

BIBLE STUDY NOTES

VOLUME ONE



GENESIS

Anita S. Dole
Edited by William Ross Woofenden

Bible Study Notes

Volume One

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PREFACE

Early in the 1950s, Mrs. Louis A. Dole completed a six-age-level, four-year-cycle set of Sunday School lesson notes. She drew in part on a set of intermediate-age notes she had done earlier for a so-called "graded" lesson course (using different Bible stories for different ages). This new course, however, was planned to use a "uniform" schedule (meaning that all age levels from preschool to adult would use the same Bible story any given week).

The four-year cycle, however, rather than covering the books of the Word in Bible sequence over a four-year period, was so arranged that each year's notes began with the Creation account and ended with the Holy City New Jerusalem. Nevertheless, with the exception of the Christmas story (of which there are only two Gospel accounts) no lesson was repeated, although there was always a lesson on each of twenty-five basic events and/or persons. For example, although as stated each year began with the Creation, year one had a general lesson, year two stressed the first four days, year three days five and six, and year four the seventh day. Similarly, to cite just one more example, the four David lessons began with the anointing of David the first year, moved to the story of David and Goliath the second year, to David's bringing the ark to Jerusalem the third year, and to the account of David and Bathsheba the fourth year. [For further details see the Introductory Notes for Teachers below.] In the New Testament portion, all Gospel lessons were from Matthew the first year, from Mark the second, from Luke the third, and from John the fourth.

At first the course was privately sponsored and printed with eight widely scattered Sunday Schools trying out the course. It proved so successful in both quality of content and effectiveness in communicating quickly a sense of the full scope of the Bible narrative that by the end of the decade the course was adopted as the official lesson course of the American New Church Sunday School Association. It has remained in that status ever since.

This present memorial edition in permanent book form has been rearranged in Bible sequence, necessitating some editing in order to eliminate references to the "last lesson," the "next lesson," etc. Other editorial changes have been for the most part limited to the occasional correction of matters of fact and to the rearranging of some of the features in order to make their use more practical. The most extensive change has been made in combining the notes for Beginner and Primary ages with an attempt to keep the best of both. Notes for Teachers, instead of being kept all together on a single sheet, have been put with the notes for the various age levels (e.g., Junior teacher suggestions will now be found at the beginning of the section for Juniors). The Doctrinal Points, instead of being grouped in ten-lesson units, appear with the lesson to which they refer.

No substantive changes have been made in the text, although occasional editorial comments have been added in footnotes. It has been a privilege to have been involved in helping make these valuable materials available to a wider audience.

— *William Ross Woofenden*

The editor would like to thank Louise Dole Woofenden and Adrienne Frank for their contributions to the revision of this second edition.

September 2001

For anyone who loves the church there is no more rewarding experience than teaching a Sunday School class. Like every other worthwhile undertaking it has its problems, its difficulties, and its disappointments; it demands time, effort, and self-sacrifice. But the teacher feels that he is performing a task second only to that of the minister. He is constantly inspired and stimulated by the responsibility of guiding young, open minds into an understanding of spiritual things. His own grasp of the Word and the teachings of the church grows and deepens from Sunday to Sunday. And his understanding of individuals other than himself, as it develops through this experience, enables him to be more and more helpful to friends and acquaintances as well as to his pupils. All these things take time; so let no one feel discouraged if he fails to find immediate enjoyment and success in the work. Be patient, and count the failures as stepping stones.

The Teacher's Equipment

Every Sunday School teacher should have a teacher's Bible. Cross-references and varying translations in the center column, a concordance at the back, tables and historical summaries, Bible dictionary, and maps are invaluable. There are many collateral works which have been produced for the special purpose of aiding teachers and students. Your minister can make these available to you and advise you as to their use. Information concerning special visual aids may be obtained from the Sunday School Association's committee on visual aids.

Preparing the Lesson

The teacher should realize that more preparation is necessary than merely reading through the lesson notes for his class. There is no substitute for personal study and thought. The first essential is to study the Bible story. In this, too, it is not enough for the

INTRODUCTION

teacher to read the lesson assignment for the day, for this is always somewhat curtailed and leaves many details and connections to be filled in by more extended reading. If chapters have been omitted, the teacher should be familiar with at least their general content and should know as much as possible of the history and relationships of the characters involved in the lesson and the location of the places mentioned. His own interest in the lesson will be deepened by looking up the cross-references, and often he will find points in which his class also will be interested. The meanings of the Hebrew names (found in a concordance) are significant, whether they are of persons or of places.

Next, the pupils' notes for all ages should be read, as this course is planned in such a way that both the understanding of the lesson and the knowledge of its background build up progressively from Beginner* to Adult notes. If possible, the teacher's personal study should be supplemented by a teachers' meeting under the supervision of the minister, who can supply a great deal of helpful information and also make suggestions as to the presentation of the lesson and give advice concerning specific class problems as they appear. Also, the exchange of ideas among the teachers at a weekly meeting has great educative value.

Finally, the teacher should think about the lesson in its relation to his own particular class and, with the help of the teachers' notes, decide just how he is going to present it. In this try to think always of what will be most valuable and helpful to your pupils rather than of what has proved most interesting and stimulating to yourself. Remember that their background and their states are quite different from yours. Pray for help in presenting the lesson. Our failures come most often either from lack of proper preparation, or from obtruding our own ideas between the Word and the children and trying to impress them with ourselves rather than with the lesson. Remember that the power for good is not in yourself but in the Word.

*In this publication of these lesson materials, the notes for the Beginner and Primary children have been combined.

Subject Matter

The primary task of the church is "to keep the Divine among men." And we know that our access to the Divine is through the Word. Therefore the first goal of our Sunday Schools should be to acquaint the pupils with the letter of the Word. There is no other agency except the Sunday School which can be counted on to perform this task. The schools do not do it, and even in the New Church few homes attempt it in any systematic way. The child is taught morals and certain common ethical values by many of his contacts outside of the church, but only in Sunday School can we be sure he will be taught to build his character on the Word of God. The child whose experience does not include systematic instruction in the letter of the Word is cheated of his birthright. So the Word is our primary subject matter. Our supplementary material is found in the writings of the Second Coming which enable us to understand the Word. All our other objectives may be carried out in connection with this study. The stories of the Word are not mere fairy tales or fables or ancient history: they are messages from the Lord to us—our life textbook. As teachers we must feel their power and see their applications, and always try to inspire in the children the love of hearing and studying the Word.

Suggested Goals for the Sunday School

1. Knowledge of the letter of the Word.
2. Introductory knowledge of the spiritual sense of the Word.
3. A working knowledge of New Church doctrines.
4. A desire for worship and an understanding of its forms.
5. Instruction in the Christian way of life in emotion, thought, and conduct.

This outline does not imply that there should be separate lessons in doctrine, in worship, and in Christian living, but that these objectives should all be in the teacher's mind as he prepares and teaches the lesson, so that the particular Bible story being taught will come to the children with present meaning and urgency, and so that no opportunity will be wasted of furthering the spiritual

development of the children.

To achieve these goals the teacher of each age group should have in mind specific things under each heading which he may hope to impart to the children of his class before they pass on to the next age group. A further definition of these requires that we consider each age group in turn.

The Age Groups

Traditionally the children in our Sunday Schools are divided into five age groups: Beginner (ages 3, 4, and 5), Primary (ages 6, 7, and 8), Junior (ages 9, 10, and 11), Intermediate (ages 12, 13, and 14), and Senior (ages 15, 16, and 17). At the age of eighteen the young person should be ready for the Adult class.

Children vary, of course, in their individual mental and emotional development at any given age, and the occasional slow or advanced child in a group presents a special problem, and may need to be placed temporarily with another age group. But in general there are certain characteristics of each age group which are fairly constant.

Beginner: Beginners are still in the infant states of trust and love, and are peculiarly sensitive to the atmosphere of the class. We know that some of the deepest and most lasting impressions are made on children at this age—without the child's knowing how or why. Even though the children may not at the time be able to recall—or at least to express—any of the specific facts we give them, we know that these facts together with the states in which they were received are stored up in the children's minds as “remains” on which heavenly attitudes are built. The teacher's own attitude toward the Lord, the Word, and the Church will largely determine the kind of impression which the Sunday School makes on little children. We should never feel that these little ones are in our care merely to be “looked after” and amused. If we do, the church will be to them just another place where they may play. Instead, their first contacts with the church should give them a sense of wonder and reverence. They should be happy, but happy

in a special way. We cannot teach this by words, but only by the example of our own feeling.

So the specific goals for this group are simple and general:

1. *The Word.* Although each lesson should be taught as it comes, special pains should be taken to impress upon the children the Creation story, the story of the Garden of Eden, the story of the flood, stories of Bible children, and the Christmas, Palm Sunday, and Easter stories.
2. *Spiritual Sense.* Nothing specific should be given at this age level, but if the teacher has the correspondence in mind in discussing things in nature, what he says will inevitably be put in such a way as to prepare for later instruction. For example, the plants and animals of the Bible will be emphasized.
3. *Doctrine.* Jesus is our heavenly Father. The world was made by Him. The Bible is His book. He wants us to be good. He takes care of us.
4. *Worship.* The church is the Lord's house. Teach the Lord's Prayer and other simple Bible verses. Teach the simpler Sunday School hymns. Develop a reverent feeling about the Sunday School service.
5. *Christian Living.* We should be kind and loving. We should learn what is right and good. We should obey our parents.

Primary: Primary children retain much of the same responsiveness to atmosphere, but they are beginning to acquire in school tools of learning, and they need to be allowed to exercise their new tools and abilities and to be kept busy. This does not mean just hand-work. Their minds need to be kept busy, too. They like to be able to answer questions, and they like to memorize. They can stand any amount of repetition of the lesson—in fact that is the way in which it is impressed upon them. Pictures and other visual aids should never be chosen just to give the children something to do, but always as aids to the lesson; for at this age children are quick to recognize discrepancies between a picture and what the teacher is telling them, and if pictures and handwork make a false im-

pression, it is hard to correct it later. This is one reason why Bible stories should never be embroidered by the teacher's imagination. Let the child's own imagination do the embroidering, if it will, but do not encourage it.

The specific goals for this group may be:

1. *The Word.* The emphasis should be on the literal story, with the attempt to fix important names in the memory. Read as much as possible of the story from the Word itself. Teach the Blessings and other verses.
2. *Spiritual Sense.* Suggest the correspondence of the sun to the Lord and of its heat and light to His love and wisdom. Bring this out a little at a time by speaking of the effects of the sun in the world and of the Lord in our souls.
3. *Doctrine.* The Lord is always with us and knows our thoughts. He teaches us through His Word. Talk about heaven and the life that leads to it.
4. *Worship.* Reverence for the Lord's house. Care of the Word. Why the Word is on the altar. The Sunday School service, with participation in its conduct.
5. *Christian Living.* (a) Moral principles: honesty, obedience, industry, trustworthiness. (b) Where our good and bad thoughts come from, and their power. (c) What unselfishness is, with practical guidance in unselfish conduct.

Junior: Children of this age are hungry for factual information. They are beginning to be somewhat self-assertive, and if their minds are not fed, and fed rather fast, they become restless and look about for some other occupation. They are interested in maps and in pictures of places and people—real pictures, not “baby work.” The teacher should be particularly careful not to “talk down” to them, but to respect their growing mental ability. Their questions are usually intensely practical and the teacher needs to study as much as possible of the geographic and cultural background of the lesson. Frequent reviews help to hold the interest of the class, and this is also an excellent age at which to teach the

children how to look up verses in the Bible and how to use **Bible** helps.

1. *The Word.* The literal story in detail, with emphasis on geography and attention to background, especially the past history and the relationships of the people in the story. Learn the Commandments and several Psalms.
2. *Spiritual Sense.* Some simple correspondences, such as high and low, heat and light, animal, vegetable, and mineral, gold, silver, and brass, water, stone, bread and wine, the seed-plant series. Quite often the general inner meaning of the story can be suggested. Watch the notes for such opportunities.
3. *Doctrine.* The doctrine of use. The meaning of baptism. The origin of evil. The Lord's part and ours in our getting to heaven.
4. *Worship.* The parts of the church building. The service. Why we come to church.
5. *Christian Living.* Application of religious principles to the children's everyday problems. How to live together.

Intermediate: This is in some ways the most difficult age to teach with any degree of satisfaction. It is indeed an "in-between" age. The pupils are still really children, and yet they like to think of themselves as "grown-up." They should be taken very seriously from Sunday to Sunday, but the teacher himself should not worry too much about any untoward attitudes they may express, for they experiment and change constantly. They need mental challenge, teaching which makes them think in new terms and new ways, the feeling that the teacher believes them capable of understanding rather deep and difficult ideas. And it is surprising how much they do understand and remember. Anyone who has taught this age group over a period of years has had the experience of being reminded by a former pupil of some teaching of his which he was sure no one in his class had taken in when it was given. At this age pupils may be apparently quite unresponsive and yet may be taking in a great deal for private consideration. Their occasional questions are searching ones. The teacher needs much

more knowledge of the doctrinal and philosophical aspects of the church teachings than one might imagine.

1. *The Word.* In the literal story place the emphasis on individual character and historical sequence. Stress daily reading of the Word and the use of memorizing for our individual needs.
2. *Spiritual Sense.* The general internal sense of each lesson, with as much detail as time and the ability of the class permit.
3. *Doctrine.* Preparation for confirmation. Doctrine of the Lord, of the Word, of Life, the Second Coming, the Lord's Supper, the Church.
4. *Worship.* Function of the church. Duty to the church. History of the New Church. Learn the Faith. Study the church service and principles of chanting.
5. *Christian Living.* What true leadership is. Responsibility in home and community. Boy-girl relationships (if indicated).

Senior: While these young people are still adolescents, they have passed beyond the stage of wishful thinking about adult life and are really trying to live as independent human beings. They are genuinely grasping at principles by which they may live good lives. The teacher should take for granted that their intentions are uniformly good and their mistakes mistakes of judgment, and should give them all the help possible both spiritual and natural. In school they are exposed to all sorts of civic and social attitudes and theories, and they need as clear and complete an understanding as possible of the basic philosophy of the New Church. "Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together," not as a helpful idea here and there, but a consistent doctrine of life which can guide our thinking in every field. The teacher of the Seniors has a very great opportunity and a very serious responsibility, for if he is able to lead these seeking young people to the treasure which the Lord has given us in His Second Coming, he is doing both them and the church the greatest service possible.

1. *The Word.* Emphasize throughout the Lord's part in the Bible story.

2. *Spiritual Sense.* More detailed study of the internal sense of the lessons, with some suggestion of the celestial sense.
3. *Doctrine.* Doctrine of degrees, the spiritual world, repentance, reformation, and regeneration, doctrine of marriage. Start them reading Swedenborg.
4. *Worship.* Deeper study of public worship and home devotions. Study of prayer.
5. *Christian Living.* Application of religious principles to adolescent problems. Some consideration of the cause of community and world problems.

Adult: One of the first duties of the teacher of the Adult class is to appraise his particular class as to their basic knowledge of the Bible and of the teachings of the church. It is unfortunately true that in most of our Sunday Schools the adults are fully as much in need as the children of instruction in this field. There are usually two or three well-read laymen and women in a Society, and sometimes these tend to monopolize the discussion and to carry it at a level which is beyond the understanding of the rest of the class. Such a situation also discourages the young people from graduating into the Adult class, and if the Sunday School is taking the place it should in the church life, there are always new people, often young couples, becoming interested who have not been brought up in the New Church and especially need instruction of the informal discussion type, based on the Bible. The attitude of the teacher should be that every member of the class is to be taken seriously and that each is able to make worthwhile contributions to the discussion. He should also be able to establish the fact that we are never any of us too old or too wise to need further Bible and doctrinal study, and that the Sunday School is the place especially for Bible study. Even with the Adults the Bible lesson is the first thing to cover each Sunday, and discussion of current topics and of special problems should grow out of the Bible lesson—not be substituted for it. The five goals should be kept in mind, the particular methods of fulfilling them being determined by the

states and needs of the members of the class. Perhaps one more goal should be added for the Adults: that of developing the ability to communicate to others the New Church understanding of the Word and the New Church answers to individual and social problems. Every New Churchman should be a missionary, not merely for the sake of building up the church organization (although that in itself is a worthy endeavor), but because we have so much help to give, and the responsibility of giving it wherever and whenever it is needed is laid upon each one of us. We cannot fulfill this responsibility without constant study and intelligent thought about the problem of communication. This need should always be in the teacher's mind.

— *Anita S. Dole*

INTRODUCTORY NOTES FOR TEACHERS

As we may see by the accompanying chart, this program was planned as a four-year Bible course, but it was originally arranged so that the whole Word was covered by periods each year, in order that the child might early realize that the Bible is one book—not only a continuous story but a completed one—and also that children might not so often enter the Sunday School for the first time in the middle of the Bible story with no idea of what has gone before. While this plan might in any one year seem to leave many important stories untouched, the retelling of the background of the successive periods from year to year in the context of different stories built up gradually in the child's mind both a surer knowledge and a better understanding of the whole letter of the Word. The plan insured that the beginning of the Bible story was not forgotten before the end was reached, and that the Old and New Testaments were seen in their proper relation and proportion. Although the lessons are now arranged in Bible sequence, it is still possible, by using the chart, to use the original four-year plan.

The notes for the various age groups are written with two purposes in view. It is *not* intended that the teacher should read them to the class. Neither is it intended that copies should be given out to the pupils in advance. Only the Bible reading should be done in advance. For the teacher, the notes are meant to suggest the points to be covered in the lesson, a possible order of presentation, and the general level of meaning which pupils in the particular age group may be expected to comprehend. For the pupil, if he has his own set of the books, they are meant to be taken home, read as a review during the week, and preserved for future reference.

It is very important that the teacher plan his use of the class time carefully. Five minutes or less at the beginning of the period are enough for review questions. Then give five minutes to a carefully thought-out covering of the background of the lesson for the day before going into the lesson proper. In the Old Testament

build the background as far as possible about persons and places in order to fix these in their proper sequence in the pupils' minds. In the New Testament the background should be the factual story of the Lord's life on earth.

The writings of the church tell us that "generals" must be grasped before "particulars" can be understood in their proper context; so we may feel sure that our first object in the Sunday School should be to impress the general outline of the whole Bible story on the minds of our pupils. The covering of the whole story each year has this objective in view.

The two survey lessons (nos. 22 and 24 on the accompanying chart) are general lessons but are based on a different passage each year in order to give the pupils a wider variety in the study of the Prophets than has been possible in previous courses. They are also optional lessons, written in such a way that Sunday Schools with a school year of less than forty sessions may omit them without losing continuity. Each series also contains fifteen lessons from the New Testament. A different Gospel is studied each year. Two of the fifteen lessons are written as optional lessons; three are the special lessons for Christmas, Palm Sunday, and Easter; and three are from the book of Revelation.

FOUR-YEAR LESSON COURSE FOR NEW CHURCH SUNDAY SCHOOLS

xxx:

Assignments in the Old Testament

| <i>Lesson</i> | <i>Subject</i> | <i>Series I</i> | <i>Series II</i> | <i>Series III</i> | <i>Series IV</i> |
|---------------|-------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| 1. | The Creation | General View | First Four Days | Days Five and Six | The Seventh Day |
| 2. | The Most Ancient Church | The Garden of Eden | Helpmeet for Adam | The Serpent | Cain and Abel |
| 3. | The Ancient Church | Noah Builds an Ark | End of the Flood | The Rainbow | Tower of Babel |
| 4. | Abraham | The Call of Abram | Abram and Lot | Birth of Ishmael | Abraham & the Angels |
| 5. | Isaac | Birth of Isaac | Sacrifice of Isaac | Isaac and Rebekah | Isaac & Abimelech |
| 6. | Jacob | Jacob & Esau | Jacob's Dream | Wives & Sons | Jacob's Return |
| 7. | Joseph | Joseph & Brothers | Joseph in Prison | Ruler of Egypt | Sons and Death |
| 8. | Moses | Birth of Moses | The Burning Bush | The Ten Plagues | The Passover |
| 9. | Escape from Egypt | Crossing Red Sea | Marah & Elim | Quails and Manna | Rephidim & Amalek |
| 10. | Mount Sinai | Ten Commandments | Ark of Covenant | The Tabernacle | The Golden Calf |
| 11. | Wilderness Wanderings | Nadab & Abihu | The Twelve Spies | Korah, Dathan, Abiram | Aaron's Rod |
| 12. | Entering the Holy Land | Balaam | Call of Joshua | Crossing the Jordan | Gilgal |
| 13. | Conquest of Holy Land | Jericho | Ai | The Gibeonites | Conquest & Division |
| 14. | The Judges | Deborah & Barak | Gideon | Jephthah | Samson |
| 15. | Samuel | Birth of Samuel | Lord Calls Samuel | Capture of the Ark | Asking for a King |
| 16. | Saul | Choosing of Saul | Saul's Impatience | Saul & Jonathan | Sparing Agag |
| 17. | David | Anointing of David | David & Goliath | Ark to Jerusalem | David & Bathsheba |
| 18. | Solomon | Wisdom of Solomon | Glory of Solomon | Building the Temple | Decline & Death |
| 19. | Kingdom of Israel | Elijah & Ahab | Elijah at Horeb | Elijah's Mantle | Elisha & Naaman |
| 20. | Kingdom of Judah | Reign of Asa | Hezekiah & Isaiah | Josiah | Zedekiah & Jeremiah |
| 21. | Book of Psalms | Psalm 1 | Psalm 19 | Psalm 91 | Psalm 119 |

| | | | | | |
|------|-----------------------|---------------|------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| *22. | Major Prophets—Survey | Isaiah 6 | Jeremiah 1 | Ezekiel 47:1-12 | Daniel 5 |
| 23. | Major Prophets | Fiery Furnace | Ezekiel's Vision | Daniel & the Image | Daniel & the Lions |
| *24. | Minor Prophets—Survey | Micah 6 | Joel 3:9-21 | Amos 8 | Zechariah 4 |
| 25. | Minor Prophets | Haggai 1; 2 | Jonah & the Fish | Malachi 3; 4 | Jonah & the Gourd |

Assignments in the New Testament

| <i>Lesson</i> | <i>Series I</i> | <i>Series II</i> | <i>Series III</i> | <i>Series IV</i> |
|---------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| 26. | Matthew 1:18-25; 2:13-23 | Mark 1 | Luke 1 | John 1 |
| 27. | Matthew 3 | Mark 2 | Luke 7:1-30 | John 2:1-11 |
| 28. | Matthew 4:1-11 | *Mark 3 | Luke 9:1-36 | *John 3:1-21 |
| 29. | *Matthew 4:12-25 | *Mark 4 | Luke 10:25-42 | John 4:1-42 |
| 30. | Matthew 5; 6; 7 | Mark 5 | *Luke 11 | John 5:1-16 |
| 31. | Matthew 8 | Mark 6 | Luke 14 | John 9 |
| 32. | *Matthew 13 | Mark 10 | Luke 15 | *John 10 |
| 33. | Matthew 17:1-13 | Mark 14 | *Luke 16 | John 11:1-46 |
| 34. | Matthew 26; 27 | Mark 15 | Luke 24:13-53 | John 15 |
| 35. | Revelation 1 | Revelation 4 | Revelation 6 | Revelation 12 |
| 36. | Revelation 2; 3 | Revelation 5 | Revelation 8; 9 | Revelation 13; 19:11-21 |
| 37. | Revelation 21; 22 | Revelation 20:11-15; 21:1-7 | Revelation 21:9-16 | Revelation 22:8-21 |

Special Lessons

| | | | | |
|-------------|-----------------|-------------|----------------|---------------|
| Christmas | Matthew 2:1-15 | Luke 2:1-20 | Matthew 2:1-15 | Luke 2:1-20 |
| Palm Sunday | Matthew 21:1-27 | Mark 11 | Luke 19 | John 12:12-50 |
| Easter | Matthew 28 | Mark 16 | Luke 24:1-12 | John 20; 21 |

*Optional Lessons

BIBLE STUDY NOTES

Genesis

THE CREATION – A GENERAL VIEW

Genesis 1; 2:1-3

The introduction for this first lesson in all classes should be a few words about the Bible as the book we study in Sunday School. It is different from all other books in the world. The Lord is its Author, and in it He tells us about Himself and the things we need to know so that we may learn to be heavenly people and live in heaven when we die. So we call it the *Word of God*. It is made up of many books written through many men. The first book is called *Genesis*, which means “the beginning.”

