

THE VEIL WAS TORN IN TWO

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Jesus, when He had cried out again with a loud voice, yielded up His spirit. And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; (Matt. 27:50-51)

The joy of Easter is the joy of the risen Lord. He conquered death and hell, rising to greet the women who came to the sepulcher and later the disciples. Their fears and sorrows of the last two days were banished with the joy of His resurrection. We have our own fears and sorrows today. Why is the Lord's life and His resurrection so important to us?

The purpose of Jesus' life in the world is central to the doctrine of the New Church. His unseen battles against the power of evil and His work of uniting His human life with the infinite and invisible God began very early in His childhood and continued to His final temptation on the cross (*Arcana Caelestia* 2776:2, *Apocalypse Explained* 220:5). The Gospel of John records the Lord's final words as Jesus said, "It is finished: and He bowed His head and gave up the spirit" (John 19:30). With the end of this last temptation, the veil of the temple in Jerusalem was torn in two, revealing the most holy inner sanctuary. The simultaneous occurrence of this event with the end of the Lord's final temptation represents the effect of His lifetime of work.

The veil that was torn in two had the same function as the inmost veil in the tabernacle. This inmost veil separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. This inmost veil hid the most holy object in the tabernacle, the golden ark which contained the Ten Commandments. The Holy of Holies was so sacred that, except under extraordinary circumstances, it was entered only one day a year and then only by the high priest after elaborate preparations of ritual cleansing (Leviticus 16). The solitary day on which the priest entered the inmost sanctuary was the Day of Atonement. The detailed ritual that was performed on this day represented an atonement for all the sins of the Children of Israel. In addition to the entrance of the high priest into the Holy of Holies, the outstanding feature of the ritual included the choosing a goat to serve as that year's scapegoat. This goat had the sins of the Israelites symbolically transferred to it and then was led off into the wilderness with the idea that this would carry these sins away from the people.

The ritual of atonement represented both the process of the Lord's spiritual development and the redemption of the human race (*Arcana Caelestia* 9670:5, 6; 9506). It represented the Lord's work of removing evil loves from people who is doing their own work of repentance. The ritual of the scapegoat did not by itself remove any evil from the Israelites. It was an act of worship that had been understood by an earlier and wiser church. Gradually this understanding was lost and the dominate concerns in people's lives became gradually more worldly and self-centered.

In the Lord's government, the rituals continued to be performed by people who didn't know what their actions were really supposed to mean. The internal or spiritual life of love to the Lord and charity to the neighbor could not exist with many people of the church at the time of the Lord's life in this world. In everything of their worship these internal things had to be closed up or veiled over. The people of that church did not see the Lord and Divine truth clearly. Both the true nature of the Lord and the genuine meaning of His words were hidden in darkness for them. The Lord's advent ended this darkness. The ritual forms of worship that were empty of genuine love and understanding were no longer needed.

The Lord's spiritual battles throughout His life in this world gave human beings the possibility of a new revelation of truth. The veil that had hidden the genuine qualities of a true church was torn in two by this revelation. The laws and rituals that had been handed down from the ancient times were unfolded to reveal the Lord's love and wisdom that had been hidden. Once again, a church could be established which had love and charity as the internal life within the external acts of their worship and daily actions. The revelation of these qualities of a true church was accomplished through the Lord's perfect spiritual development, known in the teachings for the New Church as the "glorification." We might wonder why this revelation couldn't have been accomplished through another prophet. Further written revelation by itself would have been as useless to the human race as a booklet of instructions would be to someone in a pitch dark room. An inner light was necessary for truth to be seen by each individual human being.

The veil that had hidden the truth from human understanding was torn in two through the Lord's battles with the hells and the way these battles made heaven more perfect. Light could once again shine forth from the Lord to the people of His church. An image of this new presence of the Lord was presented by the veil in front of the Holy of Holies being torn in two at the end of the Lord's final temptation on the cross (*Arcana Caelestia* 4772).

There is a second meaning to this miraculous event that accompanied the completion of the Lord's work. This second meaning illustrates why the Lord needed to glorify His Human or in other words, make this Human perfectly united to the Infinite God. We are told in the opening of the Gospel of John that "in the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God....That was the true Light, which gives light to everyone who comes into the world" (John 1:1, 9). "The Word" here means the Divine truth (*Arcana Caelestia* 4687:3). The Divine truth flowing down through heaven was the light that had enlightened all people prior to the advent. Before the coming of the Lord into the world, spiritual light and life flowed from the Infinite God to people and spirits through the angels of the highest heaven (*Arcana Caelestia* 6371:2). But at the time just prior to the advent this spiritual light and life could no longer affect the human race, because people had turned so far away from a love of good and a knowledge of truth. The people of the world by an accumulation of evil tendencies removed themselves from light and cast themselves into darkness (*Arcana Caelestia* 3195).

The influx of Divine light and life flowing through the highest and best angels could no longer reach people to enlighten them and thereby preserve their spiritual freedom. It could not accomplish this task because it was not purely the Lord's light and life. It was tainted by the impurities of the angels as it descended through heaven. In this sense, the angels were the inner veil of the tabernacle that hid the ark or the Lord Himself (cf. *Arcana Caelestia* 2576:2). In its most degenerate state, the human race could not receive spiritual light from heaven or be led by it to a sight of the Lord (cf. *Arcana Caelestia* 2814, 1894, 400:14). If this state of spiritual darkness had become complete, not a single human beings could have chosen a life that leads to heaven.

