word. Other books are written by men, and contain what is in the mind of the author. Only the Word can reveal what is in the Lord's mind. But how can the Lord write a book?

If you were told to write a composition, and if, instead of doing so, you asked someone to tell you what to write, and just copied what he dictated to you, then the composition would not be your writing. It would not make known anything in your mind. It would instead reveal what was in the mind of the one whose words you copied. That is the way the Word was written. The Lord selected someone and told him what to write. Moses and the prophets who wrote the Old Testament did not write down what they knew, or what they thought. They wrote only what the Lord told them to write. That is why we often read in the prophets "Thus says the Lord." So it was also with those who wrote the Gospels. The Lord caused them to remember what He had done, and what He had said to them, when He was in the world, and they wrote down nothing but what He told them to write. For this reason, what they wrote was the Word of the Lord.

Because the Lord loves men and wants to make them happy from Himself, He has given them His Word from the very beginning, and has done so over and over again through all the ages. This the Lord has done in order that men might know Him, and love Him, and keep His commandments. He spoke the Word to the Most Ancient people before it was written down as a book. He spoke to the prophets of the Ancient Church, and caused them to write down what is called the Ancient Word. And later He spoke the Word to Moses, giving His commandments from the top of Mount Sinai, and causing them to be written down, not only on the tables of stone, but also on parchment, and preserved in the five books of Moses. So also at the command of the Lord Joshua wrote the book that bears his name, and others wrote the books of Judges, Samuel, and Kings, as well as all the Prophets of the Old Testament.

But it is important to know that the Word was written differently at different times. Any book must be so written that the people for whom it is intended may understand. A book intended for the people of France must be written in the French language; one designed for the people of England must be in the English language, and so forth. More than this, if a book is designed for children it must be written in very simple language that children can understand, and one that is designed for adults must be written in adult language. Of this there are many kinds. There are books written for scientists, or for philosophers, or for artists, and many others.

Now notice this. The Word must be written in many languages. Above all, it must be written differently for different ages. The race is like a person. It began as an infant, and it grew gradually to be like a child, then like a youth, and then like an adult. At each stage of its growth the Word was written differently. The Ancient Word was quite different from the Old Testament,

which was written specially for the Jewish people. So also the New Testament, which was written for Christians after the Lord had come on earth, was written in a very different form from any Word that had gone before. So also, when the Lord made His Second Coming, He spoke the Word in a new form to Emanuel Swedenborg, who wrote down only what the Lord told him to write.

For this reason, all the books of the Heavenly Doctrine are also the Word of the Lord. They are very different in form from the former Scriptures, but nevertheless they contain nothing but what is in the mind of the Lord. This Swedenborg testifies, saying: "From the first day of my call I have not received anything whatever pertaining to the doctrines of the New Church, from any angel, but from the Lord alone while I read the Word." (TCR 779) For this reason these writings also are the Word; but they are a form of the Word designed for the people of our day. Not only this, but by means of this new Word the Lord has opened for us the deeper meaning of the Old and New Testaments, a meaning that could not have been understood by those who lived in earlier times.

Knowing this, perhaps you can begin to understand how wonderful the Word is. It is not a single book, but consists of many volumes, written at different times, all of them telling about the Lord, about heaven, and how we must live on earth if we are to know the joys of the Lord's kingdom after death.

Such is the wonder of the Word, It is like a great river of truth proceeding from the throne of God, and bringing life and blessing to all who drink its water. To drink this water of life is to read the Word, to learn what it teaches, and to live according to it so far as we understand it. This is the life of religion that leads to the eternal happiness of heaven.

**Texts: John 1:1; John 15: 10, 11;  
True Christian Religion 779**