Doctrinal Points

[Summary doctrinal points will be found at the beginning of each lesson. They are especially recommended for the use of teachers of Intermediate and Senior classes. Their listing in this way merely brings them together for the teacher's convenience; they are not meant to be taken up as the main feature of the lesson, but to be brought in by the way. Each point will be identifiable as related to one of the four principal doctrines of the Church: the doctrines of the Lord, the Word, Faith, or Charity.]

The Lord is the beginning of everything. He created heaven and earth.

The Word is the Lord's revelation to us of all that we need to know about our Creator and our relation to Him.

Faith in the Lord means trust in Him and obedience to His commandments even against our own will and judgment.

We cannot do any real good of ourselves. All good is in and from the Lord.

Notes for Parents

We send our children to school to learn the things they need to know to find and fill their places in this world. We bring them to Sunday School to learn the deeper things they need to know in order to be useful and happy not only in this world but in that higher world where we shall all live to eternity.

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These deeper things can be learned only by studying the Book in which the Lord has revealed them to us—the Bible, the Word of God. So in our Sunday School course each year we cover the Bible story, learning more and more about it from year to year. We hope very much that you will be interested in what your children are learning in Sunday School and will help to lay the basis in their minds for the lesson each week by reading with them the chapters in the Bible suggested in these notes and by teaching them the memory verses. The Lord not only *speaks* to us in His Word; He is *present* with us in every verse from the Word which is planted in our memory. So in helping your children to know the Bible you are doing for them something more valuable than anything else you can possibly do.

The Bible begins with the story of creation. Its very first verse tells us the first and most important thing every person should know: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” If we do not believe that we owe our existence to God, we can have no true understanding of the purpose and goal of life.

Many people today question the authority of the Bible because science has proved that the material world was many thousands of years in the making. Yet when an old person says to us, “In my day people didn’t do that,” we know that the speaker does not mean a day of twenty-four hours. The six days of creation are merely six stages of development. And, while it is true that in general the physical world came into being somewhat as the first chapter of Genesis says, it is not really this physical world about which the Lord is speaking. We can find out about the physical world for ourselves, but of the inner world of our souls only the Lord can tell us.

The first chapter of Genesis really tells us about the creation of a true human soul from its unconscious beginning in infancy, when it has only the potential elements of spiritual and natural development—the heaven and the earth—through the first dawning of the light of understanding by means of which one learns both natural and spiritual truths, to the belief in God and love of Him which

enable us to come into His image and likeness and to attain the peace and happiness pictured by the sabbath day.

Primary

The teacher, after going through the whole story briefly, should try to see that most of the children are able to answer at least the questions, *Who made the world?* *What book tells us about the Lord?* and *Who wrote the Bible?* and to tell how many days it took the Lord to make the world and what He did on the seventh day. Do not be afraid of repetition; little children like it, and that is the way they learn.

In this lesson on Creation a special point can be made very simply of the origin of the sabbath and how we should use Sunday.

Do you know what book we study in Sunday School? It is the *Bible*. It is called *the Lord's Book* because the Lord was its Author. It is also called *the Word* because it was spoken by the Lord. And finally it is called *the Book of Life* because it tells us how to live so that we may be the Lord's children and live in heaven when we die.

The Bible is made up of many books, the first of which is called *Genesis*, which means "the beginning." Let us read the very first verse of the Bible and see if we can learn it, because it teaches us something which we must never forget. The Lord made this world in which we live and everything in it. But He made something else, too. He made heaven, the beautiful world to which we shall all go to live sometime if we are good.

What was the world like when it was first created?

What was the Lord's first command?

In how many days was everything created?

These were not twenty-four hour days but long periods of time.

What did the Lord make last?

Our chapter for today tells us the order in which the Lord made man. Let us read it from the Bible. [Read Genesis 1.] You see the world had to be prepared for men before men could be created, but everything in the world was made for the use of man. The Lord is called our "Heavenly Father" because He made us all and

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loves us as His children. He tells us to take good care of everything and to use everything wisely as He made it to be used.

See if you can remember what the Lord did on the seventh day [Read Genesis 2:1-3], and try every Sunday when you wake up to think, ‘This is the Lord’s day; I must keep it holy; I must think about the Lord, and try to make everyone about me happy.’ *Blessed* means made happy, and *sanctified* means made holy.

Junior

These children should be able to find the lesson in the Bible and to remember most of it. It is at this age that children especially like to learn facts, and it is therefore the age at which the literal sense of the Word should be most thoroughly taught. Be sure that they understand the meaning of any unusual words in the text. Juniors like to learn new words and to stretch their minds. They may also be introduced to the idea that all the stories in the Word are parables, even though most of them are also fact. So the Junior notes will include from time to time some of the simpler and more obvious correspondences. In the case of the Creation story the correspondence of light and darkness is a very easy one to explain because it is so familiar through our everyday speech.

What book do we study in Sunday School?

What is the first book in the Bible?

What does *Genesis* mean?

What does the first verse of the Bible tell us?

Who is the Author of the Bible?

The first chapter in the Bible tells us about the creation of the world. God made both the heavens and the earth in the very beginning, but it took a long time to prepare the earth for man. This preparation was accomplished in six stages, called “days.”

Notice that the very first step in the development of the world was *light*. “And God said, Let there be light; and there was light.” Now think whether there is any other kind of light besides physical light. Do we ever say, “I see,” when we don’t mean seeing with our eyes? When we don’t understand a thing, it is like darkness, isn’t it? And light comes when we begin to understand. Then we can go ahead. So if our minds are to develop we need the light of

truth, or knowledge.

After light came, the world moved steadily forward.

First the heavens and the earth could be clearly distinguished from each other.

Then on the earth the dry land appeared, and grass and grain and fruit trees began to grow.

Then the clouds broke away so that the sun appeared in the daytime and the moon and stars at night.

Then the fish were created in the sea and the birds in the air.

Finally, on the sixth day the animals were created and lastly men and women.

Read verse 27 and see what it tells us about God, and about man. This shows us that man is quite different from the animals.

God gave the whole world to man to use and enjoy and take care of. If we misuse and spoil the good things the Lord gives us, we hurt ourselves more than anyone else. If we take good care of our possessions and use them as they are meant to be used, we can be trusted with more and more and can have more and more happiness.

Read verse 3 of chapter 2. *Blessed* means made happy, and *sanctified* or *hallowed* means made sacred. This tells us what kind of day Sunday should be. It should be a restful and happy day not only for us but for all those about us; so we must try to be especially obedient and helpful at home on that day. And it should be made sacred by taking time and opportunity to learn about the Lord and to worship Him.

The first chapter of Genesis seems to be just a story of how the world and all things in it were created, but it is really a parable. Inside of this story of the beginning of things on the earth is the story of how each one of us is born in the darkness of complete ignorance and develops little by little as his understanding grows until he is able to bring forth the fruits of good deeds and become a true man or woman in the image and likeness of his Heavenly Father, and worships Him in a happy, peaceful heart.

Now, let us see if we can write down the order in which the

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chapter tells us everything was created, so that we shall remember it, for as you grow older, you will learn a great deal more about what each thing in the story means.

On the first day God created *light*.

On the second day God created *the firmament*.

On the third day God created *the grass, herbs, and trees*.

On the fourth day God created *the sun, moon, and stars*.

On the fifth day God created *the fish and the birds*.

On the sixth day God created *the animals, and man*.

What did God do on the seventh day? *He rested*.

Intermediate

There should be persistent effort to make clear to the pupils that the Bible has an intimate personal application and that it describes their own spiritual life. This group should begin to realize that in its spiritual as well as in its literal sense the Bible is one continuous story written by the Lord according to definite patterns and plans. In this lesson the New Church teaching concerning the early chapters of Genesis can be given briefly, and the effect should be to make the young people feel sorry for those who know so little of the meaning of these wonderful stories that they doubt and ridicule them. Most of the class time should be given to the correspondence of the six days as it relates to their own development from infancy to maturity.

Let us be sure we know the first verse of the Bible by heart. Other verses in the lesson which are good to learn are verses 3, 27, and 28. We should also know what progress was made on each of the six days.

While this seems to be the story of the beginning of the earth, we should know that the Bible is not given to teach us natural science. Men can find out things about the earth by their own efforts, and God would not have to give us a revelation to tell us such things. The Bible is given to teach us spiritual truths—truths about God and our souls—which we could not find out for ourselves. The Lord Himself is the Author of the Word, although He used many different men to write it down. He put the words into their minds, and they knew that they must write them down, and that the words did not come from themselves.

The very first verse tells us that in the beginning man was created with a heavenly as well as an earthly nature. He was not a mere animal. But his earthly nature was rudimentary and his heavenly nature was clouded with the darkness of ignorance (verse 2). This is also true of each one of us when he is born.

The beginning of man's development—and of ours—was the moment when God said, "Let there be light." Truth is for the eye of the mind what light is for the physical eye. When we begin to understand something, we say, "I see." Then and only then can we go ahead. See if you can think of any other common sayings in which light and darkness and sight and blindness are used in this way.

The six days of creation picture six stages in man's development into a true human being, in the image and likeness of God, a spiritual being capable of knowing and worshiping God. Read through the chapter, thinking of each step in this light. Because everything in nature was made by the Lord, everything expresses something in Him. So we say that each thing in nature "corresponds" to something in the world of the spirit, and the Bible is written in this language of correspondence. Here are some correspondences to help you in seeing the spiritual meaning within this first chapter of Genesis:

Waters mean truths.

The firmament—or *expans*e as it is more accurately translated—pictures the plane of our thinking. The waters above the firmament are symbolic of truths about God and heavenly life, those below the firmament are truths about the world and earthly life.

Dry land means our conscious experience, and seas represent truths gathered together in the memory.

The vegetable kingdom stands for our thoughts, the fruit for our deeds. Seeds, spiritually speaking, are new germs of thought which are capable of producing fruit. We may think of the Lord's words: "By their fruits ye shall know them." And we all remember the parable of the sower, which is found in Matthew 13:1-23. The Lord Himself explained this parable to His disciples, and told them that the seed represented the Word.

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The sun is the symbol of love for the Lord, the moon faith in Him, and the stars knowledges of heavenly things. The day is a time when we see clearly, and the night one when everything seems dark, and we must just trust in what we have been taught about the Lord and the good life, as a sailor at night is guided by the stars.

Living creatures represent affections or desires—cold-blooded ones, like fish, affections for earthly knowledges, the birds affections for heavenly knowledges, and warm-blooded animals affections for doing useful things.

Think carefully what verse 27 teaches us about God and our relation to Him.

The Lord gave us the world in which we live and also all the thoughts and affections we have, and He tells us to rule over them wisely. Swedenborg tells us: “The end [purpose] of creation is a heaven from the human race.” So our purpose in life should be to become the kind of people who can live in heaven.

Read chapter 2, verse 3, and think from it what type of day Sunday should be for us. It is not intended to be a sad or hard day, but we ought to spend it in such a way that we and all those about us may be happy and peaceful together. Happiness does not come from always “getting our own way,” for our own way is often very selfish and hard on other people. Happiness comes from learning to love to do the things the Lord would have us do, and we can do this only by learning what He has told us in the Word and by keeping His commandments. Recall the commandment, “Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy.” Going to church and Sunday School is an orderly part of the keeping of the sabbath. A good rule to keep in mind about Sunday is one which the Lord gave the people when He was in the world: “It is lawful to do good on the sabbath day.”

Basic Correspondences

light = truth

water = truth

dry land, earth, or ground = our conscious experience,
which forms our "mind"
the vegetable kingdom = our thinking
the animal kingdom = our affections
darkness = ignorance
the sun = love to the Lord,
from whom all truth comes
the moon = faith in the Lord
the stars = knowledges of heavenly things
waters above the firmament = spiritual truth
waters under the firmament = natural truth
seas = truth gathered in the memory
fish = affections for natural knowledge
birds = affections for spiritual knowledge
animals = affections for useful thought
and action

Senior

Follow the same general lines as for the Intermediates but with proportionately more stress upon doctrine and upon the attitude of the world toward the things of religion. Solid grounding in the principles underlying the Lord's operation in the world, given at this age, will do much to prevent the young people from drifting away from the church when the atmosphere of the world begins to press upon them.

Probably the first attack on the authenticity of the Bible as the Word of God centered about the creation story. Since science has proved that the world was millions of years in the process of formation, it is obvious that the literal statement in Genesis is contrary to fact. As a result of this, some men say that the Bible cannot be the Word of God because it is not true.

But the Bible was not written to teach men natural science or anything else which they can find out for themselves. It was written to teach us about God and His purposes, and about our souls and their relation to Him.

In the creation story the Lord tells us—in terms of familiar

natural objects which we all understand—the story of how He created the human soul in the first place and of how He creates each one of us today. In the New Church view, a human being is not merely a higher animal, although he has a material body as the animals have. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” Man from his creation has not only a natural body fitted for life on this earth and mental faculties to direct its use, but he has also a higher spiritual plane capable of knowing God and of living in the spiritual world.

At first both the spiritual and the natural planes were undeveloped, just as our individual minds are at birth. The baby has no knowledge; he is unable to do anything for himself. But he is not a little animal—he is a potential man. Let us follow the story of creation through briefly, as it applies to the development of the individual soul, for we are immediately concerned with the process by which each of us may become the true human being whom the Lord created him to be.

The first step—or *day*—is the dawn of consciousness, the ability to see, to distinguish objects and form associations of pleasure or pain. The baby begins to “notice,” to recognize his parents and friends, to play, to laugh, to seek what pleases him. The second day is the dawning of the realization that some things must be done whether they give pleasure or not, that there is something in life beside the satisfaction of physical desires. This is the rudimentary differentiation between right and wrong, the basis of heavenly life.

The third day brings the thirst for knowledge of the world about us with all the thoughts and activities that spring up from this knowledge. The fourth day brings the first real concept of God and desire to learn about Him and to love and serve Him—the sun, moon, and stars picture love to the Lord, faith in Him, and knowledges of heavenly things. The fifth day brings abundant knowledge and understanding of both earthly and heavenly truths. And finally on the sixth day the strong, warm desires for useful and happy service—the warm-blooded animals—appear, and man

becomes a truly human being, ordering his life wisely on the basis of knowledge of the Lord and His purposes. He is then a mature, independent, and useful individual, and can know rest—peace of mind.

This story is developed in detail in the first volume of Swedenborg's *Arcana Coelestia*, from which you will find a quotation at the end of this lesson. There it is also applied to the development of the Human nature which the Lord manifested by means of His life on earth. For within the letter of the Word of God there are several levels of meaning. The inmost level relates to the Lord and His nature and life, the next to the individual human soul, and the next to the spiritual history of the human race as a whole. So within every verse there are deeper and deeper ideas and knowledges, each one a subject for study and development. It is this inner world which the Lord has opened to men in His Second Coming.

Adult

The teacher should cover the whole lesson briefly and then invite discussion and develop further the points in which the class is most interested.

It is very important for us to understand that the New Church has teaching concerning the early chapters of Genesis which can be found nowhere else. For even if we hear no direct attacks upon the validity of this portion of the Word, we can scarcely escape hearing slighting references to it, and jokes and songs based upon the stories of Creation, Adam and Eve and the serpent, and Noah and the Ark. The prevailing skepticism concerning these early chapters is like an atmosphere which is breathed unconsciously. Children who are beginning to pass from complete reliance upon their parents can be protected against it only by being forewarned of its existence and by understanding its cause. This is the method the Lord followed with the race. It is interesting to note that the first volume of the *Arcana*, which points out the impossibility of a literal interpretation of these chapters and gives their internal

sense, appeared several years before the work of Jean Astruc (1684-1766), the father of modern skepticism.* Thus before doubt was permitted to attack the Word openly, the truth which could meet and overcome the doubt was published.

The New Church teaches that the early chapters of Genesis were copied by Moses from the Ancient Word, which existed before our Word and which was written entirely in correspondences; that is, the things of nature were used as symbols to express spiritual truths, just as the Lord taught His disciples through the various parables so familiar to us all. The people of the Most Ancient Church, having open communication with the heavens, understood the true relation between the two worlds and saw everything in nature as a mere ultimation of something spiritual. So the earliest language, both spoken and written, was a beautiful symbol language, the expression of spiritual thought in natural forms. This language was preserved in the Ancient Word, and still is preserved in the first eleven chapters of our Bible. As men turned from the Lord, however, and became absorbed in themselves and in their life in the world, they lost communication with the spiritual world and with it the understanding of the spiritual realities behind things in nature. In time they lost even the knowledge that the early stories of Genesis had a spiritual meaning.

Yet for a time men continued to recognize that these stories came from God and to believe them to be true. So they could be helped by them, for even in their letter they teach the great truths that the Lord is Creator of all things, that man is happy so long as he obeys the Lord, and that all evil and unhappiness come from disobedience. But finally men began to doubt the truth of the stories and with it their Divine origin. Then in order to save mankind the Lord restored the knowledge of their inner meaning. This

*The work here referred to was published in 1753 and titled, *Conjectures sur les Mémoires Originaux dont il Parait que Moïse s'est Servi pour Composer le livre de la Genèse* (Conjectures on the manuscripts of which it appears that Moses made use in order to compose the book of Genesis). Biblical textual scholars generally regard this work as the beginning of modern textual investigation of the sources of the Pentateuch.

—Ed.

is what was done through Swedenborg. To the New Churchman the early chapters of Genesis, instead of being strange and puzzling, and stumbling blocks in the way of belief in the Bible, become wonderful volumes of instruction in the spiritual history of the race and of our own souls. Our children should be armed with the knowledge that those who doubt these chapters are simply ignorant of their true meaning, because they either have not found or have refused to use the key which the Lord has given us.

Swedenborg tells us that the object of creation was “a heaven from the human race.” The first verse of the Word tells us: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” Heaven symbolizes the spiritual nature in man, the earth his lower nature. The whole story of creation is the account of the development of man’s consciousness of his higher nature, of his understanding of the proper relation and use of the higher and lower, and finally of his enjoyment of the full measure of his heavenly possibilities; that is, of the development of the truly human soul. This is a long process, and the history of the individual parallels the history of the race because the race is composed of individuals, and because each individual is a new creation.

The great heritage of the New Church is the key to the inner meaning of the Word: the knowledge of correspondences. Yet many New Church people never acquire the ability to use this key for themselves. They know perhaps that water corresponds to truth, fire to love, a lamb to innocence, bread and wine to good and truth, and other correspondences here and there, but their information is too scattered to be of any use to them as they read the Word. The story of creation provides a practical working outline for the study of correspondences because it contains the great generals. *Heaven* in the first verse of Genesis signifies the internal part of man, and *earth* the external part of man (AC 16). The external part of man does not mean just the body, but all the natural thoughts and feelings which are connected with our everyday life in the world. The internal man is the higher, internal region of the soul, of which we are unconscious much of the time,

where are our thoughts and feelings about the Lord and spiritual things. These two are present in every man from the beginning, but the earth—the external man—is without form and void; that is, we have no understanding of the purpose or plan of our earthly life. And darkness is “upon the face of the deep”; that is, we are altogether ignorant even of the existence of an inner and higher nature. This condition exists not only when we are infants, but when we are grown men and women if we have not begun to regenerate; for when a man or woman does not believe that there is any higher life than the natural, not only is his internal man in darkness but everything he knows about this world is empty of any real good and truth because it is not seen in its proper relation to spiritual life. Yet always the “spirit of God” moves upon the face of the waters; the Lord’s mercy is always seeking to reach us through the things which He has stored up—without our knowing it—in our internal man.