To prevent this universal damnation, the Lord was born into this world. The Gospel of John states, "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). The Lord was born, taking on a finite human form from Mary like that of any other human being (*Arcana Caelestia* 3061). As to His natural body, Jesus was the son of Mary, but His soul was the infinite God who created and guides all things. As the infant Jesus grew and developed, He had to learn the truths of the Word in the same way we do. In this way He learned the statements of the Word now empty of Divine

truth the people in the world at that time. (cf. *Arcana Caelestia* 2813). The Lord then allowed Himself to be tempted that He might remove from Himself all that was limited or merely human, until nothing but the Divine remained (*Arcana Caelestia* 2814, 2816). By means of continual temptations in which His thoughts and loves were attacked by evil spirits and by continual victories in these battles, the Lord simultaneously returned the hells to their proper place and influence and provided a new order for the angels of heaven to follow (cf. AE 400:14). By conquest in temptation the Lord rose above limitations, revealing the flaws in each false idea or less than perfect love as He did so. With each victory His Human drew ever closer to a complete correspondence with the infinite Divine itself. This is what is meant by the glorification.

The Lord by His last temptation, endured in Gethsemane upon the cross, completed the work which He had begun in His childhood. His Human became one with the Divine Itself by dispersing the last of the limitations He had taken on in the world (*Arcana Caelestia* 2576:5). The completion of this work is also signified by the tearing of the veil of the temple (cf. *Arcana Caelestia* 2576:5, 9670:4; AE 220:5, 400:14).

It is absolutely essential to the purpose of the Lord's glorification or ascension to the Divine good that He did not temporarily part the veil during His ascent. The veil was torn in two from top to bottom. The Lord by His life of temptation and victory opened the way to the Divine Itself through His Divine Human. The glorification opened the way for the light of Divine truth to proceed to the human race and enlighten each of us even when we're in times of deep spiritual darkness (*Arcana Caelestia* 3195). The Divine truth from the Divine Human can now flow into the mind of every person who has some the faith arising from a wise kindness (*Arcana Caelestia* 2776:3). By reestablishing our spiritual freedom or equilibrium, the Lord redeemed all people from unavoidable damnation. The Lord can now be with each of us and lead us toward heaven even by the natural things of our minds (ibid). By means of the glorification the Lord opened the way for light to flow down to each of us in a manner never possible before that time. The veil that would have hidden the light of Divine truth from us was torn wide open.

There is a second reason for emphasizing the continuing effect of the Lord's work that is signified by the tearing of the inmost veil. The Lord came into the world and assumed the Human not only to redeem the human race, but also to make Himself visible (*True Christian Religion* 786). The Lord did not disappear forever from human sight when He cast off the remaining vestiges inherited from Mary. He did not unite His Human to the Divine Itself only to be as remote from us as He had been before these two became one. On Easter morning the sepulcher was indeed empty. All that had been received from Mary had been put off (*Arcana Caelestia* 2288). We are not to look to the material body which died on the cross. (cf. *Doctrine of the Lord* 32:8). That was not the Lord Himself. The women who came to the sepulcher early Easter morning were told, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen" (Luke 24:5,6). The Lord had risen. He had become one with the infinite Divine good (*Arcana Caelestia* 9199). But the veil that had hidden the true nature of the Lord from human beings was torn in two with His ascent. Even after His final victory in temptation, the Lord could appear to people in human form as the visible Lord. While it is true that we cannot see the infinite Divine itself, we are to worship a visible God in whom is the Divine good itself as a soul a body (*True Christian Religion* 787). We can see His loving human care in the Gospels stories. For some people God's work is invisible. They believe God is doing nothing today. In the teachings for the New Church we are invited to learn of His love and wisdom can be clearly visible today. We can recognize His presence as we reflect back on how much He has helped us become better human beings. God is now visible to those who

seek Him in His Word and live according to what they learn. With the completion of the Lord's work in this world, the veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom, revealing the inmost sanctuary.

There are many things about the Lord's work and His life in this world that strains our understanding or surpasses it completely. We need not be too concerned over our lack of understanding of some of the particulars of these things. However, the universals are within everyone's grasp. The Lord from eternity, who is Jehovah, came into the world to subjugate the hells and to glorify His Human; and without this no mortal could have been saved. The work that accomplished our redemption took place throughout Jesus whole life. The passion of the cross was but the final temptation in a series that had begun early in His childhood. When Jesus conquered in this last temptation, His work was complete. Jesus conquered and rose from the sepulcher as our Savior and Redeemer, the Lord, the one God of heaven and earth. He is now visible to all who seek Him. The veil of the temple is torn in two. His light can shine out and we can see in to behold our Lord and God, bringing us strength and hope as we face our challenges of today. AMEN.

Lessons: Matthew 28:1-10, *True Christian Religion* 787

Matthew 28:1-10 (NKJV)

¹ Now after the Sabbath, as the first *day* of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. ² And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. ³ His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. ⁴ And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead *men*. ⁵ But the angel answered and said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. ⁷ And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you." ⁸ So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word. ⁹ And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, "Rejoice!" So they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go *and* tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me."

This New Church is the crown of all the churches that have hitherto existed on the earth, because it is to worship one visible God in whom is the invisible like the soul in the body. Thus, and not otherwise, is conjunction (a close relationship of love) between God and a person possible because each human being is natural, and therefore thinks naturally, and conjunction must exist in his thought, and thus in his love's affection, and this is the case when he thinks of God as a Human Being. Conjunction with an invisible God is like a conjunction of the eye's vision with the expanse of the universe, the limits of which are invisible; it is also like vision in mid-ocean, which reaches out into the air and upon the sea, and is lost. Conjunction (A close relationship of love) with a visible God, on the other hand, is like beholding a human being in the air or on the sea spreading forth his hands and inviting to his arms. For all conjunction of God with a person must be also a reciprocal conjunction of that person with God; and no such reciprocation is possible except with a visible God. *True Christian Religion* 787