The first beginning of regeneration—the formation of a heavenly character—is the coming of light. Throughout the Word darkness pictures a state of ignorance and light a state of knowledge. The Lord was born while shepherds watched their flocks by night; when He was crucified there was darkness over the world. And in the creation story each day—that is, each stage of development—proceeds from evening to morning, from darkness to light, from ignorance to knowledge. “And God said, Let there be light; and there was light.” Of this Swedenborg says: “The first state is when man begins to know that the good and the true are something higher” (AC 20). The very first thing necessary to regeneration is to recognize that there is something higher than our mere external life, something more important than what we can get for ourselves out of this world. Thus God, working in our minds, divides the light from the darkness.

Then follows the second day, in which we begin to organize the knowledges which are in our minds, dividing between those which concern merely worldly things and those which concern heavenly and Divine things. This is the beginning of our real awareness

of our internal potential—the *firmament*—and the dividing of the waters above the firmament from those below the firmament. In the story water first appears as a symbol for truth. To the man who does not believe in God and a spiritual world the Bible is like any other book, and ideas about goodness and truth have no meaning other than that which arises out of their effects in this world. But as soon as one recognizes the existence of God and of a higher life, goodness and truth are seen as spiritual realities.

The third day, or stage, brings more definite and permanent accomplishment. The waters under the firmament are gathered together into seas. Seas stand for knowledges gathered together in the memory. Think, for example, of the place the Sea of Galilee holds in the Gospel story. Then the dry land appears; that is, man forms a definite idea of what his external nature is and of what its use should be. And from this time he begins to make his external perform its proper use. It receives seeds of truth from the Lord and produces external good works. Here we have our introduction to the wonderful symbolism of the vegetable kingdom, the basis for the understanding of the meaning of all the plants and trees in the Bible story. We are familiar with the parable of the Sower and with the Lord's explanation of it: the Sower is the Lord, the seed truths from the Word, the ground the minds of men, and the fruit the good and useful things done by a man when the seed of truth has taken root in his heart and grown up in his life. The many different plants and trees represent different truths. Every plant and tree is a principle grown from a particular truth, and its fruit is the conduct which results from the application of that principle. And as every fruit has seeds of its own kind within itself, so right conduct in one individual suggests to other people the truth of the principle behind it, which they may adopt and develop into right conduct of their own. Notice that there is a progression in the appearance of vegetable life: first the grass—or more properly the “tender herb”—then the herb yielding seed and finally the tree yielding fruit. That is, we first develop minor truths whose results are perishable, and later more and more important and

fruitful truths.

Now we are ready for another great step forward. The good we have done so far has been the result of the mere recognition of the existence of God and spiritual things. But when we have had some experience in trying to live according to spiritual principles, we begin to feel the need of more definite knowledge of God and of His purposes. On the fourth day the sun, moon, and stars appear. The sun is the symbol of love to the Lord, the moon of faith in Him, and the stars of knowledges of heavenly things. There are a great many people who believe that there is a God but think we cannot know anything about Him. These people try to do right, but they have only their own judgment to guide them or the judgment of other men and women. They have light but they do not know where it comes from. They do right from a sense of duty, or from fear of the consequences of evil, or from a desire to be respected and to respect themselves. These are all motives in which there is much of self. Such people are often troubled by the command to "love the Lord." They say, "What does it mean to love the Lord? How can we love someone we do not know?" But it is not true that we cannot know the Lord. He has revealed Himself to us in His Word and in the person of Jesus Christ, the "Word made flesh." If we love the divine characteristics so manifested, we love the Lord. If, instead of clinging to our natural tastes and desires, we seek to make our characters conform to the divine standard, then we are acting from love to the Lord and not from love of self. Then the sun appears in our heavens. But we all know that even after we have seen this sun, there are times when our natural desires rise up and darken our sky. Then we must continue to obey the commandments because we know that they are the Lord's way. This is faith, which like the moon shines by reflected light and shows us the way through our temporary darkness until the sun rises again—until the temptation is past. And we are helped at such times also by all that we have learned from the Word about the Lord and His ways—the stars guide us. This change from self-guidance to the Lord's guidance is a distinct step in our

progress and is necessary to our doing any real good; for, as Swedenborg tells us many times and as the Lord Himself tells us in Matthew 19:17, there is no genuine good except from the Lord's unselfish love in the heart. This is why the creation of the sun, moon, and stars comes in between the creation of the vegetable kingdom and that of the animal kingdom, for animals are warm-blooded, living things and represent genuine good affections.

At the beginning of his explanation of verse 20 Swedenborg says: "After the great luminaries have been kindled and placed in the internal man, and the external receives light from them, then the man first begins to live. Heretofore he can scarcely be said to have lived, inasmuch as the good which he did he supposed that he did of himself, and the truth which he spoke that he spoke of himself; and since man of himself is dead, and there is in him nothing but what is evil and false, therefore whatsoever he produces from himself is not alive" (AC 39). But as soon as one recognizes that all goodness comes from the Lord and not from himself, everything in him begins to live. The knowledges of external things which he has stored in his memory—the seas—come to life, as it were, because they become related to the Lord and His service; these are the "moving creatures that hath life" which the waters brought forth. And the higher things of his reason are the birds which fly in the air. The great whales are the general principles of external knowledge. That is, fishes and birds picture things of the mind made alive by being related to the Lord as the source of all wisdom.

On the sixth day the earth brings forth living creatures. These are no longer things of the mind alone, but things of the will—good affections. Before we reach this stage we may know what is right and not do it, or we may even do it against our real desire. But when we love to do it, then the earth has brought forth the good animals. Fish and birds always picture things of the mind, lower and higher, and animals always picture things of the heart or will. When these good affections are brought forth, when a man has come to love to do the Lord's will, then he has become truly

a man created in the image and likeness of God both as to his intellect and as to his will: “Male and female created he them.” Here is another fundamental correspondence which we should know: in general throughout the Word men picture the intellect and women the affections. The regenerate man has dominion or control over all his thoughts and affections; for when anyone loves to do the Lord’s will, the Lord’s power can act in and through him. The Lord has given each of us a kingdom within himself, which he must learn to govern wisely. We must try to see that everything in us serves the Lord and so is really alive, and then we must keep all the fish and birds and animals of our minds and hearts in order so that the Lord’s power can make us true men and women.

The seventh day—the day of rest—pictures the happy state of one who is fully established in heavenly character. We have a taste of this state whenever we have fully conquered a particular temptation so that we no longer want to do the wrong thing against which we have been struggling, when the Lord’s love is in our hearts instead of the selfish desire which has troubled us. As long as we are in this world new temptations will soon come upon us. But when we reach our heavenly home, the time of struggle and trial will be past and we shall always enjoy the happy state of willing service. For rest is not inactivity: it is “rest in the Lord”—living consciously from Him so that nothing which is given us to do can worry or tire us. For this reason the seventh day was blessed and sanctified, and the number seven throughout the Word represents what is holy.

From the Writings of Swedenborg

Arcana Coelestia, nn. 16, 20: “The most ancient time is called ‘the beginning.’ By the prophets it is in various places called the ‘days of old [*antiquitatis*]’ and also the ‘days of eternity.’ The ‘beginning’ also involves the first period when man is being regenerated, for he is then born anew, and receives life. Regeneration itself is therefore called a ‘new creation’ of man. The expressions to ‘create,’ to ‘form,’ to ‘make,’ in almost all parts of the prophetic writings signify to regenerate, yet with a difference in the signification. . . . That

'heaven' signifies the internal man; and 'earth' the external man before regeneration, may be seen from what follows."

"*And God said, Let there be light; and there was light.* The first state is when man begins to know that the good and the true are something higher. Men who are altogether external do not even know what good and truth are; for they fancy all things to be good that belong to the love of self and the love of the world; and all things to be true that favor these loves; not being aware that such goods are veils, and such truths falsities. But when man is conceived anew, he then begins for the first time to know that his goods are not goods, and also, as he comes more into the light, that the Lord is, and that He is good and truth itself."

Suggested Questions on the Lesson

- P. What book do we study in Sunday School? *the Bible*
P. Who is the Author of the Bible? *God*
P. By what other names do we call the Bible? *the Lord's Book, the Word, the Book of Life*
P. What is the name of the first book of the Bible? *Genesis*
P. Can you repeat the first verse of the Bible? *In the beginning . . .*
P. What is the first chapter about? *the Creation*
P. In how many days was the earth and everything on it created? *six*
J. Were these days of twenty-four hours each? *no*
J. What happened on the first day? *light*
J. What happened on the second day? *firmament*
J. What happened to the waters on the third day? *sea, dry land*
J. What new things were created on that day? *grass, herbs, trees*
J. What appeared on the fourth day? *sun, moon, stars*
J. What were created on the fifth day? *fish, birds*
J. On what day were the animals created? *sixth*
J. What was the final creation? *man*
I. In whose image and likeness was man created? *God's*
I. What two kinds of people were created? *male, female*
I. What did the Lord tell them to do? *be fruitful*
P. What did the Lord do on the seventh day? *rested*
I. What is the Lord really telling us about in this first chapter? *the beginning of our spiritual growth*
S. What is meant by the heaven and the earth? *spiritual and natural*
S. What do the sun, moon, and stars correspond to? *love to Lord, faith in Him, knowledges of heavenly things*

The brief answers to questions supplied in all the lessons are intended only as a general guide to teachers. Fuller and more detailed answers formulated and worked out with the class are generally recommended.

THE CREATION – THE FIRST FOUR DAYS

Genesis 1:1-19

In teaching the Creation story we need to keep in mind that this is not only the beginning of the Bible but the foundation of all our further teaching. The thought of the Lord as the beginning of everything, our Heavenly Father, the Creator of everything we see and know, is essential to any spiritual understanding and to any genuinely good life. With all the classes we shall need to point out that our primary business in Sunday School is to learn of the Lord and His purposes for us so that we may truly serve Him, and that the only sure source of such knowledge is His Word which He has given us so that we may know these things. We are studying the Word as the Lord has given it to us and as He has opened it for our deeper understanding. Throughout our year's work we should frequently remind ourselves as well as our pupils that what we are studying is the Lord's Book, which is the Book of Life. We are putting special emphasis on the thought of the first four days in the Creation story, but the seven days should first be covered briefly.

Doctrinal Points

The first thing we need to know about the Lord is that He is the Creator of all things. The Lord's name Jehovah means "I am."

The whole Word is a parable written in the language of correspondences.

Faith is the acceptance of something as true, and the better we understand anything the more faith we can have in it.

Truth which does not lead to good deeds is like a plant which bears no fruit.

Notes for Parents

Genesis means “beginning.” The first words of the Bible are

“In the beginning God.” This is the first thing we need to know if we are to be true human beings and not mere animals. The real difference between an animal and a human being is that an animal can know nothing beyond physical things, while a human being can know God.

If we stop to think, we should be able to see that God would not be likely to waste time telling us things we can find out for ourselves—things about the world of nature. What He has to tell us are the things about Himself and about our souls, because these we cannot find out in any other way. So this first chapter of the Bible, about which people have disputed so much, really tells us about the creation of the human soul. It is a wonderful parable, a symbol story, taken from an Ancient Word written in the time when men spoke in this symbol language because they saw everything in the world about them to be an expression of something in God and thus in the soul. Throughout His Word the Lord speaks to us in this language and if we study it, we can understand more and more of what He wishes to tell us. The Bible is like Jacob’s ladder with its foot on the ground and its top reaching up to God; God’s thoughts come down to us through it and our thoughts rise up to Him, like the angels on the ladder. Read this story in Genesis 28:10-22. We, as well as our children, need to know the Bible stories well, just as they are given us in the Bible, if we are to find God in them.

Primary

Call the children’s attention to your Bible and see if they know what book it is. Explain to them that it is the Lord’s Book, which He has written so that we may know about Him. Then go on to the first things He tells us about Himself and the world. Tell them that God is our Heavenly Father to whom we pray—the same Person who came into the world as the Lord Jesus—and that He loves us and takes care of us; and that if we try to do what He tells us is right, we shall be happy. Then talk about light and darkness and about what the sun, moon, and stars do for us, reminding them that the Lord made these things for us.

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This is a good opportunity to point out briefly the two parts of the Word—the Old and the New Testaments. Speak of the wonderful opportunity the Lord has given us to learn about Him, of the need of studying the Word all our lives, and of the reverence we should feel for it.

Did you know that God made the light? Some mornings when you wake up the sky is blue and the sun is bright and you can play out-of-doors. Then you are happy. Then some mornings it is raining and you have to play in the house, but still you can see everything. That is because, although the sky is covered with clouds from which the rain is coming, the sun is up above the clouds still, and it gives so much light that it shines right through.

But after you have played all day and had your supper, it is dark outside, and dark in the house too, unless your mother turns on the lights. The sun has not stopped shining, but it is around on the other side of the earth making daytime for little Chinese and Japanese girls and boys.

Have you ever been out-of-doors at night? If you have, you have seen the stars way up in the sky, and perhaps the moon. God made those, too. He made the whole sky and the earth, and He made all the plants and trees, and the birds and fishes and animals, and He made you and me and everybody.

God made all these things because He loves us and wants us to be happy. And we can always be happy if we love Him and each other. When we love people, we try to make them happy. Let us read our lesson from the Bible.

What did God create on the first day?

What did He create on the second day?

What did He create on the third day?

What two great lights did God make on the fourth day?

What little lights did He make?

Can you think of some of the things the sun does for us?

When can we see the moon and stars?

You know that at night sailors can steer their ships by the stars.

Don't you think we should all thank the Lord for making such a beautiful world for us to live in?

He made it because He loves us. When we love people, we want to make them

happy. Selfishness is the opposite of love. It makes everybody unhappy, even the selfish people themselves. So we must try not to be selfish.

Junior

Note the suggestions made above in regard to the Lord and the Word, and be sure the pupils are familiar with these thoughts. Then go on to the Creation story, calling attention to its true meaning. The Juniors should be introduced to the idea that the Word has an internal meaning relating to our souls, which is its important meaning, and told that no one can learn this meaning unless he knows the literal story well and reads it regularly. Our effort is to give them glimpses of the internal sense which will show them how much is in store for them as they grow older, and will form a basis for more detailed study in the intermediate class. This can be done very well in connection with the creation of light and of the sun, moon, and stars. The teacher will find the answer to the last question suggested in their notes by reading the notes for the older classes. But see if any of the class can figure out the answer before you give it.

What book do we study in Sunday School?

Who is its Author?

By what other names is it called?

What is the name of the first book in the Bible?

Genesis means “beginning.” This book tells us about the beginning of everything in the world. The first chapter seems to be about the creation of the earth and all the plants and animals and people on it, but this is only the outside meaning.

How many days did this creation take?

What happened on the seventh day?

At the end of this lesson you will find a list of questions. Look up the answers in your Bible and write them after the questions. This will help you to remember the “order of creation.” We can also remember that it is because of this story of creation that we and other people all over the world find it good to work six days and on the seventh day to rest and worship the Lord. In your Bible look up Exodus 20:8-11.

Scientists are finding out more and more about the earth all the time. One of the things they have found out is that it took many

thousands of years to form the earth. This makes some people doubt the Bible. But we need not be troubled by this, for we know that the whole Word is a parable. A *parable* is a story which has a deeper meaning within it. When you are a little older, you will study the deeper meaning of this story of creation. It is a wonderful study.

Even now you may be able to see a little of the deeper meaning, which tells us how our souls are made by the Lord. What does the first verse say? “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” The Lord did create the sky and the earth, but in each one of us—in our souls—there are also “the heaven and the earth,” a higher and a lower nature. When you want very much to do something which your father or mother has told you not to do, there is a battle within you between your higher and your lower nature. Your higher nature tells you to do what is right, but your lower nature wants the thing which looks pleasant. When you were a little baby, you did not know enough even to think about right and wrong. Read the second verse and see how it tells about that time when your soul was empty and ignorant.

Did you ever, when your father or your mother was explaining something to you, say all of a sudden, “Oh, I see”? You did not mean that you saw something with your eyes, did you? You saw something with your mind. Read verses 3, 4, and 5. When you were a little child and first began to see things with your mind, it was like the coming of light. This was the first day in your soul. Now perhaps you can see that *day* in this story of creation does not mean a day like Sunday or Monday or Tuesday. It means a new state of thinking and feeling. And it may mean a long period of time, too. Did you ever hear an old person say, “In my day everybody did so and so”?

So each day in this chapter really describes a new step in our growing up. When you get into the Intermediate class, you will study more of these steps, but for now it is enough to remember that light pictures the understanding of truth, and darkness pictures ignorance. With this knowledge, see if you can figure out

why in our chapter it always says “the evening and the morning” instead of “the morning and the evening.”

What did God create on the first day?
What did God create on the second day?
What did God create on the third day?
What did God create on the fourth day?
What did God create on the fifth day?
What did God create on the sixth day?
What did God do on the seventh day?

Intermediate

For this class the teacher will need to study the Senior and Adult notes as well as the Intermediate notes, in order that he may have more to add to what is given in the pupils' notes; but in developing the lesson he should follow the general outline of the pupils' notes. Do not neglect the introduction given at the beginning of this lesson. Try to cover the lesson rapidly enough to leave time for questions and discussion.

The first chapter of the Bible, like all the rest of the Word, is a parable. It seems to tell us about the creation of the natural world; and of course it is true that God created everything in the natural world, including our physical bodies. But men can find out about nature for themselves, and the Lord wrote the Word to tell us things which we cannot find out in this way. That means things about our souls.

So the Creation story really tells us how our souls were and are developed by the Lord. When we are born, we have a physical nature—not just a body, but a mind capable of growing into a knowledge of all the things we need for life in this world. This is “the earth” of our souls. And animals have this earth, too. But we have another nature which the animals do not have: a spiritual nature capable of learning about God and heavenly things. This is “the heaven.”

In a little baby both of these natures are just in their beginnings. The state each of us is in as a baby is described in verse 2. The “darkness” is ignorance. Do you know that people of every

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language all over the world say “I see” when they mean “I understand”? This is what is called the language of *correspondence*—the correspondence of natural or physical things with spiritual or heavenly things. In the beginning everyone understood this correspondence and spoke in its language, and many of the expressions—like “I see”—have come down to us, although the general principle was lost. If you keep this in mind, you will soon notice some of these expressions in our common speech. All of the Word of God is written in this language of correspondence.

The first instance of this which we shall consider in this lesson is the word *darkness*. It is the opposite of *light*. If darkness signifies *ignorance*, what does *light* mean? So when the Word tells us (verse 3), “and God said, Let there be light: and there was light,” it is speaking of the time in our earliest childhood when we first begin to “see” or understand things. The next step—the second day—is when we begin to be able to understand more than just the physical things like eating and walking and handling; we learn that we must obey our parents or be called naughty, that we should be gentle and kind to others, etc. *Water* corresponds to *truth*, and the waters above the firmament are truths about spiritual or heavenly things, while those *under* the firmament are truths about natural or earthly things.

The dry land which appears on the third day is the character which we develop as we choose to do right or wrong, and this character is the ground out of which grow all kinds of thoughts, just as all sorts of grass and herbs and plants grow out of the earth. The actions to which these thoughts lead are the fruits.

The fourth day or state is the time when we are old enough to think about God and come to love Him and believe in Him, and want to know more and more about Him and about what we can do to please Him. This love is the sun which warms our hearts and lights our minds; our belief in God is the moon which shows us our way even when we cannot understand the “why” of things—the nighttime. And the stars are all knowledges which our minds gather about heavenly things, which often seem far away from our

present life and not very helpful, and yet gradually form patterns in our minds by which we may be guided, just as wise sailors can find their location and direction from the stars.

The living things which come on the fifth and sixth days are the affections or tastes we develop as our characters become fully formed, until finally we are grown-up men and women, ready to govern our own lives and put all our knowledges to use—to “have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth” (verse 28).

Psalm 118 begins, “O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; because his mercy endureth forever,” and verses 23 and 24 of the same Psalm suggest the feeling we ought to have when we reach the seventh day of rest:

“This is the Lord’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.
This is the day which the Lord hath made;
we will rejoice and be glad in it.”

Basic Correspondences

| | |
|---------|----------------------------------|
| earth | = the natural mind |
| plants | = truths developing in our minds |
| fruit | = good works |
| birds | = thoughts |
| animals | = affections |
| heaven | = the spiritual mind |

Senior

With this class the introductory material may well be given as a statement of the difference between the New Church teaching concerning the Lord and the Word and the teachings of all other churches. It is good for young people at this age to know that their church has clear and definite knowledge concerning many points which trouble people, and that even if they themselves may not yet be ready to discuss these points with others, there are reasonable answers to all of people’s religious questions. Young people discuss religion and argue about it among themselves much more frequently than we are likely to think, and we should take every opportunity to give them a sense of the wonderful things available to them in the writings of the New Church.

Try to save time each week to read and discuss with the class the quotations from these writings found at the end of their notes and, if possible, inspire them to begin reading for themselves. The Creation story, being one most often challenged, is the best possible beginning for developing this sense of the unique opportunity offered us by the Lord in His Second Coming.

One of the questions which sooner or later arise in anyone's mind is, "How did the world as we know it start?" Scientists, including Swedenborg, have spent years in studying the rocks and the various remains preserved in their strata, in the effort to answer this question; and different theories of the origin of the universe have been developed. Yet no human investigations or man-made theories can really answer it. The only answer is given us in the first verse of the Bible: "In the beginning God . . ." God is the beginning of everything we are and everything we know. His name, as He gave it to Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3:13-14), is Jehovah—"I Am"—Life Itself, from Whom everything in the world receives its life from moment to moment.

The first chapter of Genesis is a wonderful parable in which God Himself tells us the order of our creation. The world of nature, about which the chapter seems to speak, is only a picture of the real world of spirit. The six days of creation are six stages of development, not only in the world of nature in a general way, but in the human race as a whole and in every individual, including you and me.

Let us think of the story particularly as it applies to our individual development. We start with two natures, a higher and a lower, "the heaven and the earth." When we are born, these are only potential, "without form and void," and we are in "darkness" as to the mind; but God is at work in us, and presently our consciousness of the world about us begins to develop—the light comes. Very soon—surprisingly soon—we begin to realize that life is more than eating and sleeping and play: there are such things as right and wrong about which we must learn; the truths or "waters" of the spiritual nature are separated from those concerned only with our physical well-being. Then, as we choose the higher or

the lower, the solid ground of our individual character begins to be formed, and from it develop our own ideas and reasonings, at first simple and fleeting like the grass, and then more and more strong and lasting. The permanent affections—our various tastes and loves—are last to develop, but finally we become full-grown men and women and can know the peace and rest of established character.

But in our brief sketch we have left out one day—the fourth—the central one of the seven. On it, according to the story, God created the sun, moon, and stars. Psalm 84:11 tells us “The Lord God is a sun and shield,” and in prophecy (Malachi 4:2) the Lord Jesus Christ is called “the Sun of righteousness.” Somewhere in our development, if it is normal and sound, there comes a time when we really see that the *Lord is*, and that all our life—the light of our minds and the warmth of our hearts—comes from Him. The sun has burst forth through our clouds of ignorance. From then on the Sun rules our daytimes—the states in which we see our way clearly and love to do as the Lord wishes us to do. But these states are not constant. We have nighttimes too, when doubts and fears arise and we do not see our way. In such states our sun—our love for the Lord—seems to disappear. But we still have the belief that the Lord’s way is right whether we understand it or not. This is a reflected light like that of the moon. And we still have our knowledges of the Lord’s truth which, like the stars, even though small and scattered and apparently far from our immediate purpose, still form patterns which can give us direction.

One of the criticisms which has been made of the Creation story is that light appears before the creation of the sun; but we can see how, in the inner meaning, this is an orderly and beautiful development. The Lord is at work in our souls from the beginning, bringing us gradually out of darkness into full sunlight. This order is seen also in the repeated expression, “and the evening and the morning were” So the Psalmist writes:

“The heavens declare the glory of God;
and the firmament sheweth his handiwork.

Day unto day uttereth speech,
and night unto night sheweth knowledge.”

—Psalm 19:1-2

Adult

It is suggested that in taking up the Creation story, the teacher refer to the attack which has been made upon its authenticity, point out that the Bible is the Lord's revelation to us and is not concerned with things we can find out for ourselves; and go on from there to the general meaning of the six steps of creation in their relation to the development of the race and of the individual, with particular emphasis on the reason why light appears in the story before the creation of the sun, moon, and stars, and why each day is said to go from evening to morning.

In Revelation 20:12 we read, “And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God, and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.” It would be difficult for anyone to read this verse and fail to understand that by “the books” are meant the record of the lives of those who are being judged, and that by “the book of life” is meant the Bible. Throughout the history of the Christian Church, therefore, the pressing problem of salvation has been tied inseparably to that of the nature and interpretation of the Bible. Before the development of natural science, Christians were for the most part content to accept the Bible as literally true and to leave its interpretation to the priesthood, living in the simple belief that if they did what their priests told them to do, they were obeying the Lord and would be saved. With the invention of printing, however, and the consequent wide distribution of the Bible, men began to read it for themselves and to develop differences of opinion as to its interpretation, and inevitably differences of opinion as to what constituted conduct in accordance with the Bible teaching. And these differences were aggravated as the findings of natural science began to cast doubt upon the literal accuracy of the Bible narrative. Actually the unique character of

the Bible should be evident from the very volume and persistence of the study which it has produced, to say nothing of the literature that has been influenced by it. It is significant that even those today who believe that the Bible is the product of human minds often confess to feeling its strange power and try in various ways to account for this power.

It is not the Lord's fault that men refuse to recognize His Word as a revelation from Him; the refusal is in the individual will. The Lord has always told men all they needed to know about Himself. To the two on the way to Emmaus He said: “‘O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken’ . . . And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself” (Luke 24:25, 27). And just before He allowed Himself to be taken He said, “I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now” (John 16:12). This further revelation foretold to the disciples was given to the world through Emanuel Swedenborg just as soon as men's minds were ready to receive it, and in time to meet the humanistic and scientific attacks upon the Bible. As we read the *Arcana Coelestia*, we are constantly coming upon statements which show that Swedenborg, who was one of the most noted scientists of his day, was fully aware of all the facts which are brought forward to prove that the Bible is the work of men. This is indicated by many statements like the following from *Arcana Coelestia*, n. 2674 concerning the sending away of Hagar and Ishmael: “Every one can see that these historic statements involve arcana, from the fact that Abraham, who was rich in flock and herd, and also in gold and silver, sent away in this manner his handmaid by whom he had a son, and the boy Ishmael whom he much loved, giving them only bread and water.” And he says repeatedly that only a knowledge of the internal sense can account for the peculiarities of the letter of Scripture, and that the Lord revealed the internal sense for the specific purpose of saving good men from losing their faith in the Word. It is therefore of supreme importance that we, and our children as soon as they are old enough, study the internal

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sense as well as the letter of the Word.

The Creation story is an outstanding example of this necessity. Science makes it obvious that it cannot be literally true. Archaeology turns up similar stories in other ancient literatures. As Swedenborg says, men ask "How can this be Divine?" Yet the Creation story is the foundation of the Word and the basis of all our understanding of the Lord's purpose in our creation and of the working of His Divine providence in our lives. We are told through Swedenborg that the literal sense of the first eleven chapters is not history in the sense in which the rest of the Word is history. These eleven chapters were copied by Moses from the Ancient Word—the Word which existed before our Word and which was still in existence in the time of Moses. All the stories of Creation, of the Garden of Eden, and of the Flood found in literatures other than the Hebrew had their source in this same account in the Ancient Word, but they came down in the form of tradition and so are not in themselves verbally inspired. The Ancient Word was written in the language of pure symbol, the language in which the people of the Ancient Church thought and wrote. No one in that day misunderstood the Creation story or took it for an account of the creation of the physical universe. There are quotations in other parts of our Bible from other books of the Ancient Word, and some of these books are mentioned by name (See Numbers 21:14-16, 27-28; Joshua 10:13; II Samuel 1:18). Swedenborg also tells us that the book of Job—a book which has puzzled scholars because it has the language characteristics of a very old Hebrew book and yet manifests highly developed philosophical concepts—is "a book of the Ancient Church," lacking an inner sense but written in the "forms of expression in common use in the Ancient Church" (*Arcana Coelestia*, n. 2682).

The Creation story, like the rest of the inspired Word, coming down as it does from the Lord through the heavens, has within it several levels of meaning. For us it is primarily the story of the creation of a human soul. We may see it in its relation to our development from infancy to adult life, or, as Swedenborg especially

interprets it in the *Arcana*, as the process of regeneration. In every individual there are two natures: a higher or spiritual, and a lower or natural—the heavens and the earth. So long as he remains, whether innocently or willfully, in ignorance of spiritual things, his soul is actually in darkness and undeveloped; but the Lord is constantly seeking to awaken him. The first response is like the coming of light, and after that he is able to see that some knowledges relate to spiritual and others to natural things—the waters above and below the firmament. All life is from the Lord, and man does not begin really to live until he recognizes God and tries to learn of Him. At first his knowledge of God is derived from others and is like a diffused light in his mind, but as he begins to think and act from the principle of doing what is right in the Lord's sight instead of what is pleasing to himself, living things begin to appear in his soul and he comes to know from his own experience what it is to love the Lord and to believe in Him and trust His guidance—the sun, moon, and stars appear clearly in the sky. The sun is love to the Lord shining in our states of clear understanding; the moon is faith and trust showing us our way even when everything seems dark and incomprehensible. The stars are all the knowledges of spiritual things which, as we relate them to each other, gradually form patterns in our minds and help to direct us. Living thoughts and affections—the birds, fish, and animals—are then possible, and one is formed into a true man, in the image and likeness of his Creator. Only then can one find rest and peace.

“And the evening and the morning were the first day.” In this lesson we are centering our thought on the first four days of Creation. The outstanding characteristic of this part of the story is the appearance, effect, and increase of light. In the letter of the inspired Word there is nothing accidental. In our natural activities we think of a day as beginning with the morning and ending with the evening, but when we stop to think, we may realize that from morning to evening there is a decline—a decline in strength, in vitality, in mental keenness, in endurance—until we reach the point when we must stop and wait for the renewal which comes with

sleep. In the writings of Swedenborg we are told that it is during our periods of sleep that the Lord can do most for us, because then our concentration on our own affairs and on the natural world about us is in temporary abeyance, and our souls are open to heavenly influences. This is why it is provided that children shall have such long periods of sleep, and why sleep has such curative value. The physical rebuilding is the least of the values of sleep. If we are inclined to boast that we do not need so much sleep as the average person, it is time for us to take serious thought as to our spiritual state. Actually progress is from evening to morning—from a state of ignorance to one of understanding—and this is the work of the Creator, not of ourselves. Day by day we must seek continually to learn in order that we may progress.

From the Writings of Swedenborg

Arcana Coelestia, n. 22: ‘What is meant by ‘evening’ and what by ‘morning’ can now be discerned. ‘Evening’ means every preceding state, because it is a state of shade, or of falsity and of no faith; ‘morning’ is every subsequent state, being one of light, or of truth and of the knowledges of faith. ‘Evening,’ in a general sense, signifies all things that are of man’s own; but ‘morning’ whatever is of the Lord, as is said through David: ‘The spirit of Jehovah spake in me, and His word was on my tongue; the God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me; He is as the light of the morning, when the sun ariseth, even a morning without clouds, when from brightness, from rain, the tender herb springeth out of the earth’ (II Samuel 23:2-4). As it is ‘evening’ when there is no faith, and ‘morning’ when there is faith, therefore the coming of the Lord into the world is called ‘morning’; and the time when He comes, because then there is no faith, is called ‘evening’ . . . In like manner ‘morning’ is used in the Word to denote every coming of the Lord; consequently it is an expression of new creation.’

Arcana Coelestia, n. 29¹: ‘When the ‘earth,’ or man, has been thus prepared to receive celestial seeds from the Lord, and to produce something of what is good and true, then the Lord first causes some tender thing to spring forth, which is called the ‘tender herb’; then something more useful, which again bears seeds in itself, and is called the ‘herb yielding seed’; and at length something good which becomes fruitful, and is called the ‘tree bearing fruit, whose seed is in itself,’ each according to its own kind. The man who is being regen-

erated is at first of such a quality that he supposes the good which he does, and the truth which he speaks, to be from himself, when in reality all good and all truth are from the Lord, so that whosoever supposes them to be from himself has not as yet the life of true faith, which nevertheless he may afterwards receive; for he cannot as yet believe that they are from the Lord, because he is only in a state of preparation for the reception of the life of faith. This state is here represented by things inanimate, and the succeeding one of the life of faith, by animate things."

True Christian Religion, n. 73²: "The laws of order prescribed for man, are that man should acquire for himself truths from the Word, and think of them naturally, and so far as he can, rationally, and thus procure for himself natural faith. The laws of order on the part of God then are, that He should approach, fill the truths with His Divine Light, and thus fill with the Divine Essence man's natural faith, which is only knowledge and persuasion. Thus, and not otherwise, is saving faith produced."

Suggested Questions on the Lesson

- P. Who made the world? *God*
- P. What book tells us about God? *the Bible*
- J. What does light do for us? *lets us see*
- P. What special lights did the Lord make for us? *sun, moon, stars*
- P. In how many days does the Bible say the world was created? *six*
- J. What happened on the seventh day? *God rested*
- I. In relation to our souls what are meant by the heaven and the earth? *higher and lower nature*
- J. To what does light correspond? *truth*
- I. With what is the Creation story really concerned?
how God develops our souls
- S. Why did the Lord create the world and man? *heaven from human race*
- S. What spiritually is the rest on the sabbath day? *regeneration, completed character*

THE CREATION—THE FIFTH AND SIXTH DAYS

Genesis 1:20-31

The natural introduction to this lesson is to talk about the Bible as a whole—what it is and why we study it in Sunday School. With all except the Primary class, the children's knowledge on these points should be tested first. Then give a very brief account of the seven days and what happened on each before developing the work of the fifth and sixth days.

Doctrinal Points

*The Lord as the Creator of all things, the Source and beginning.
The distinction between the natural and the spiritual planes of the mind.*

The difference between man and the animals: Man is made to be in the image and likeness of God.

The necessity of controlling our natural faculties and desires.

Notes for Parents

A very little thought will show us that the Bible is different from every other book in the world. It was written by the hands of many men over a period of more than fifteen hundred years and yet we think of it as a book written for us. It has been translated into over six hundred languages and dialects. Year after year it is the “best seller” of all books in the world. These facts alone should prove to us that the Bible was not the work of any man or men, but is truly the Word of God.

What should we expect of the Word of God? Should we expect it to teach us things which we can find out for ourselves, things about the natural world and about the outward history of men and nations? No, God would tell us about Himself, about our relation to Him, and about why He created us and what He wants us to do. And this is the kind of knowledge that people have always found in the Bible when they really looked for it. Wherever

it has gone it has changed the course of history and transformed the lives of individuals.

But this meaning of the Bible is seldom found on the surface. It is hidden within what seem to be mere stories of people and events, just as we tell children stories which have a moral hidden within them. For in the Lord's sight we are all children and have to be given the truth in words we can understand.

So our task in Sunday School and in the home is to teach the children the literal stories of the Bible and afterward, as they grow older and are able to understand, to give them something of the inner meaning of the stories.

Our lesson for today is again the first chapter of the Bible, the story of creation. It is really a parable telling us how a man or woman becomes a true human being, formed in the image and likeness of God. For it is our possibility of knowing and serving the Lord which makes us human and not merely higher animals. We want our children to become true men and women. So we must do all we can to lead them to know and understand the Word of God.

Primary

Impress the children with the importance and holiness of the Bible as the Lord's Word. Then speak of the Lord as the Creator of everything and everyone and tell simply the story of the seven days, going into more detail with the fifth and sixth. In telling the Creation story try to get the children to think of the real difference between men and animals and the importance of trying to be as much like the Lord as we can. This is a good lesson in which to stress the fact that we ought to take care of all the good things that are given us and use them as they are meant to be used.

You know, don't you, that the Lord Jesus is our Heavenly Father? He made everything there is in the world. He made you and me. And long, long ago, He made the very first people. But He couldn't make them until He had made a world for them to live in. So first He made the heaven and the earth. Then He made day and night and then the dry land and the seas. Then He made grass grow

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out of the earth and then the grain and the fruit trees. He made the sun and the moon and the stars.

After that He made all kinds of fish to swim in the sea, and all kinds of birds to fly in the air, and all kinds of animals to live on the dry land. And finally He made men and women.

Why did everything else have to be created before men and women?

In whose image and likeness were men and women created?

This makes them very different from animals.

It means that they can study and reason, and can understand who the Lord is and what He wants them to do.

All animals can know is what makes them comfortable and contented.

Everything in the world is made for some particular use.

What did the Lord say of everything when He had finished?

If you have a puppy, does he tell you what to do or do you tell him what to do? When the Lord made men and women, He put them in charge of everything else in the world. So you see people have to study and learn a great deal so that they may rule wisely. We have to learn about the world and everything in it and we have to learn just what everything is meant for. That is why we go to school.

But there is something else we have to learn. The Lord gave us everything we have that is good, and in the Bible He tells us what He wants us to do with what we have so that we and everyone else may be happy. So we need to study the Bible. That is why we go to Sunday School.

Junior

This is the age group with which we need to begin to speak of the letter of the Word as parable, while still teaching the details of the letter. In your introduction point out that the teaching the Lord gives us in His Word is necessarily spiritual—about Himself and our relation to Him—and not primarily about the things in nature which we can find out for ourselves. Then in connection with the Creation story call their attention to the way in which we develop from the innocence and helplessness of infancy to adult life. In speaking of the lesson proper suggest that the dominion we are told to exercise is over our lower thoughts and desires.

This year let us first see how much we can tell about the Bible as a whole:

By what other names do we call it?

Who is its Author?

Into what two main parts is it divided?

Through whom were the first five books given?

What did the Jews call these five books?

What is the first book called?

What does *Genesis* mean?

What does the first verse in the Bible tell us?

In how many stages or “days” did the Lord finish His creation?

What did He do on the seventh day?

In this lesson we are studying especially what is said about the fifth and sixth days of creation. We should remember, however, that on the first day heaven and earth were created and light was given, on the second day the waters above the firmament were divided from those below the firmament, on the third day the waters were gathered together into seas and the dry land appeared and was made to produce grass and herbs and fruit trees, and on the fourth day the sun, moon, and stars appeared.

In this way the earth was prepared for habitation. You can easily see that there had to be an earth before animals and people could be created.

Why did the plants and trees have to be created before animals and men?

What were created on the fifth day?

What were created first on the sixth day?

What was the final creation?

Do you know that some people think that man is just a higher kind of animal who developed somehow or other out of the lower animals? This is not the teaching of the Word. The Word teaches that the different forms of life on earth were created in a certain order but not one out of another. Each kind of living being was a separate creation and only man was created in the image and likeness of God. And man was told to have dominion over all other living things.

The things which distinguish men from the animals are the

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ability to distinguish right from wrong and the ability to choose what they will believe and do and be. Animals are governed by their instincts and never can advance. Their bodies may develop and change to meet changing conditions in their surroundings, but they can never make changes themselves. And they can know only about the things which affect their bodies—food and shelter and warmth and protection are enough to satisfy them. A human being, however, has higher thoughts and desires. He not only can understand the earth and everything that belongs to it, but he can know about God and heaven, because he is made in the image and likeness of God. So whenever a person refuses to think about God and spiritual things and lives only for what he can get for himself out of the world—food and clothing, possessions and pleasures—he is reducing himself to a mere animal and cheating himself out of all that belongs to him as a human being.

Notice in verse 27 that both men and women were created at the same time. The familiar story in chapter 2 of the creation of Eve out of the rib of Adam has led people to think that one man was created first and then a wife was created for him and that all people came from these two individuals. But the story of Adam and Eve is a parable which teaches another lesson. When you are older, you will understand what it means. All of the Word is parable—a story which has a deeper meaning within it—although the greater part of the Word is also true history. Our chapter for today has a very deep meaning within it which you will study someday. But perhaps you will like to know that in the original language, which is Hebrew, the word which in chapter 1 is translated *man* is the same word which later is translated *Adam*. *Adam* simply means *man*, or mankind as a race. So when you see *Adam* in chapter 2 and elsewhere, you can remember that it is not really the name of a person at all. Mankind was created as a race. We have no way of knowing just how many individuals were placed on the earth by the Lord to begin with, but we do know that there were both men and women.

The other lesson which we need particularly to draw from the

account of the fifth and sixth days of creation is that man was created to have dominion over all the things of the earth. This means, first, that everything else was created for the service of man, but it means more than this. A wise ruler does not use his power selfishly. He tries to understand all the things over which he has control, to know what they are for, and to cause them to work together for the benefit of his whole kingdom. This is what we should do with all the things of the earth which are given us to use. We need not only to study hard to understand the things of nature but to study also what the Lord made each thing for so that we may use it wisely. Perhaps we can understand this best if we take our food as an example. Many good things have been created by the Lord to nourish and strengthen our bodies so that we can do our work in the world better, and they have been made pleasant to our taste so that we will enjoy them. But suppose we like the taste of some particular thing so much that we forget what it is meant for and eat more of it than is good for us. Then we are letting that particular food rule us instead of keeping it under our control. Whenever you are tempted in this way, it will help if you remember that we are told to "subdue" the earth.

Intermediate

This age group should be given in outline the correspondence of the Creation story with particular emphasis on the fifth and sixth days. The fact that each of us has a higher and a lower nature should be stressed, and that it is the higher nature which makes us human beings, so that the command to "have dominion" is one we should always have in mind. At this age children begin to feel that they should be allowed to make their own decisions and they particularly need to be shown what is the true standard for their decisions.

In beginning our study of the Bible we need to remember several things. First, it is the Word of God which we are studying, a series of books dictated by the Lord to teach us the things about Himself and about our souls which we could not possibly find out in any other way. Second, the Word is written in parable or story form so that we may read it easily and keep it in our memories,

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but its real meaning is in the spiritual lessons which are within the letter. Third, the first eleven chapters of the Bible were from the Ancient Word, which was written in symbol language; they are pure symbol stories rather than history. From chapter 12 of Genesis on, the Bible is for the most part truly historic as well as symbolic. Fourth, we need to read the Bible every day throughout our lives, because it brings us near to heaven and the Lord, and because the spiritual lessons within it can be opened to us only as we read its letter. You who are in the Intermediate class have reached the age at which you can begin to understand the general meaning within the stories you learn.

The story of creation given in the first chapter of Genesis has a great deal of truth in its letter. The Lord did create this earth and everything on it, and He created it by an orderly process of which the six days give us a good idea. When your grandmother says, “In my day we weren’t allowed to do so and so,” you know that she is not talking about any single day but about a certain period which was different from our modern “day.” Each “day” in the Creation story was a long period of time. The earth had to be formed and brought into a certain order before any life could be created upon it. The dry land had to be established before plants could grow or animals could live. The seas had to be gathered together before there could be fish. And both plants and animals had to be created before man could live. This was the necessary and true order of the natural creation.

But we are men and women not because we have bodies but because we have souls, and in its inner meaning the story of creation is the story of how a human soul is formed, from its beginning, when it has both heavenly and earthly possibilities (verse 1) but no knowledge or understanding even of earthly things (verse 2) through the gradual dawning of understanding (verse 3) to the beginning of the formation of character (verses 6-13) and the beginning of the knowledge and love of God (verses 14-19).

It is only then that really living things can be produced in our lives, because all life comes from the Lord. You know that when

you were little, you learned a great many things—how to eat, how to walk, how to talk, how to play, and finally how to study—and also you learned a great many things about how to please your parents and how to avoid the things for which you would be punished, but usually you did not really understand why one thing was good and another bad. But now you have reached the age when you begin to understand that it is the Lord's plan and order which determine what is good and that the most important thing in the world is to learn what the Lord wants us to do and then to do it. In other words the sun, moon, and stars—love for the Lord, belief in Him, and knowledge about Him—have appeared in your sky and you are ready to make real decisions on the basis of what you learn about the Lord. From now on you should try to think not, "What will bring me reward and what punishment?" but, "What is really right in the Lord's sight?" This is a time of very important change in your life and you need to know how to go about it.

And it is just this which is taught us in the story of the fifth and sixth days of creation. You probably remember from prior lessons that water "corresponds" to truth. This is because water was created by the Lord to perform the same services for the body that truth performs for the soul. The seas are water gathered together in quantity, and they picture truth gathered in the memory. Each of you already has a "sea" of memory. Now that you are trying more and more to think for yourself about right and wrong, things begin to come to life in your memory. The first living creatures produced were the fish in the seas. Do you remember that the first Apostles called by the Lord when He was on earth were fishermen?

The next things created were the birds. When you really want to know what you ought to do, and search your memory until you find some bit of knowledge that comes to life for your need, all sorts of thoughts begin to fly around in your mind. These are the birds.

Then the next step is the desire to do the thing you have decided is right. Animals correspond to our affections or desires,

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and the animals created by the Lord in our story are all good and useful desires.

When such good desires have been developed in our hearts, we are ready to be men and women in the true sense. For the thing which distinguishes man from all other created things is his ability to know and love the Lord and to choose freely to do what the Lord shows him is right. All other things are governed by the fixed laws of nature and by inborn instinct, but man is created in the image and likeness of God with the power to learn, to reason, and to act of his own free will.

We learn from our chapter that man was created as a race, both men and women. And we learn that mankind was given dominion over the earth and told to “subdue” it. This means that if we want to be true men and women, we must keep our bodies and all the things that belong to them under control. We must not let our appetites control us. You remember that in each of us at the very start there are “the heaven and the earth.” Our “earth” is our bodies and all the thoughts and desires connected with them. Our “heaven” is the spiritual part of us which can know the Lord and serve Him, the part of us which we must develop if we are ever to live in heaven or even if we are to be truly happy in this world. We cannot develop this “heaven” in our souls unless we learn to subdue our “earth.” Remember this when you are tempted to do wrong for the sake of getting something you want.

Basic Correspondences

day = any period of activity

fish = affections for memory knowledges

Senior

The nature of the Word and the nature of man are the essential lessons for the young people. If you can lead them to see that a person who lives for worldly satisfactions is cheating himself out of his birthright, you will have given them a valuable piece of spiritual armor. They also need to be shown the difference between deeds done with self in mind and deeds done in the spirit of unselfish service.

We begin our study of the Bible with the story of creation, and this is as it should be. For not only does all the rest of the Bible story depend upon this beginning, but unless we understand how and why man was created, our lives are aimless and without meaning.

In this lesson we consider especially the verses which describe the fifth and sixth days of creation, in which the fishes, birds, animals, and finally man appear. In the New Church we know that, while material creation did in general proceed in the order described in this chapter, the creation really treated of is the creation of a human soul into its intended form, the image and likeness of God.

For man is not merely, as some people choose to think, the highest of the animals. The animals are altogether of the earth. They have no thought or desire beyond the satisfaction of their physical wants. Man also has his physical nature and as long as he is in this world must spend much time in maintaining it, but even while he is in this world, his thoughts and affections may rise above the things of the body and the world. He has from birth a spiritual nature as well as a physical nature, and this spiritual nature must be developed and nourished if he is to become truly a man. Anyone who lives only for the satisfaction of his bodily and worldly cravings is living like an animal and not like a man.

When we are born, we have in us both spiritual and natural potentialities—"heaven" and "earth"—but both are without form and void and we are in the darkness of complete ignorance. Very early in our childhood, however, we begin to have some understanding—the light dawns in the mind. We begin to be conscious of ourselves as individuals, to gather knowledges into our memory, as the waters were gathered into the seas, and to distinguish between higher and lower kinds of knowledge. Our character is forming and we put forth the first little shoots of independent thought and do our first little deeds of kindness. But in the beginning we think of these thoughts and deeds as our own and are proud of ourselves for them. Swedenborg says that many people never get beyond

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this third “day” in their spiritual development.

The fourth day—which was the particular subject of our study in the preceding lesson—marks a great change, for the appearance of the sun, moon, and stars pictures a turning from self to the Lord, when we really see that all life and goodness and truth are from Him and nothing from ourselves. Then for the first time we are able to produce genuinely living thoughts and deeds, for nothing lives except from the Lord’s presence in it. This is not so hard to understand as it may seem. Suppose we were to receive identical gifts from two different persons. One in giving his gift makes it clear that he thinks it is very good of him to give it and that he will expect us to be properly grateful and to do as much for him someday. The other gives his gift in such a way that we feel that he is not thinking of himself at all, but is happy in being able to make us happy. In the first gift there is no real goodness because there is only self-praise behind it. The second is full of unselfish love, which is the Lord’s love expressing itself through the giver.

This new life develops in a certain order. On the fifth day the fish were created in the sea and then the birds in the air. We cannot produce anything without knowledge. We know that this is true of material things: we have to learn how to do a thing before we can do it. But we sometimes forget that this is just as true of our spiritual development. Unless we fill our memories with knowledge from the Word, we cannot progress in goodness. The faculty of knowing what is right lives in our “sea” of stored-up knowledge. You remember that the first Apostles were fishermen. Our knowledges must “come alive” with the realization that they are meant to serve the Lord. Then our thoughts, like the birds, begin to rise above the earth into the higher regions of our minds. Learning to do the Lord’s will, to be true men and women, is a challenge to our highest powers.

The animals picture our affections. We have two basic mental faculties, the will and the understanding. Only when they act together do they accomplish anything. Sometimes we like to think

about noble deeds but go no further than the thinking. Our will is not involved. The affections, which the animals represent, belong to our will. When they are aroused to carry out our knowledge and thought about right living, we become true human beings.

There is one further lesson we need to learn from this part of the chapter. After we have become true spiritual men and women, serving the Lord as we are meant to do, we must keep order in our lives. Man was told to have dominion over everything else on earth, to replenish the earth and subdue it. It is very easy to become self-satisfied and lazy spiritually and to imagine we can make no mistakes once we have become “good” people. But this in itself is a grave mistake. Read what the Lord said to the people through Moses in Deuteronomy 6:10-12. We never reach the state in which we do not need to be on our guard against letting worldly and selfish thoughts and desires control us.

Adult

Cover the lesson briefly, pointing out the various levels of meaning in the story. Then discuss the nature of a true man as an image of God, the difference between natural goodness and spiritual goodness, the necessity of continually adding knowledges to our memory, and the method by which they are brought to life and made means of producing genuine goodness.

In paragraph 4 of the *Arcana Coelestia* we read: “The first chapter of Genesis in the internal sense treats in general of the new creation of man, or of his regeneration, and specifically of the Most Ancient Church; and this in such a manner that there is not the least expression which does not represent, signify, and enfold within it these things.” Of the first verse we are told that “heaven” signifies the internal man; and “earth” the external man before regeneration.”

In general this first chapter of the Bible describes truly the order of material creation. It is strange that the use of the word *day* has caused so many to believe that it is contrary to the findings of science, when we ourselves are quite in the habit of using *day* to

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express any general period of time: “in that day,” “in the day of the cave dwellers,” etc.

In the New Church we are also familiar with the thought that the development of every individual from infancy to maturity is pictured in this chapter and also the development of the first created human race from their primitive state of ignorance into a true church, the first or Most Ancient Church on earth. But we do not so often think of it in terms of the change which takes place in an adult of our own day as he passes from an unregenerate to a regenerate state. Yet it is true that every individual who has not come to recognize the Lord and brought his life into order according to the Lord’s commandments from a desire to serve the Lord is as yet a mere potential man. However learned and cultured he may be, his mind is “without form and void” and the darkness of ignorance obscures the deeper possibilities of his nature. He is not truly a man. For man is man from being formed into the image and likeness of God.

This change of man from his natural state into his true form is called regeneration, or rebirth, and it is a gradual process. In some churches it is believed that a person is “saved” by a single religious experience called “conversion,” but this is not the New Church belief. Conversion is necessary, but it may perhaps be likened to the coming of light on the first day and is only a beginning. In AC 6-13 Swedenborg sums up briefly the meaning of the six days of creation in their application to the process of regeneration, and concludes: “Those who are being regenerated do not all arrive at this [sixth] state. The greatest part, at this day, attain only the first state; some only the second; others the third; fourth, or fifth; few the sixth; and scarcely anyone the seventh.”

In the first lesson of this course we took up all seven stages in a brief general way. In the second we centered our lesson on the work of the fourth day. Of this Swedenborg says: “The fourth state is when man becomes affected with love, and illuminated by faith. He indeed previously discoursed piously, and brought forth goods, but he did so in consequence of the temptations and strait-

ness under which he labored, and not from faith and charity; wherefore faith and charity are now enkindled in his internal man, and are called two ‘luminaries’” (AC 10). In this lesson we shall consider a little more fully the meaning of what took place on the fifth and sixth days.

Swedenborg says (AC 11): “The fifth state is when the man discourses from faith, and thereby confirms himself in truth and good; the things then produced by him are animate, and are called the ‘fish of the sea,’ and the ‘birds of the heavens.’” Until true love and faith (the sun and moon) make their appearance in a person’s life, he believes that the truth he thinks and the good he does are from himself, and at this stage his grasp of truth and level of goodness are not really “living” and are pictured by the “grass, the herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit” (Genesis 1:11), but when he comes to acknowledge that all truth and good are from the Lord alone, the living creatures of the water, air, and earth appear. These are created in order. We may recall that seas picture knowledges gathered together in the memory, and that fish are memory knowledges “which belong to the external man” (AC 40). What then is the difference between the seas and the fish? All knowledge comes to us first by an external way. Our minds are full of knowledges which we have gathered throughout our lives. But there is no life in these knowledges until we begin to draw them forth for the service of the Lord. Mere worldly and even intellectual use of them does not make them “fish.” This is the lesson taught in John 21:3-6, where the net cast by the fishermen on the left side of the ship—the side of the intellect alone—drew in no fish, but when at the Lord’s bidding it was cast on the right side—the side of the will or affection—“they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.” We must have the necessary memory-knowledges before we can make any spiritual progress, but it is the will to serve the Lord which gives them life.

AC 40 goes on to tell us that “birds” generally signify rational and intellectual things, “of which the latter belong to the internal man.” Once we have a desire to serve the Lord we draw knowl-

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edges from our memory to implement the desire. The next step is thought about them, rising to a higher level than mere worldly or temporal uses. So on the fifth day “man discourses from faith, and thereby confirms himself in truth and good.”

The final stage, the sixth day, is described in AC 12 as follows: “The sixth state is when, from faith, and thence from love, he speaks what is true, and does what is good: the things which he then brings forth are called the ‘living soul’ and the ‘beast.’ And as he then begins to act at once and together from both faith and love, he becomes a spiritual man, who is called an ‘image.’ His spiritual life is delighted and sustained by such things as belong to the knowledges of faith, and to works of charity, which are called his ‘food,’ and his natural life is delighted and sustained by those which belong to the body and the senses; whence a combat arises, until love gains the dominion, and he becomes a celestial man.” In AC 45 we read that “beasts are of two kinds; the evil, so called because they are hurtful; and the good, which are harmless. Evils in man are signified by evil beasts, as by bears, wolves, dogs; and the things which are good and gentle, by beasts of a like nature, as by heifers, sheep, and lambs. The ‘beasts’ here referred to are good and gentle ones, and thus signify affections, because it here treats of those who are being regenerated.”

From this, we learn that in the process of regeneration genuinely good affections are developed last of all. The writings throughout make a clear distinction between “natural good” and “spiritual good.” We all inherit from our natural parents good as well as evil tendencies, but even the good tendencies we inherit are full of self. They are not spiritual or living. The Lord uses them as first means toward our reformation, but they are really the opposite of genuine good. We cannot trust our natural good intentions to produce either knowledge of what we ought to do or good works. Even on the sixth day, as we note in Swedenborg’s explanation, “a combat arises, until love gains the dominion.” The man created in the image of God had work to do. He was to be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it.” We never in this world

reach a state in which acquiring new knowledge from the Lord and overcoming our evils become unnecessary.

From the Writings of Swedenborg

Arcana Coelestia, nn. 44-45: “Man, like the earth, can produce nothing of good unless the knowledges of faith are first sown in him, whereby he may know what is to be believed and done. It is the office of the understanding to hear the Word, and of the will to do it. To hear the Word and not to do it, is like saying that we believe when we do not live according to our belief; in which case we separate hearing and doing, and thus have a divided mind, and become of those whom the Lord calls ‘foolish’ in the following passage: ‘Whosoever heareth my words, and doeth them, I will liken unto a wise man who built his house upon a rock: but everyone that heareth my words, and doeth them not, I liken to a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand’ (Matthew 7:24, 26). The things that belong to the understanding are signified—as before shown—by the ‘creeping things which the waters bring forth,’ and also by the ‘fowl upon the earth,’ and upon the faces of the expanse; but those which are of the will are signified here by the ‘living soul which the earth produces,’ and by the ‘beast’ and ‘creeping thing,’ and also by the ‘wild animal of that earth.’”

Suggested Questions on the Lesson

- P. What book do we study in Sunday School? *Bible*
- J. Why is it called the Word of God? *God's Word to us*
- I. How do the first eleven chapters of Genesis differ from the rest?
pure symbol
- J. Into what two parts is the Bible divided?
Old Testament and New Testament
- J. What are the first five books called? *Moses, Law, Torah, Pentateuch*
- P. What is the name of the first book? *Genesis*
- P. What does *Genesis* mean? *the beginning*
- J. Can you repeat the first verse of the Bible? *In the beginning . . .*
- P. In how many days are the earth and everything on it said to have been created? *six*
- J. Does this mean days of twenty-four hours each? *no*
- J. What appeared on the fourth day? *sun, moon, stars*
- I. To what do the sun and moon correspond? *love to God, faith in Him*
- P. What were created on the fifth day? *fish, birds*
- P. What were created first on the sixth day? *animals*

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- P. What was the final creation? *man*
- J. How was man different from every other living creature? *image of God*
- J. What was he told to do? *multiply, subdue earth*
- J. Was just one created in the beginning? *no*
- J. What happened on the seventh day? *God rested*
- I. What kind of lessons does the Lord teach us in the Bible?
about Himself and our relationship to Him
- I. To what do the fish, birds, and animals correspond?
knowledges, thoughts, affections
- S. What does the command to “have dominion” mean? *control*

THE CREATION—THE SEVENTH DAY

Genesis 2:1-7

The lesson in all the classes should begin with some brief discussion of the nature and purpose of the Bible, followed by emphasis on its first book and on its first verse, and then a very brief review of the first six days of creation. The notes for the various age groups will suggest the level at which this review should be carried in each class. Not more than half the lesson time should be used for this introductory work.

Doctrinal Points

The first thing we should know about the Lord is that He is the Creator of all things.

The Word begins with the development of man. Regeneration is a gradual process and follows a certain order.

It is the higher plane of the mind—the ability to know God—which distinguishes man from the animals.

The sabbath state of rest is attained only through learning the Lord's truth and obeying it.

Notes for Parents

As we have observed before, *Genesis* means *the beginning*, and the first words we read in the Bible are, “In the beginning God.” God is the beginning of everything. Nothing in the world created itself. And in the very last chapter of the Bible we read, “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.” The Bible was written through many men over a period of hundreds of years, but it is one book by one Author. The Lord is the beginning and the end of it.

The story of creation is a wonderful allegory or parable given us by the Lord to teach us how we are developed, once “light” dawns in our minds. We begin in ignorance—“without form and void”—

and pass through the long processes of learning and living the truth as the Lord gives it to us, receiving ever more and more of His spirit, until finally, if we are faithful, we come into that happy state when we trust and obey Him gladly. Then, when our selfish and worldly desires have been overcome, we no longer have to struggle with temptations. This is the rest of the sabbath.

The weekly day of rest was ordained by the Lord because we need it. Our bodies and our minds need regular rest and change, but our souls need it even more. If we make Sunday merely a day of idle self-indulgence, our selfish feelings and thoughts—which cause all our troubles—are just as active then as on any other day. There is only one place where our souls can find rest, and that is in the Lord. When the Lord was in the world, He gave us the perfect example of how to live, and He taught us by His own acts how we ought to spend the sabbath day. Luke (4:16) tells us that “as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day.” He taught and healed on the sabbath. He walked through the fields with His disciples and ate with them. And in Matthew 12:12 He gives us one simple rule: “It is lawful to do good on the sabbath.” Let us make Sunday the day when we especially try to “do good,” worshiping the Lord, learning from Him, and trying to forget ourselves and make those about us happy. Then we shall soon learn why the Lord in the beginning “blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it.”

Primary

The lesson should always be read before the children are allowed to begin any handwork. Then, as the children work, the teacher may repeat and emphasize any points desired. Stress the fact that happiness comes only from the Lord, and that He can give it to us only as we try to make others happy.

Do you know what book we read and study in Sunday School? It is the Holy Bible. It is also called the Word of God, because in it God speaks to us and tells us about Himself and about heaven and about how we should live so that He will be able to make us happy always. So the Bible is the most wonderful book in the world.

It is divided into a great many shorter books which we shall study one after another, but in all of them the Lord tells us in interesting stories the things He wants us to know.

The first book in the Bible is called Genesis. *Genesis* means *the beginning*, and it starts with the story of the beginning of the world. Let us read the first five verses of the first chapter.

Then we are told how the Lord went on creating or making everything. On the second day He separated the earth and the heaven by dividing the waters above from the waters below. On the third day He gathered the lower waters into seas and brought forth grass and herbs and fruit trees on the earth. On the fourth day the sun, moon, and stars appeared. On the fifth day the fish and birds were created, and on the sixth day the animals and men and women were created. Now let us go on with our reading.

[Read Genesis 2:1-7.]

What did the Lord do on the seventh day?

Verse 3 of chapter 2 tells us why every seventh day is set apart as a day of rest. *Blessed* means made happy, and *sanctified* means made holy.

None of us does just the same things on Sunday as on weekdays.

But some people do not use Sunday as it is meant to be used.

It should be a happy day but it should also be a holy day.

We should use part of it to learn about the Lord and to worship Him.

And we should use all of it in ways which will make us better—more nearly likenesses of the Lord.

Junior

The Juniors are old enough to have met and to know the answer to the problem of Saturday or Sunday as the true sabbath. The greater part of the lesson period, however, should be given to a discussion of the right use of the sabbath. Have them look up the Bible references in their notes.

By what other names do we call the Bible?

Who is its Author?

Why do we study it?

Into what two parts is it divided?

What is the first book in the Bible?

Why is it called *Genesis*?

In how many days or periods was the earth created?

On what day were the sun, moon, and stars created?

What was the final creation?

How does man differ from the animals?

Over what was he given dominion?

What did the Lord do on the seventh day?

You know that no one can work day in and day out without resting. We have to have our rest and sleep every night, but even this is not enough. Once in a while we need a “break,” a change from our usual activities. Otherwise we lose all pleasure in our work; our bodies wear out and our minds grow dull. Our bodies need the regular day of change; our minds need it; and above all our souls need it. The Lord Himself, as we learn in our lesson for today, ordained that every seventh day should be set apart as a day of rest, and the Lord knows what is best for the creatures He has made.

You probably all know people who think they are not obeying this command of the Lord unless they set apart Saturday, which happens to be the seventh day of our calendar week. But we may remember that our calendar did not come into existence for thousands of years after the Lord gave the first people this law; so the law has nothing to do with our calendar week. It prescribes six days of work and then a holy day of rest. The word *sabbath* means rest. The Jews observed and still observe Saturday as their sabbath, but the early Christians chose Sunday, the first day of the calendar week, because it was “the Lord’s Day,” the day on which the Lord arose from the dead.

All of you have probably had some arguments with your parents as to what you should and should not do on Sunday. This is partly because people’s ideas differ as to what is fitting conduct for the day which the Lord has sanctified. *Sanctified* means “made holy.” We learn from the New Testament that the Lord, when He was on earth, disagreed with the Pharisees as to what it was right to do on the sabbath day, and He pointed out to them that He was Lord of the sabbath day.

Since we are all trying to follow the Lord’s example, there are

some things which we may know should be done on Sunday. We should go to church and Sunday School. Look up Luke 4:16. And we should do all we can to be helpful to others on Sunday, for the Lord performed many miracles of healing on the sabbath. His example also shows us that it is right for us to walk and talk with our friends and to eat with them on Sunday. Read Matthew 12:1-8.

In Matthew 12:12 the Lord gives us a general law which we should learn and always keep in mind on Sunday: "It is lawful to do good on the sabbath." Our souls need this day of rest—rest from the selfish struggle to get what we want. One of the things this may mean for you is that on Sunday more than on any other day you should be obedient and try to make your parents happy. You will find that this will make you happier, too, as the day goes on, for all real happiness comes from unselfishness. If our hearts are filled up with ourselves and what we want, they are closed to the Lord, and it is the Lord's love flowing into our hearts which can make us happy. Sunday should be a day when our hearts and minds are open to the Lord and eager to learn and do His will. If on Sunday we go to church and Sunday School, enjoy the company of our family and friends, and try to think of things to do which will make those about us happy, we shall be too busy and too happy ourselves to worry about the things we are not allowed to do.

Intermediate

In this lesson our discussion of the spiritual sense has been general and we have suggested no additions to the basic correspondences for this class. Instead, the meaning of the terms *natural*, *spiritual*, and *celestial* should be stressed as a basis for later lessons. The progression may be illustrated by citing the formation of any good habit—from the first natural resistance, through enforced practice, to the time when the good habit has become involuntary. So far as this particular good thing is concerned you have reached the celestial state or sabbath rest. The Intermediates are still young enough to need also the teaching concerning the proper use of Sunday.

In the literal Creation story the essential things to remember are

that God created all things and that He created them gradually according to a certain order; that heaven and earth were the first creations and that the giving of light led to all that followed; that although grass and fruit trees began to appear as soon as the waters were gathered into seas leaving the dry land, it was not until after the appearance of the sun, moon, and stars that living creatures were created; that the order of the creation of living creatures was fish, birds, animals, and finally men and women; that man differed from the animals in that he was created in the image and likeness of God; and that man was given dominion over all the earth and its creatures.

In the spiritual sense we need to remember that this story of creation tells us how the first men and women were developed into a church, and also how any one of us from being wholly natural and worldly may become spiritual and heavenly, a true human being, formed in the image and likeness of God.

Today's lesson takes us to the final step in this story—the seventh day. In the literal sense we have, in the first three verses of the second chapter of Genesis, the account of the ordination of the sabbath as a holy day of rest, coming every seventh day. There is a very obvious lesson for us in the letter. The Lord knows the needs of the people He has created, and if He tells us to observe every seventh day as a day of rest, it is because we need it. Also if it is said that the Lord "blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it," we know that it is to be not only a day of rest but a holy day. When the Lord was in the world, He gave us a clear example of how to use the sabbath day. He went regularly to the synagogue on that day; He taught and healed on that day; and He walked through the fields with His disciples and ate with them. That is, Sunday should be a day when we go to church and Sunday School, do all we can to be helpful to others, and enjoy the company of our family and friends. Sunday should be a day when we try to put our selfish thoughts and feelings aside, learn about the Lord and worship Him, and practice making other people happy. If we do this, we shall find ourselves also happy on Sunday. Remember

that *blessed* means happy. The Lord gave the Pharisees a simple rule for the observance of the sabbath which we should learn and remember. He said (Matthew 12:12): “It is lawful to do good on the sabbath.”

When we come to the spiritual sense of our lesson, we find that the seventh day pictures the final creation of the first people into a “celestial” church, and the final celestial state which it is possible for any one of us to attain if he is faithful in trying to learn the Lord’s truth and obey it. In the spiritual sense the rest of the sabbath day is not rest from work but rest from fear and worry and from the struggle with temptation. We reach this state of rest only when we come to trust the Lord wholly and to love to do His will, that is, when we come really to love the Lord. We need to know what are meant by the terms *celestial* and *spiritual*, for we shall be using them often. *Celestial* means a state in which we do right spontaneously from love to the Lord. *Spiritual* means a state in which we do right from love to the neighbor in accordance with the truths we have learned from the Word.

What we must especially remember from our study of the Creation story is that we are not born celestial or spiritual, but natural, and that we cannot become celestial without first becoming spiritual.

We all like to think that if we “mean well,” what we do will be right, or at least that when we do things which actually hurt other people, we should be forgiven because we meant well. We need to see that our natural good intentions are not a sufficient guide for our conduct, but that we must constantly be studying the Word to find out what the Lord says is right and to correct our own ideas accordingly. We are all born *natural*; that is, our feelings and ideas are centered about what we see and experience in this world. If we study the Word and correct our ideas and feelings according to the truths we learn there, the Lord can regenerate us and make us *spiritual*. And if we are faithful in this effort to the very end of our life in this world, the Lord can fill our hearts with His own love so that we shall become *celestial*. Then there is no longer any

struggle between what we “naturally” want to do and what we know we ought to do, because we have come to love to do what we ought to do. This is the rest of the sabbath.

The Creation story is summed up for us in the last four verses of our lesson, beginning again with the Lord’s creation of the heavens and the earth—the heavenly and the earthly things in our souls—and ending with man’s becoming a “living soul”—full from inmost to outmost with life from the Lord.

Senior

The emphasis with this class should be on the importance of continued effort to learn and do the Lord’s will, the lifelong repetition of the six days of creation and the sabbath of rest. They also need the lesson on the purpose and use of the sabbath day.

Our lesson for today is centered on the completion of the Creation story, which is summed up for us in Genesis 2:4-7. The heavens and the earth picture our spiritual and our natural faculties and the six days of creation the process by which, if we develop as we should, our natural faculties are educated and brought into orderly subjection to the spiritual—which is the process of regeneration. Verse 7 is a still briefer summary. The Lord forms man of the “dust of the ground” when our natural faculties are developed; He “breathes into his nostrils the breath of life” when knowledge of Him and faith in Him are acquired; and man becomes a “living soul” when his external life becomes an expression of love to the Lord.

The Creation story also pictures the development of the first people into a true “church,” the Most Ancient Church.

The rest of the seventh day pictures the final stage of the process in both these meanings. It is the attainment of the celestial degree, when there is no longer any sense of labor or conflict because right action has become happy and spontaneous through the inflowing love of the Lord. The Most Ancient Church was a celestial church. Its people were in love to the Lord, and so could be given a perception of the truth. We know that they afterward

declined from this state and that the perception had to be taken away when their will became perverted. Men on earth have never since lived in the celestial state. It is, however, the high ideal toward which we should strive and one which we may attain in the end if we are sufficiently faithful here.

We may see in our own experience small examples of the process of becoming celestial. We have all acquired at least some good habits, habits which are so much a part of us now that we may forget that they had to be acquired. But in each case our original natural tendency was contrary. We first had to be taught what was right. Usually, for some time we had to be forced to do it until we came to see that it really was right. Then we forced ourselves to do it until our natural resistance gradually disappeared and the right action became “second nature.” So far as that particular thing was concerned we had reached the sabbath of rest, the celestial state.

This process must go on little by little all our lives: six days of labor before the sabbath of rest. Isaiah writes (28:10): “For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little.” We all like to imagine that, since in general we mean well, something inside us will always tell us what is right. You will hear people say, “What a man thinks is right is right for him.” This is an attempt to jump from the first day to the seventh without any of the labor of the intervening days—and it just can’t be done. We really know this. If we are honest with ourselves, we know we have made many mistakes which we might have avoided if we had been willing to study and think and correct our own judgment by the teachings of the Word of God.

The sabbath of rest comes from the Lord. It is not, either literally or spiritually, a day of idle loafing. It is a day and a state in which selfish thoughts and desires and strivings are put aside and we give ourselves wholeheartedly to the service of the Lord and the neighbor. It is natural that we should grow up thinking of Sunday in terms of what we must not do on that day. The rule of

life is “Cease to do evil; learn to do well.” But it is not the ceasing from evil which makes the sabbath blessed and sanctified; it is the learning to do well.

The Pharisees, you may remember, had made the sabbath a hard day with their many prohibitions, and the Lord brushed away these prohibitions with the simple statement, “It is lawful to do good on the sabbath.” The sabbath state is a positive, not a negative one. Doing good means active effort to learn about the Lord, to worship Him, and to engage in such works as will make others happy and ourselves nearer to the ideal given us by the Lord. Such a use of our Sundays may not seem easy or happy to us at first, but practice in this, more perhaps than in any other good habit, will bring great reward.

Adult

After the introductory statement concerning the Bible, and the brief review of chapter 1, the teacher should touch on the meaning of the seventh day in the internal historical sense and in the spiritual sense, and then go on to a discussion of the use of the sabbath. It may be well to mention the reason why we observe Sunday instead of Saturday (see Junior notes) especially if there are young adults in the class. The rest of the discussion may well be based on the Lord’s use of the sabbath, and the teacher should be familiar with the Gospel passages cited in the Junior notes and with their context.

Every time we reread the story of creation, with which our Bible begins, we are more impressed with its scope and importance. From the letter alone we receive the fundamental teachings that everything with which we are familiar was created by the Lord, that there is a Divine order in the universe, that man is not merely a higher animal but a creature with heavenly possibilities, that man has the responsibility of controlling and using rightly all the lower forms of creation, and that the ideal state to which he should look forward is one of heavenly peace and happiness. In the Creation story nothing appears which is not good and useful. “And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.” The Lord is the Source of all good and nothing but good proceeds

from Him.

When we read this story with a knowledge of its spiritual sense, it is still more impressive. Everything that is in man's soul appears here in its original orderly form. Throughout it is the story of the formation of man—as a race and as an individual—into the image and likeness of God, his highest possible attainment.

In the three previous lessons we have considered the first six days of creation in some detail, and we now center our attention on the seventh day.

Limiting our thought for the moment to the letter, we rightly think of Genesis 2:2-3 as the Divine institution of the sabbath day. The commandment regarding the sabbath given through Moses from Sinai was not a new commandment. The sabbath was a part of the order of the Most Ancient Church. The Lord, who made man, knew man's needs. Even physically we need one day out of seven of rest and change from our regular work. Our minds need this same rest and change. And above all spiritually we need one day in seven in which we may lift our thoughts above our worldly concerns and renew our inner strength through worship, instruction, and meditation.

In this simple statement of the Divine ordination of the sabbath there is nothing harsh—nothing suggestive of prohibition: “And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.” If we developed in an orderly way as children of our Heavenly Father, we should have no problems concerning the sabbath. We should, as Isaiah suggests (58:13), “call the sabbath a delight.” The reason why the breaking and profaning of the sabbath is connected with such severe denunciation later in the Word is that men departed from their true order and that without the regular observance of the sabbath men become immersed in worldliness and selfishness, lose their touch with God, and die spiritually. Our Puritan forefathers were mistaken in making the sabbath a hard and burdensome day, just as the Pharisees were mistaken in adding their own interpretations to the simple law. We recall how many

times in the Gospel story the Pharisees accused the Lord of breaking the sabbath and how He told them that He Himself was Lord of the sabbath. He gave us our example specifically in attending the synagogue on the sabbath day, teaching, healing, and walking with his disciples, and He summed up the law in the simple statement (Matthew 12:12): “It is lawful to do good on the sabbath.”

Turning to the inner meaning of our lesson, we find this in AC 83, 84: “The ‘heavens and earth and all the army of them’ are said to be ‘finished,’ when man has become the ‘sixth day,’ for then faith and love make a one. When they do this, love, and not faith, or in other words the celestial principle, and not the spiritual, begins to be the principal, and this is to be a celestial man. . . . The celestial man is the ‘seventh day,’ which, as the Lord has worked during the six days, is called ‘His work’; and as all combat then ceases, the Lord is said to ‘rest from all His work.’”

The Most Ancient Church, whose development is described in the internal historical sense of our lesson, was a celestial church, in which love to the Lord ruled in the heart and truth could be given by perception—in an internal rather than in an external way. We forget sometimes that this first church had to be developed—that even the first men had to grow into it through the various stages pictured in the Creation story, and had to become spiritual men before they became celestial.

In its application to our own regeneration this is also true. Although it is certainly possible for us, if we are faithful, to attain the celestial degree, we do not attain it before the end of our life in this world. But we all may have foretastes of it. For example, whenever we recognize a particular evil in ourselves, fight it with the Lord’s help, and reach the point where it no longer has any appeal for us, we have—with regard to that particular evil—reached the sabbath of rest. But as long as we are in this world there are always further evils in us to recognize and fight. And we recognize and fight these only if we are constantly trying to learn new truth from the Word. In this world we never reach a state in which the knowledge of what is right comes to us by an internal way. The

writings are very clear on this point. Our conscience is never a perfect guide. It must be continually corrected, educated, and developed throughout our lives here. Without this process we make no spiritual progress and never attain the true sabbath of rest.

This rest of the sabbath is not idleness. It is rest from struggle with temptation. It is said that the Lord blessed and sanctified the seventh day, that is, pronounced it happy and holy. We know that happiness comes only from forgetting self, and that only as we learn about the Lord and seek to serve Him and the neighbor is it possible for us to make a place in our hearts for the influx of His unselfish love. If we regularly use the sabbath for worship, instruction, and unselfish service, we shall find it our best aid in attaining the celestial state of rest. Let us use it to “do good” and make it a happy and a holy day.

From the Writings of Swedenborg

Arcana Coelestia, nn. 82-83: “*And the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the army of them.* By these words is meant that man is now rendered so far spiritual as to have become the ‘sixth day’; ‘heaven’ is his internal man, and ‘earth’ his external; ‘the army of them’ are love, faith, and the knowledges thereof, which were previously signified by the great luminaries and the stars. . . . Both ‘heaven’ and ‘earth’ are predicated of man; for although they refer primarily to the Most Ancient Church, yet the interiors of the Word are of such a nature that whatever is said of the church may also be said of every individual member of it, who, unless he were a church, could not possibly be a part of the church, just as he who is not a temple of the Lord cannot be what is signified by the temple, namely, the church and heaven. It is for this reason that the Most Ancient Church is called ‘man,’ in the singular number.

“The ‘heavens and the earth and all the army of them’ are said to be ‘finished,’ when man has become the ‘sixth day,’ for then faith and love make a one. When they do this, love, and not faith, or in other words the celestial principle, and not the spiritual, begins to be the principal, and this is to be a celestial man.”

Suggested Questions on the Lesson

- P. What book do we study in Sunday School? *Bible*
P. Who is its Author? *God*
P. What is the first book in the Bible? *Genesis*
P. What does *Genesis* mean? *the beginning*
P. Can you repeat the first verse of the Bible? *In the beginning . . .*
P. What was given to the world on the first day of creation? *light*
J. In how many days was creation finished? *six*
J. Does *day* mean our day of twenty-four hours? *no*
J. What was the Lord's final creation? *man*
I. How is man different from the animals? *image of God*
I. What dominion or power was given to man? *all earth*
J. What did the Lord say of creation when He had finished it? *it was good*
P. What did He do on the seventh day? *rested*
J. How did He set the seventh day apart from other days?
blessed and sanctified it
J. What does *blessed* mean? *made happy*
J. What does *sanctified* or *hallowed* mean? *holy*
J. When the Lord was on earth, what did He say it is lawful to do
on the sabbath? *good*
J. What things did He Himself do on the sabbath?
worshiped, taught, healed, ate with friends
I. What do we mean by (1) *celestial*, and (2) *spiritual* states?
(1) *doing right spontaneously from love*
(2) *doing right according to truth*
S. Spiritually, what is the rest of the Sabbath Day?
rest from struggle with temptation

THE GARDEN OF EDEN

Genesis 2:8-25

The first seven chapters of Genesis were copied verbatim from the Ancient Word and are in the language of pure symbol in which that Word was written (see SS 103, TCR 279^e, SD 5605). They are especially adapted to the teaching of young children, who love the simple, beautiful pictures they present and retain them deep in their memories. They should be taught with a feeling of wonder and reverence.

Doctrinal Points

In the Word truth from the Lord is adapted to all the different planes of the soul.

We are given freedom to choose good or evil, but we must always look to the Lord and not to self for both knowledge and power.

Notes for Parents

The beautiful parable of the Garden of Eden shows us the happy, innocent state of the first people on earth after they had developed—through the stages described in the Creation story—into a church. At the center of this church was worship of the Lord as the Source of all goodness and truth—the tree of life. The river which watered the garden was truth from the Lord flowing into every plane of life. It was an ideal state.

Do we wonder why it did not last? It was because of that other tree in the garden, the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Mankind, we remember, was created in the image and likeness of God. Man was not to be a mere automaton, carrying out the will of God by instinct like the animals. He was to have the feeling that he was an independent being, and the freedom to choose whether he would serve God or himself. This was the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The Lord warned man not to eat of its fruit, that is,

not to believe that he was really wise apart from the Lord's truth, but he was left free to disobey.

The story of the creation of woman from Adam's rib is, of course, a parable too. The first seven chapters of Genesis were copied by Moses from an Ancient Word which existed before our Bible and which was written in an old style of pure symbolism. We should know that Adam and Eve were not two individuals, for we have already been told that both men and women had been created. *Adam* is the Hebrew word for "man" or "mankind," and *Eve* means "life." The story of the creation of Eve gives us a picture of the Lord's mercy in permitting mankind to see how the lifeless framework which he really is can be brought to life and clothed with beauty by the Lord's spirit. Of ourselves we are nothing, but if we turn to the Lord and obey Him, He can make us angels. And this story also gives us the basis of true marriage, for it is only obedience to the Lord and unselfish devotion to one another that can make a marriage happy.

Primary

Teachers will have no difficulty in talking to young children about the beautiful Garden of Eden. The river, the trees, the fruit, and the animals all connect with the children's own experience. Tell them that the Lord made this beautiful garden on purpose for men to live in long ago when He first created them. He told them to take good care of it—"to dress it and keep it." He told them that they might enjoy all the fruit except the fruit of one tree. If they had obeyed the Lord, they would have been able to go on living in the garden always. In this way prepare the children for the fact that men lost the garden because they did not obey the Lord. When we are selfish with our things and misuse and spoil them, we are spoiling our "garden."

When the Lord created the first people, He gave them a beautiful place to live in. It is called the Garden of Eden, and in our chapter for today the first people are called *Adam*. Let us read the story from the Bible. [Read Genesis 2:8-25.]

You see these first people were taken care of by the Lord just as you are taken care of by your parents. The Lord provided their

food and gave them everything they needed, and they were grateful to Him and loved Him. They had not begun to be selfish or to want their own way. They obeyed the Lord and took care of everything in the garden just as He told them to do.

Where did the Lord put the first people?

Eden means "delight."

How was the Garden of Eden watered?

Into how many streams did the river divide?

What tree was in the midst of the garden?

What were the first people to do in the garden?

Can you remember what was the one thing the Lord told them not to do? You know that when your parents tell you not to do something, you are likely to think about just that particular thing, and pretty soon it begins to seem just the one thing you most want to do. That is what is called temptation. If we are wise, we do not disobey, but all of us sometimes are foolish instead of wise.

Junior

The details of the story should be impressed on the children with the understanding that this is a wonderful parable which they will understand better and better as they grow older. The correspondence of the Garden of Eden, the river, and the two trees can be given. Be sure to have the class look up and read the references in Ezekiel and in Revelation, and in connection with the tree of life refer again to Revelation 22:2.

What is the name of the first book in the Bible?

What does *Genesis* mean?

What is the first chapter about?

In how many days was everything created?

What did the Lord say which started the development of everything?

What was the last thing created?

What happened on the seventh day?

Our lesson for today is another beautiful parable. A parable is a story which has another meaning within it.

What is our chapter about?

How was the Garden of Eden watered?

Into how many streams did the river divide?

Who lived in the garden?

What was Adam to do in the garden?

Adam is a Hebrew word which means “man.” It is the same word that is used in verse 26 of the first chapter. So you see that this chapter is not about one man and woman but about the human race after it had developed far enough to know and serve the Lord. It was the first church which existed on earth—the Most Ancient Church—and the Garden of Eden is a picture of the beautiful, peaceful state in which its people lived. *Eden* means “delight.” They depended on the Lord for everything, and He could give them all they needed freely because they obeyed Him. You know that when you obey your parents, they can do many more pleasant things for you than they can when you are disobedient.

Last week we learned that light is a symbol of truth. In our lesson today we have another symbol for truth—that is, water. Perhaps you have heard people say of some wise man that he always had “a thirst for knowledge.” Look up and read Ezekiel 47:1-5 and Revelation 22:1-2. These describe the same river that watered the Garden of Eden—that of truth from the Lord. Now read John 4:5-14.

What tree was in the midst of the garden?

What other tree is mentioned?

What one thing was Adam told not to do?

The early people were innocent and happy because they understood that everything they had came from the Lord, and they loved and trusted Him and did not want to have their own way. This happy state is the beautiful garden and the tree of life in the center is the thought that everything comes from the Lord. As long as men obeyed the Lord and took care of all His gifts and used them as they were meant to be used, they could go on living in the happy garden.

The other tree, of whose fruit they were not to eat, is the thought that we can know what is good and wise from ourselves, without learning from the Lord. Very soon we shall learn what

happened when they disobeyed the Lord and ate of the fruit of this tree.

What did the Lord do when Adam was asleep?

What did He make from the rib?

The story of the creation of woman out of the rib of man is a parable, too. One of the things it teaches us is that “it is not good for man to be alone.” Men and women were created by the Lord to help each other. Marriage is a holy state ordained by the Lord from the beginning. You will learn much more about this part of the story and its meaning when you are older.

Intermediate

Begin by reminding the young people of the correspondence of the vegetable kingdom, and take up the correspondence of the river and the tree of life to account for the beauty and fruitfulness of the life of the people of the Most Ancient Church. This is a good lesson in which to point out the value of knowing the meaning of the Hebrew names. Take up the creation of woman in a general way, stressing the principle that the Lord provided the marriage relation to promote unselfishness. If we were allowed to feel complete in ourselves, it would be very much harder for us to be unselfish.

In studying the story of the Garden of Eden we should know first that Adam and Eve were not two individuals but symbol figures, representing the people of the first “church” on earth—the Most Ancient Church. *Adam* is merely the Hebrew word for “man,” and is the same word that is translated “man” in Genesis 1:26. *Eve* means “life.” *Eden* means “delight.” The garden is said to have been “eastward” in Eden because east represents nearness to the Lord. The four quarters—east, west, north, and south—represent states of nearness to or withdrawal from the Lord. The Lord, because He is represented by the sun which rises in the east, is identified with the east. *Eastward*, therefore, pictures a state of closeness to the Lord, and *westward* pictures a lessening of this closeness. *South*, the area which receives light during the greater part of the year, pictures greater understanding of the Lord’s truth, and *north* pictures less understanding.

The river which divides into four heads represents the truth as it comes from the Lord into our minds, and its four “heads” or divisions are the different planes or levels of thought and feeling which divine truth supplies. *Pison* means “overflowing,” and this quality applies to truths relating to the Lord’s Divine love. In the land watered by this river there is gold, the mineral which represents love. The *Gihon*, or river which “bursts forth,” describes the quality of truths about spiritual life. The *Hiddekel* (rapid) portrays the characteristics of the reasoning plane of our minds. And the *Euphrates* (fruitful) pictures truths as they apply to our outward conduct. As you study the Bible, you will find that it contains truth which satisfies the needs of all four of these areas. This river of Eden is the same river seen in vision by Ezekiel (47:1-5, 12) and John (Revelation 22:1-2).

The vegetable kingdom represents our thinking. Trees, the largest and loftiest things in this kingdom, express the ruling thoughts or principles by which we live. The tree of life is the thought or principle that all things come from the Lord. It was in the midst of the Garden of Eden because the people then lived by this principle. The tree of knowledge of good and evil represents the thought that we can be good and wise in and of ourselves without looking to the Lord for guidance and strength. This is the tree whose fruit Adam was commanded not to eat, and the same command applies to us as well.

When we give something a name, it means that we know what the thing is, its nature and uses. The early people saw everything in nature truly, each thing as a particular expression of the Lord’s love for them. So in the parable Adam was able to give names to everything.

The story of the creation of woman from the rib of man is a parable, too. As man developed, he was not content to “live alone” with God in his heart. He wanted to feel independent, just as a little child does very early in his development. Then he had to be taught to love something outside himself in the world, to keep him from being wholly selfish. In true marriage husband and wife love

each other more than self. Verse 24 is often used in marriage services, for it tells us that marriage is a holy state, ordained by the Lord from the beginning, and to be cherished above all other human relations. Notice that in the parable a deep sleep fell upon Adam. This is a picture of a time in the development of the human race when men began to be so interested in the natural world around them that they forgot that their souls were more important than their bodies. We are likely to forget this, too. The rib which the Lord took from Adam showed how lifeless man is in himself. It is only as the Lord's spirit enters into us that we become really alive and lovely.

Basic Correspondences

| | |
|---|---|
| a river | = truth as it comes from the Lord into our minds |
| trees | = general principles |
| the tree of life | = the principle that all good and truth come from the Lord |
| the tree of knowledge of good and evil | = the principle that we can be good and wise of ourselves |
| the four points of the compass | = our relation to the Lord |
| east | = nearness to the Lord from love |
| west | = a state of less love to the Lord |
| south | = a clear understanding of the Lord's truth |
| north | = less understanding of the Lord's truth |
| the mineral kingdom | = the basic things of life |
| gold | = love |

Senior

Give attention to the suggestions in the Intermediate section, but use more of the class time for the discussion of the creation of woman. This lesson is our first opportunity for a discussion of marriage, which is so important with this class.

Even among those who know nothing of the language of correspondences the Garden of Eden has always been a symbol of a state of innocence and happiness. This is because it is in fact the Lord's own picture of such a state.

The Garden of Eden was not a material garden. But the spiritual state which it pictures was actually the state of the men and women of the earliest church on earth, which Swedenborg calls the Most Ancient or the Adamic Church. These people knew that they lived from the Lord. That was the central principle of their thought, the tree of life in the midst of the garden. Because they knew this the Lord could cause to spring up in the "ground" of their minds "every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food," and because of it the people of this church—called *Adam*—could "name" or distinguish the true character of all their experiences, both natural and spiritual. They did not have to study and learn as we do. Their hearts were open to the Lord and He could instruct them by an inner influx—the river of truth, whose four streams watered the four divisions or planes of their minds. We sometimes like to think that we have such inner influx, that we can trust the impulses of our hearts to tell us what is right; but this is not so. We shall see why in our next lesson.

Swedenborg says that the people of this first church had open vision into the spiritual world and scarcely thought about their natural surroundings. This is a very different concept from historians' ideas of the crude and savage beginnings of the human race. Instead, it supports the idea of the "Golden Age" handed down through mythology. It was indeed a "golden" age, the age when men were led by the Lord through love, which gold represents.

But men were not animals, to be governed by unchanging instincts. They were to be free to choose their own way, because only in freedom could they really respond to the Lord's love and be happy. Because they were made in the image and likeness of God, they must be able to think of themselves as independent beings free to choose what they would think and do. The dawning

of this sense of individual independence—the *proprium*, as Swedenborg calls it—is pictured in the story of the creation of Eve. This *proprium* was a part of the original structure of the human soul, one of the “bones” which protected the very life of the human will and understanding, as the ribs protect the hearts and lungs of the physical body. But man must become conscious of it, and see it as beautiful and necessary to his happiness and usefulness. It is the feeling of our own separate existence as individuals, of our own independence, which is the basis of our free choice of right or wrong. We must be able to look at ourselves objectively, to see ourselves in relation to other men and to the Lord. We must feel our thoughts and decisions to be our own. So, if we think justly and choose rightly, we can come more and more into the image and likeness of our heavenly Father. In the story Eve was created in the Garden of Eden because this faculty is part of our true human nature and capable of heavenly usefulness.

There is also, of course, the lesson in this story that true marriage is ordained by the Lord for the purpose of taking our thoughts out of ourselves and centering them on another. The Lord saw that it was “not good that the man should be alone.” The complete “man,” as Swedenborg saw in the other world, is not a man or woman but a married pair. Marriage is the highest and most sacred relationship into which we can enter. But the basis of a happy marriage is belief in the Lord and the desire and effort to learn His will and do it together. And a true marriage is eternal. We should all want such a marriage and be careful to do nothing which will unfit us for one.

Adult

The interpretation of the creation of woman from the rib of man is perhaps the best discussion topic for this class, although the general correspondences of the Garden of Eden should be covered first.

We have seen that the Creation story is the account of the orderly development of the race or of the individual. The first

people did in general develop in this way, so that the first church on earth—the Most Ancient Church—was composed of a very high type of people, “celestial people,” who loved the Lord supremely, had open communication with the heavens, and cared for the things of this world only as they were related to and could serve spiritual things. The Lord instructed them directly through their affections. We know that we cannot trust our desires to tell us what is true and good because so many of our desires are evil. But the early people had only good and innocent desires because they were content to be led entirely by the Lord and did not care to guide themselves or to imagine that they knew anything apart from the Lord’s teaching. In various parts of the writings Swedenborg tells us many things about these people, of their simple, happy life, their high ideal of marriage, their love for each other and for children, their worship. Love was the keynote of everything, and for this reason the traditions of this period have come down to us—aside from the symbolic stories of the early chapters of Genesis—in the myths of the “Golden Age,” for gold has always been recognized as the symbol of love. The Word describes this civilization as a garden which the Lord planted “eastward in Eden,” *Eden* meaning pleasure or delight, and *eastward* always meaning near the Lord. The garden was watered by the river of wisdom from the Lord’s love, and in it were all trees “pleasant to the sight and good for food,” which mean all the knowledge necessary to make men happy and useful. And in the center was the tree of life, which is the knowledge that man lives from the Lord alone. Man was placed in this garden “to dress it and keep it”; that is, he realized that all the good things he had belonged to the Lord and were to be used in His service.

Everyone loves a little baby because of the beautiful sphere of innocence and trust which surrounds him. The infancy of the individual is like the infancy of the race, before the development of self-consciousness and self-seeking. He is close to the Lord and the angels, and is without anxiety or fear. In this sense the life story of the individual begins in the Garden of Eden. The four *heads*

into which the river was divided picture the Lord's provision for the enlightenment of all the planes of the mind: the Pison is symbolic of the highest intelligence, which is from love; so there was gold in the land compassed by that river. The Gihon pictures "the knowledge of all things that belong to the good and the true" (AC 116). The Hiddekel stands for "reason, or the clear-sightedness of reason" (AC 118), that plane or faculty which connects the internal with the external mind and enables us to relate the two. And the Euphrates represents memory knowledge, all that we learn of the externals of things, which serves as a basis for the higher planes. All good and useful knowledge is open to us, and all good things are given us to use and enjoy. To eat of every tree is "to know from perception what is good and true" (AC 125). As long as men were content to be led solely by the Lord, they had this perception. Very little children retain something akin to such perception; they are given to sense the quality of those about them, feeling "instinctively" whether a person is really kind and loving or merely pretending an affection he does not feel.

But there is another tree in the garden of which the man in the story was commanded not to eat—the "tree of knowledge of good and evil." In reading this story people sometimes wonder why the Lord put anything in the garden which men should not eat, and they sometimes even feel that the Lord must have put it there on purpose to tempt men, just as people sometimes blame the Lord for their troubles and say, "How can the Lord be a God of love when He permits people to be unhappy?" The tree of knowledge of good and evil was man's ability to think of himself as independent of the Lord. The presence of this ability in the garden of the human soul is necessary to man's being man. The Lord created man to make him happy, but happiness can come only from love freely given; so man could not be a mere mechanical agent of the Lord's love as other created things are. He must have a type of independence, the power to decide for himself whether he wishes to return the Lord's love or not. Therefore, although all life and power actually come to man moment by moment from the Lord,

man is allowed to feel this life and power as his own and to use it as he pleases. This tree had to be in the garden, but the Lord warned man not to eat of its fruit, that is, not to depend on himself for knowledge of what is good and true, because if he did he would be cutting himself off from the real source of goodness and wisdom and would become spiritually dead. As Swedenborg puts it (AC 126), “We are not to inquire into the mysteries of faith by means of the things of sense and of the memory, for in this case the celestial of faith is destroyed.” In one of our New Church Books of Worship this prohibition is put in the form of simple doctrine to be acknowledged by those who wish to be confirmed in the New Church: “In abstaining from evil and doing good we are to act as of ourselves; at the same time believing and acknowledging that the will, the understanding, and the power to do so are of the Lord alone.”

The last part of our chapter treats of the first step in the descent of man from this high state, the awakening of the desire for independent life, and of the way in which the Lord’s providence recognizes and meets this desire. Swedenborg tells us (AC 139) that throughout the Word “to dwell alone” signifies to live wholly from the Lord and so not to be subject to the influence of mere externals, which are the source of evils. The first men dwelt alone in this sense, and so does a little baby. But when the Lord sees that man is beginning to be more consciously interested in external things, He provides a way by which man may, if he will, develop this external consciousness and still not become absorbed in self. First He shows us all the things which are within us and teaches us their character. This is described by the Lord’s bringing all the living creatures to Adam to see what he would call them. So a little child, in the course of his everyday experience, learns a great many things about himself and the world about him. Then comes a time when through all this knowledge he develops a feeling of self-importance which dulls his interest in higher things. This is the deep sleep which fell upon Adam. The rib which the Lord took is the picture of this selfhood—the *Own*, or *proprium*—of each one

of us as it really is, merely the dead framework of a human being. Only when this selfhood is seen in its true relation to the Lord and the Lord's spirit is allowed to work through it does it become clothed with flesh and living. There is a deep psychology in this lesson. To make progress in character we must be able to "get outside of ourselves," to "see ourselves as others see us," and especially as the Lord and the angels see us. Then we begin to look at our selfhood as a tool given us to fashion for the Lord's service, and to love ourselves only for the use we can be to the neighbor. In this way our dead selfhood becomes a beautiful living thing, like the woman fashioned by the Lord from the rib of the man. The writings say: "The Own of man, when viewed from heaven, appears like something which is wholly bony, inanimate, and very ugly, consequently as being in itself dead, but when vivified by the Lord it looks like flesh" (AC 149). Only the Lord's Own was living; so He said: "A spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have" (Luke 24:39).

From the Writings of Swedenborg

Arcana Coelestia, n. 129: "Every one may know that man is governed by the principles he assumes, be they ever so false, and that all his knowledge and reasoning favor his principles; for innumerable considerations tending to support them present themselves to his mind, and thus he is confirmed in what is false. He therefore who assumes as a principle that nothing is to be believed until it is seen and understood, can never believe, because spiritual and celestial things cannot be seen with the eyes, or conceived by the imagination. But the true order is for man to be wise from the Lord, that is, from His Word, and then all things follow, and he is enlightened even in matters of reason and of memory knowledge. . . . For it is by no means forbidden to learn the sciences, since they are useful to his life and delightful; nor is he who is in faith prohibited from thinking and speaking as do the learned of the world; but it must be from this principle—to believe the Word of the Lord, and, so far as possible, confirm spiritual and celestial truths by natural truths, in terms familiar to the learned world. Thus his starting point must be the Lord, and not himself; for the former is life, but the latter is death."

Suggested Questions on the Lesson

- P. Whose Book is the Bible? *God's Word*
P. What is the name of the first book in the Bible? *Genesis*
J. What does *Genesis* mean? *the beginning*
J. What is the first chapter about? *creation*
P. In how many days was everything created? *six*
J. What was the last thing created? *man*
I. In whose image and likeness was man created? *God's*
J. What did the Lord do on the seventh day? *rested*
P. Where did the Lord place the first people? *Garden of Eden*
P. What name is given to them in our chapter? *Adam*
J. What does *Adam* mean? *mankind*
J. What was Adam told to do in the Garden of Eden? *dress it and keep it*
P. What tree was in the midst of the garden? *life*
P. How was the garden watered? *river*
P. Into how many streams was the river divided? *four*
J. Of what tree were the people told not to eat? *knowledge of good and evil*
J. To what did Adam give names? *animals, birds*
J. What did the Lord take from Adam while he slept? *rib*
J. Into what did He make the rib? *woman*
I. What does the Garden of Eden picture? *state of nearness to and complete trust in the Lord*
I. What is symbolized by the river? *truth as it comes from the Lord into our minds*
S. What do the two trees represent?
life—principle that we live from the Lord
knowledge—ability to think of self as independent from God; hence that we can know what is good and wise without God's help

A WIFE FOR ADAM

Genesis 2:8-25

This in the letter is a very short and striking story. In all classes it might be well to start by rereading the entire assignment from the Word. Only the very youngest children will be likely to accept the literal story without question, and questions should be welcomed; for the more children question, the more interested they are. Swedenborg says (AC 155): "The words 'a rib was built into a woman,' have more things inmost concealed in them than it is possible for anyone ever to discover from the letter; for the Word is such that its inmost contents regard the Lord Himself and His kingdom, and from this comes all the life of the Word."

Doctrinal Points

All true life comes from the Lord.

The wonderful meaning revealed in parts of the Bible which are puzzling in the letter is in itself sufficient proof that Swedenborg was illumined by the Lord.

In the Most Ancient Church truth could be given men directly from heaven because their hearts were good.

Marriage is eternal. A true marriage is the highest possible human state, but it can be attained only when both husband and wife are trying to serve the Lord together, each desiring the other's happiness more than his own.

Notes for Parents

The story of the creation of Eve from the rib of Adam, which has puzzled many lovers of the Bible and has been pointed to by the unbelieving in support of their lack of faith, is another symbol story with a deep lesson hidden within it. You have seen your children pass from babyhood to the age when they wanted their own way. This is a natural development, and none of us would

want our children to remain babies forever. The human race passed through this same change. In the beginning they were innocent and trustful and depended upon the Lord as a little baby depends on its mother. They were not savages, as some would have us think, but lived in harmony and peace and looked to the Lord for everything. This was the state of the first church which developed on earth, which is called the Most Ancient Church. It was the Golden Age of mythology, and in the Bible it is described in symbol language as the Garden of Eden. *Eden* means “delight.”

But the race had to grow up just as a child does. Men and women had to begin to think of themselves as independent human beings who could make their own decisions. They had to become self-conscious. There are two kinds of self-consciousness, a good and a bad. We sometimes say a child or a grown person is “too self-conscious,” meaning that he is never able to forget himself. This is a form of selfishness, and is to be avoided. But we must all recognize that every individual is important. Each of us has certain abilities, a particular use to perform, and a particular place to fill in the world. The difference between the selfish person and the helpful, outgoing person is like the difference between Adam’s rib when it was a mere lifeless bone inside of him and the same rib after the Lord had drawn it out and breathed His life into it. Children should be taught that they will find their highest happiness in serving the Lord and helping other people. It is only selfishness which makes us unhappy. This is the real lesson of our story. We should know that the word *Adam* is merely the Hebrew word for mankind. It is the same word which is used in Genesis 1:27 near the end of the Creation story: “So God created *man* in his own image . . . male and female created he them.”

Primary

Here the lesson to emphasize is that Adam needed a help *meet* (i.e., *suitable*) for him. The need of companionship and the right attitude among playmates—one of helpfulness and happiness and sharing—is a good lesson for this age.

Anything deeper in the story should be given only in response to questions, and should be kept as simple as possible.

We have learned that God made everything in the world: the heavens and the earth, the oceans, the wonderful sun that gives us light all day and warms the earth so that the seeds can grow to give us grain and fruit, the moon which gives light at night, and the stars which help the sailors at sea to guide their ships.

God is our Heavenly Father who made us, too, and put us in the beautiful world He had prepared for us, and that we should always be thankful to Him and try to please Him by doing what He says is right.

Now we shall read about something else the Lord did for people after He had made them. He had given them a beautiful garden to live in called the Garden of Eden, and He had put everything in the garden which they would need, but there was still something more they wanted.

Have you ever been lonely? Has there, perhaps, been a morning when the day was beautiful and you could play outdoors, you had just the kind of breakfast you liked, and you had some fine new toys to play with, and still you were not quite satisfied because you were all by yourself? Then you know how Adam felt in our story.

The Lord knew just how Adam felt, and planned to give him that one thing he wanted. First He brought to Adam all the animals and birds in the garden and let Adam give them names. "And whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof." But none of the animals or birds was just the companion Adam wanted. He wanted a help "meet" for him: that means a companion who just suited him.

Read verses 21, 22, and 23 and see how the Lord provided the helper suitable for Adam.

Because of this story a wife is sometimes called a "helpmeet."

Every good wife is a helper for her husband.

Men and women were created to help each other.

Helping each other takes practice; so we should begin helping each other when we are very young.

When you are older, you will learn what the deeper meaning of this story is.

And do you know something else? In heaven a man and his true wife, when they are a little way off from other angels, look to other people like one angel instead of two.

Junior

It would be impossible to teach this lesson to children of this age without giving them something of the internal meaning. Their inquiring minds would not stop in the literal sense. In their notes the effort has been made to give them the simplest interpretation applicable to their age, and there are also lessons there which should be helpful to any Junior group, but the teacher may find further lessons in the other notes which he feels his class could understand.

What is the first chapter of the Bible about?

Who made the world and everything in it?

Who is God?

Did the Lord write this first chapter of the Bible to teach us about the creation of the natural world?

What does it really teach us?

In a past lesson we thought about how our souls develop, and especially about the part which the light of understanding plays in this development. But there is another meaning with that story which we need to think about today. It is the story of how the human race developed. The human race in the beginning was in very much the same condition as a little baby. The people were simple and trustful and ignorant, and the Lord had to take care of them—just as we have to take care of a little baby—until He could teach them gradually to take care of themselves. Then they learned about their Heavenly Father, just as children do, and began to try to live as He taught them; and those who continued to look to Him for guidance became a very good and happy race of people. Their life was like a beautiful garden in which they could live in peace and happiness with everything they needed provided for them by the Lord. In the Bible story this is called the *Garden of Eden*, which means “the garden of delight.” Mythology calls this

beautiful early state the *Golden Age*. Swedenborg calls it the *Most Ancient Church*.

But men had, you remember, an “earth” side to their natures, and they could choose between serving God and serving themselves, just as we can today. We can be selfish or unselfish about everything we think and do, and no one makes us *be* one or the other, although we often have to *behave* as if we were unselfish when we do not really feel that way. The Lord, however, knows just what our temptations are, and always tries to help us choose the unselfish way. Our story for today about Adam (*Adam* is the Hebrew word for *man*) in the Garden of Eden is another parable. It seems to be about the creation of woman, but you remember that in verse 27 of the first chapter of Genesis we read: “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.” The story of the creation of woman out of the rib of man must therefore have some inner meaning. It is given in the Bible to tell us how the Lord always provides that each of us shall have someone outside of himself to love, so that his thoughts will be taken away from himself and he will have the opportunity of becoming a really unselfish person.

Men and women were made to help each other. They need each other all through their lives. You know that your father has certain responsibilities in providing for his family and taking care of it, and your mother has different things to do. Both are needed, and neither one is comfortable or happy without the other, and you need both of them to take good care of you. Men and women, boys and girls, are different—but neither is better than the other, and if they are both willing to help each other, the family will be a happy one.

If this story seems to you a strange way for the Lord to choose to teach such a simple lesson, remember that there are still deeper meanings in it which you will learn when you are older. In every story in the Word there are deeper and deeper lessons wrapped up within waiting for us to grow old enough to understand them, and if we continue to study the Word, we shall never stop growing,

even after we go from this world into the spiritual world. The Lord always has something for us to look forward to. But unless we know the story, as He gives it to us, we shall not be able to find the deeper meanings.

Another reason why we need to read and reread these chapters in the beginning of the Bible is that they are so often referred to later in the Word. Read what the Lord said to the Pharisees in Matthew 19:3-8. You see that in order to understand what the Lord was telling them you need to know the lesson we are studying today, and you also need to know about Moses and the laws given to the Jews through him. And because we cannot any of us learn too much at once, we need to be reading the Bible all through our lives.

What does the Bible call the state in which the first fully developed people lived?

How was the Garden of Eden watered?

What two trees are mentioned?

What does Swedenborg call this period?

What does mythology call it?

In the Bible story, what did the Lord see that Adam needed?

In what state was Adam when his helper was created?

What did the Lord take out of Adam?

What did the Lord do with the rib?

What did Adam say of the woman?

What does this story teach us?

Intermediate

The Intermediates, as usual, should be given at least the outline of the spiritual sense, and there are a number of correspondences, suggested in these notes, which should be especially developed. They are just at the age when they are wishing to be independent; so the lesson about the wrong and the right kind of independence should be valuable—and also helpful to their parents.

The Creation story is a picture of how our lives develop from infancy to adulthood. Swedenborg tells us that the human race developed in this same order from the darkness of ignorance to

knowledge of the Lord and the love of doing His will, which is true manhood and womanhood. The Garden of Eden, of which the second chapter of Genesis tells us, is a picture of the happy, peaceful state of these people after they had learned enough to become a church—the Most Ancient Church. Their lives were like a fruitful garden, full of beautiful thoughts and good affections. Swedenborg says they had open communication with the heavens, and that they thought very little about the earthly part of their lives, but lived close to the Lord and knew that everything they had came from Him. He calls them “celestial” people. As our chapter tells, the garden was watered by four rivers, truth for all planes of man’s mind; and in the center was the tree of life, the perception that all life, knowledge, and power are from the Lord.

But we remember that these people did have an earthly side as well as a heavenly side. It was natural that as time went on they should think more and more about themselves as independent human beings and want to decide things for themselves instead of accepting all their ideas from the Lord. This is also a stage in our own development. You know that you are approaching the time when you will have to “live your own lives”—to make your own decisions, no longer depending on your parents to guide you. In fact, you already sometimes want to do this, don’t you? The Lord knew just how these early people felt, and He knows just how you feel. You don’t mean to be bad. You mean to be good—to obey the Lord—but you want to decide things for yourselves. Your parents know this, too, and they try to let you make your own decisions in matters in which you are wise enough to do so.

This is what is meant in our story by the words, “And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.” To understand how this can be, we must know that in the Word “to be alone” means to be led entirely by the Lord instead of being what we mean when we use the expression “a man among men.” (Cf. Num. 23:9, Deut. 33:28, Jer. 49:31, AC 139.) To be alone with the Lord in that sense is the highest state of which we are capable—what Swedenborg calls the

“celestial” state—and those who, through obedience to the Lord, come to love Him more than everything else, reach that state in heaven. But we must choose by our own wills to serve the Lord, and we cannot do that without at least thinking of ourselves as independent individuals. So the Lord made provision that men could so think of themselves.

But there are two kinds of independence—a right and a wrong kind. When you decide something for yourself, trying to decide on what is really right according to all you have been taught of right and wrong, you are using your independence as it should be used. But when you forget about right and wrong and decide to do what you think will give you the most pleasure at the moment, you are using your independence in the wrong way. Our story this week gives us the picture of the right kind of independence.

First we read that the Lord brought to Adam all the animals and birds to see what he would call them, and that Adam gave names to them all. The animals and birds in the garden are pictures of our affections and thoughts. The Lord shows us just what affections and thoughts are in us and asks us to think about them and judge them. That is what we are doing in Sunday School and what your parents try to help you to do as you grow up. Giving a name to something is deciding just what it really is and trying to describe it. You probably call several of your friends by names which are not the ones they were given by their parents. Their “nicknames” frequently describe some quality which their friends see in them.

Then we are told that a deep sleep fell upon Adam. When these early people decided that they wanted to be independent, their minds were closed to the open vision they had had of the heavens, and this new state was like a sleep. And we are told that the Lord took one of Adam’s own ribs and made it into a woman to be a help “meet” or fit for him. *Meet* means exactly suited to his needs. We know that our bones have very little life in them and yet are very necessary to us. They compose the structure which gives us our form, and they support and protect the more important and living parts of the body. So the bones picture what really belongs

to us as individuals. Swedenborg calls them man's *Own*, or *proprium*. Without life constantly flowing in from the Lord, this self-hood or proprium is as dead as a skeleton. But the Lord can give it life and make it beautiful and useful. Do you see now what is meant by the creation of Eve out of the rib taken from Adam? When we know and believe that everything that is one's own is really dead apart from the Lord, and when we look to the Lord for life and guidance and try to make our proprium serve Him, then our individuality becomes a beautiful and useful thing and helps us and the world. This is the right kind of independence which does good instead of harm. So these people, even though they had declined from their first celestial state, could still be innocent, and this is pictured in the last verse of our chapter. If you remember your Bible story, you will recall that after the temptation of the serpent (discussed in our next lesson), Adam and Eve were ashamed of their nakedness.

We should not leave this story without thinking of it in another connection—as it relates to marriage. A married pair should be perfectly united to each other in their thought and feeling, as Adam and Eve were in the story. Read what the Lord has to say about this in Matthew 19:3-9. Marriage comes from the Lord and is holy, and a true marriage is the most desirable thing in life. But many marriages, which have been entered into without sufficient knowledge and preparation, are not true marriages, and lead to disaster. Remember this, and never let yourselves be deceived by the careless and foolish talk of people who have never had the great happiness of a true marriage.

Basic Correspondences

to be alone = to look only to the Lord
for guidance

sleep = unconsciousness of heavenly things

the bones = what is man's Own (*proprium*)

Senior

Two aspects of the story should be stressed: information given us through Swedenborg about the primitive state of mankind, and the lesson in regard to marriage. The teacher should develop the latter as fully as he feels the class is able to receive it. Boy and girl relations at the senior high school level are a crucial problem, and our young people should be helped as much as possible to keep their ideals high and their thought and speech and conduct pure. They are very well aware of some of the actual difficulties which arise from improper relations between boys and girls, but they need to understand the underlying reasons for keeping themselves strong and clean in this respect. They should be impressed with the thought that their influence among their schoolmates can be important.

In *Arcana Coelestia*, n. 152 Swedenborg says: “It requires but little attention in anyone to discern that woman was not formed out of the rib of a man, and that deeper arcana are here implied than any person has heretofore been aware of.”

Our story for today is a very familiar one, and one which has puzzled those people who wish to believe in the Bible but cannot close their eyes to facts. That Swedenborg was such a man is evident from the quotation above. He was constantly finding things in the letter of Scripture which did not seem sensible; yet, knowing the power and effect of the Bible, he recognized that it must be from God and, instead of rejecting it, as some do, he went to work with his scientific mind to study it more deeply in an effort to find out its true meaning. In time this meaning was revealed to him. The wonderful content of a story such as this one today is in itself proof of the validity of Swedenborg’s illumination.

We have previously considered the Creation story particularly as it applies to us as individuals. But we said that it also had its application to the race as a whole. In six general stages the Lord developed the race of men He had placed on the earth until they were capable of being a “church.” The church is wherever the Lord’s love and wisdom are accepted and responded to by men. We are told that an individual is a church in its least form, and that a group of such individuals constitutes the church in its larger form. Swedenborg tells us that there is but one true church on earth at a

time—that group which has accepted the Lord's truth as He has given it for that particular age and state of the race—and that from this church, as from the heart and lungs of a man, the life-blood goes forth throughout the rest of the body of good men and women in the world. The first three chapters of Genesis treat of the first church on earth, the Most Ancient Church: its rise (chapter 1), its time of flourishing (chapter 2), and its decline (chapter 3). The description of the Garden of Eden is a description of the beautiful state in which the people of this first church lived. It was a celestial church: that is, a church in which men could be governed by their hearts because the desire of their hearts was only to know and serve the Lord. They had open communication with the heavens, and thought very little about their earthly condition and life.

But man was created to be a free agent, since only by choosing freely the way of unselfish love, which is the Divine way, could he be happy; and the Lord's desire was to give him happiness. So man had an earthly as well as a heavenly side to his nature, and as time went on he naturally began to think more of himself and his earthly possibilities, and was no longer willing to live "alone" with the Lord. As Swedenborg states it, "This posterity of the Most Ancient Church was not disposed to dwell alone, that is, to be a celestial man, or to be led by the Lord as a celestial man, but, like the Jewish Church, desired to be among the nations. And because they desired this, it is said, 'it is not good that the man should be alone,' for he who desires is already in evil, and it is granted him" (AC 139). We all know the feeling, the desire to be like other people. The Lord knew all that was in man, and that he would decline from the celestial state, just as He knows that we shall not always be innocent, trustful little babies, but will grow up and want to make our own decisions. So He makes provision for this change in us, and in this story He tells us how we can become independent and still remain good; for independence, in the sense of going our own way, often leads to sin and unhappiness.

First the Lord brought to Adam all the beasts and fowl of the

Garden of Eden and told him to give them names. To give a name to something is to describe it as to its quality, and the beasts and fowl are our affections and thoughts. It is our duty to examine ourselves and study our affections and thoughts with a view to understanding them and their possibilities for good or evil. This prepares us to use our independence rightly.

But when the change was actually to be made, a “deep sleep” fell upon Adam. Swedenborg says: “By a ‘deep sleep’ is meant the state into which he was let so that he might seem to himself to have what is his own, which state resembles sleep” (AC 147). The rib which was taken from Adam, we are told, represents man’s “Own” or selfhood, of which he now wished to be especially conscious. Of itself it is nothing but a dead bone; yet if the Lord’s spirit is breathed into it, it can become a beautiful living thing, with the help of which he can live a useful, happy, spiritual life. (See the quotation from the *Arcana Coelestia* at the end of this lesson.)

This story is usually considered in its relation to the subject of marriage, and the Lord Himself so uses it in Matthew 19:3-9. The doctrines of the New Church teach that true marriage on earth is the ultimation of the union of the Divine Love and Wisdom in the Lord; and the vivification of Eve by the Lord’s spirit is a picture of this, also. If you look about you in the world, you cannot fail to see that true marriage is the happiest and most desirable state which a man and woman can experience, and you can see also that the deepest sorrows, the ugliest states, and even the most horrible crimes are the fruits of the perversions of the true relation between men and women. A true marriage comes from the Lord. It exists only when husband and wife are seeking to serve the Lord together and so are true helpmeets. Each desires the other’s happiness more than his own, and both are in the effort to learn the Lord’s will and do it. Marriage is eternal. The true husband and wife in the other world are reckoned as one angel, and are even so seen from a little distance. One who wishes such a true marriage will keep his ideal of marriage sacred, avoiding everything which might tarnish

or spoil it, even if he never in this world finds his true mate. This world is only the beginning of life, and it is the character formed here which counts to eternity.

Adult

There is so much in this lesson that the teacher has a wide range of possible emphases. He should perhaps read to the class first the summary of the spiritual meaning of this lesson found in AC 131-136, and then let the class decide what particular phase of the subject they would like to discuss.

Of our lesson for today Swedenborg says (AC 137): “The first three chapters of Genesis treat in general of the Most Ancient Church which is called ‘Man’ (*homo*), from its first period to its last, when it perished: the preceding part of this chapter treats of its most flourishing state, when it was a celestial man; here it now treats of those who inclined to their Own, and of their posterity.”

We have considered the Creation story in its relation to the regeneration of the individual, but it also treats of the development of the first people into a church—the Most Ancient Church. Of these first people, when they were placed on the earth, Swedenborg said (many years before Darwin) that their posture was not erect and that they lived an animal-like existence, but they were from the beginning men and not animals. It is interesting to compare the speculations of anthropologists with this statement from *The Divine Providence* (nn. 275-276): “The love into which man was created is love of the neighbor, to the end that he may wish as well to the neighbor as to himself and even better, and may be in the delight of that love when he is doing good to the neighbor; nearly the same as a parent’s love for his children. This love is truly human, for there is in it a spiritual [element] that distinguishes it from the natural love that belongs to brute animals. If man were born into that love he could not be born into the thick darkness of ignorance, as every man now is, but into a certain light of knowledge and intelligence therefrom; and into these he would quickly come. At first, of course, he would creep like a quadruped,

but with an inherent endeavor to raise himself up upon his feet; for however much like a quadruped he would not turn his face downward to the earth but forwards towards heaven, and would so raise himself up as to be able to look upwards. But when love of the neighbor was turned into love of self, and this love increased, human love was turned into animal love, and man from being a man became a beast, with the difference that he was able to think about what he felt in the body, and could rationally discriminate one thing from another, and could be taught, and could become a civil and moral man, and finally a spiritual man.” It is important to see the distinction between this idea—that the human race began as man and descended to the level of the beast in the period before our commonly accepted records begin—and the assumption of some evolutionists that the race began as an animal and worked itself up to its present state.

Our story for today, one of the best-known and perhaps most frequently ridiculed of the early stories of the Bible, treats of the beginning of the decline of the Most Ancient Church. The reason for this decline is stated very clearly in AC 139: “In ancient times those were said to ‘dwell alone’ who were under the Lord’s guidance as celestial men, because such were no longer infested by evils, or evil spirits.” But the Lord foresaw that men would not be content to “dwell alone” with Him. All along the way of the first development there were those who chose not to accept what the Lord taught them. But at this point in the story even the posterity wishing to be led by self was still in the desire to obey the Lord; therefore the Lord could vivify and enlighten the self to which these men looked for guidance. “That by ‘a help as with him’ (a helper suitable for him) is signified man’s Own, is evident both from the nature of this Own, and from what follows. As however the man of the church who is here treated of was well disposed, an Own was granted him, but of such a kind that it appeared as it were his own, and therefore it is said ‘a help as with him’” (AC 140). The Hebrew word here translated “as with” and in the King James version “meet for” actually means “opposite” or “comp-

lementary to.” In the relation of this story to the doctrine of marriage (see Matthew 19:3-9), this word indicates what husband and wife should be to each other. We know that a true human marriage is the highest ultimation among men of the union of the Divine Love and Wisdom in the Lord. We should therefore seek in marriage nothing less than a perfect mating of hearts and minds, and we should hold this ideal before our children. This does not mean that there will never be differences of opinion between husband and wife, but that as both look to the Lord for guidance and hold the same basic principles, differences will be resolved amicably and with satisfaction to both. In AC 155 Swedenborg points out that inmostly this passage treats of the heavenly marriage between the Lord and His kingdom, which can be called the “bride and wife” of the Lord.

But the part of the story on which we perhaps need most to dwell is that which shows the nature of man’s Own or proprium and why it was taken out of him and made by the Lord into a living thing which he could love without harm. The Garden of Eden represents the state of the men of the Most Ancient Church. The four rivers represent truth from the Lord flowing into the various planes of the mind. The tree of life in the midst is the perception that all life, knowledge, and power are from the Lord, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil man’s power to choose between God and self. We note that first the Lord brought to Adam all the beasts and fowl of the garden that he might give them names. The beasts and fowl are men’s affections and thoughts. Thus Adam is asked to examine his affections and thoughts and determine their quality. “That to ‘call by name’ signifies to know the quality, is because the ancients, by the ‘name’ understood the essence of a thing, and by ‘seeing and calling by name,’ they understood to know the quality” (AC 144). We all, before we take any important step in life, need such self-examination.

AC 147 gives in very simple terms the outline of the spiritual meaning of the crucial verse 21: “By a ‘rib’ which is a bone of the chest, is meant man’s Own, in which there is but little vitality, and

indeed an Own which is dear to him; by ‘flesh in the place of a rib,’ is meant an Own in which there is vitality; by a ‘deep sleep’ is meant the state into which he was let so that he might seem to himself to have what is his own, which state resembles sleep, because while in it he knows not but that he lives, thinks, speaks, and acts from himself. But when he begins to know that this is false, he is roused as it were out of sleep, and becomes awake.”

The bones, in which there is little life and yet which support and give form to the whole body and protect the delicate internal organs, naturally represent man’s Own, the proprium, by which each individual is distinguished from every other. We need to see this Own as it really is and then to see it as it can be when filled with the Lord’s spirit. “The Own of man, when viewed from heaven, appears like a something that is wholly bony, inanimate, and very ugly, consequently as being in itself dead, but when vivified by the Lord it looks like flesh. For man’s Own is a mere dead thing, although to him it appears as something, indeed as everything. Whatever lives in him is from the Lord’s life, and if this were withdrawn he would fall down as dead as a stone; for man is only an organ of life, and such as is the organ, such is the life’s affection” (AC 149²). “But truly the things of man’s Own that have been vivified by the Lord appear beautiful and lovely, with variety according to the life to which the celestial of the Lord can be applied” (AC 154).

The fact that the Lord Himself (Matthew 19:3-12) used a portion of today’s lesson to point out to the Pharisees the true nature of marriage should help us to realize that the basis of a true marriage must be a oneness of thought and purpose. We should bring up our children from the start to feel that marriage is a holy thing, that the Lord’s spirit must be in it in order that the married pair may respect and love each other and may stand before the world as one. It is very important that parents exhibit this oneness to their children, by forming their judgments on the basis of the same spiritual principles and by coming into agreement as to what they will and will not allow their children to do. Neither parent should

rule the other; rather, differences of opinion should be resolved by serious consideration from the common ground of their spiritual beliefs. And the children should be educated from the start in these spiritual beliefs.

From the Writings of Swedenborg

Arcana Coelestia, n. 154: “Nothing evil and false is ever possible which is not man’s Own, and from man’s Own, for the Own of man is evil itself, and consequently man is nothing but evil and falsity. This has been evident to me from the fact that when the things of man’s Own are presented to view in the world of spirits, they appear so deformed that it is impossible to depict anything more ugly, yet with a difference according to the nature of the Own, so that he to whom the things of the Own are visibly exhibited is struck with horror, and desires to flee from himself as from a devil. But truly the things of man’s Own that have been vivified by the Lord appear beautiful and lovely, with variety according to the life to which the celestial of the Lord can be applied; and indeed those who have been endowed with charity, or vivified by it, appear like boys and girls with most beautiful countenances; and those who are in innocence, like naked infants, variously adorned with garlands of flowers encircling their bosoms, and diadems upon their heads, living and sporting in a diamond-like aura, and having a perception of happiness from the very inmost.”

Suggested Questions on the Lesson

- P. What book are we studying? *Bible*
P. Who wrote it? *God*
J. What is the first chapter of the Bible about? *creation*
J. What does *Genesis* mean? *the beginning*
P. What beautiful place was given to the first people for their home? *Eden*
J. How was the Garden of Eden watered? *river*
P. How did the Lord provide for men there? *fruit trees, seed plants*
J. What two trees are specifically mentioned? *life, knowledge*
J. In our chapter by what name are the first people called? *Adam*
J. What one thing did Adam want that he did not have? *wife*
P. What did the Lord ask Adam to do with regard to the animals and birds?
name them
P. What did the Lord do when Adam was asleep? *took rib, formed woman*
J. What does mythology call the Garden of Eden? *Golden Age*

- J. What does Swedenborg call it? *Most Ancient Church*
- I. What is meant by man's being "alone"? *close to God*
- S. What is meant by the rib? *sense of selfhood, proprium*
- I. What is meant by the rib's being built into a woman?
made beautiful by God
- S. What is the basis of a true marriage? *desire to serv . Lord together*

THE SERPENT

Genesis 3

In all classes the connection with past material may be made by reviewing the order of creation, pointing out the difference between men and animals, and then speaking of the Garden of Eden as the beautiful state in which men came to dwell and in which they might have remained if they had been obedient and had not begun to trust in self instead of in the Lord. Speak of the two trees and of the Lord's command with regard to the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

Doctrinal Points

The two opposing central principles: trust in the Lord and trust in self.

The doctrine of "appearances"—in connection with the statement that the Lord "cursed" Adam and Eve and the serpent.

Notes for Parents

The story of the Garden of Eden is familiar to everyone. Before the development of natural science men accepted it as literally true, and the doctrine of "original sin"—the teaching that the sin of Adam was inherited by all his descendants—grew out of this literal acceptance. With greater knowledge of the natural world, however, men began to doubt the early chapters of Genesis. Some discarded them altogether and came to believe that everyone is born good and that a child's early environment is responsible for the bad things that appear in him. Others closed their minds to the findings of science and clung to their belief in the literal stories and in original sin.

But if we see that in these chapters, as we said last week, the Lord is not telling us about the natural history of the world and of man, but about spiritual development, we can understand that

these stories are not literal fact and yet are true stories—stories of how the character of the human race developed and changed and how our individual characters develop and change.

If God is pure love and wisdom, as we believe Him to be, how did evil come into the world? Men introduced it themselves by choosing to trust in their own wisdom instead of in the Lord's. Trust in themselves was the tree of knowledge of good and evil whose fruit they had been commanded not to eat. And what made them disobey? The promptings of their own sensuous desires, the same serpent which tempts us today and leads us to sacrifice our higher natures for the sake of the worldly satisfactions we think we want right now. How many times a week do we think—and even say—"I know I shouldn't, but . . ."? The story of Adam and Eve and the serpent is as true today as when it was written thousands of years ago.

But why were men created in such a way that they could choose to serve themselves and so become evil? Because freedom to choose is essentially what makes them men and not mere animals. They were made "in the image of God" and must be able to choose freely what they will love and learn and do. There would be no virtue or happiness in doing right if we could do nothing else. We know what happens to a child if his parents never give him an opportunity to learn to use his own judgment. The Lord is a wise parent.

Primary

Read the story to the children from the Word (Genesis 3:1-13). If they are old enough to ask whether the story is true, they should be told that it is a parable and that its truth is in its inner meaning. Then remind them that man was told to rule over the lower creatures. Eve let the serpent rule over her instead. Finally talk about the ways in which the children often behave as Adam and Eve did.

We have learned about how the Lord made everything in the beginning: the heaven and the earth, the seas, the dry land, the sun, moon, and stars, the fish, birds, and animals, and finally men

and women. He gave the men and women a beautiful garden to live in called the Garden of Eden, which was full of all sorts of trees and fruits. In the beginning men and women did not wear clothes at all, because they were just like innocent little babies.

There were two principal trees in the garden. The one in the very center of the garden was called the tree of life, and the other was called the tree of knowledge of good and evil. There was just one thing the Lord told men and women they must not do: they must not eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. They could eat any of the other fruit they wanted.

Now you know that when your mother tells you there is some one thing you just must not do, very often something inside you starts right in urging you to do it. In our chapter for today the Lord tells us a story about what the first men and women did. He calls the men Adam and the women Eve. As you listen to the story, you will see that the thing which makes people want to do what they know they should not do is called the serpent. A serpent is a snake. Did you ever see a snake creep out from where it had been hiding? Our desire to do as we please instead of thinking what is right is just like a snake always hiding in our hearts. [Read Genesis 3:1-13.]

Don't you think the first people were very foolish to disobey the Lord when He had given them all that they could possibly need to make them happy? They had to leave the beautiful garden, and they could never be happy in the same way again.

But we are just as foolish when we do things we have been told not to do. We know that everything goes better for us when we are good and obedient. But deep inside each of us that same serpent is hiding, waiting for a chance to tempt us to disobey, and he is very clever at arguments.

Adam and Eve had to leave the beautiful garden.

When we insist on having our own way, we lose many good things we might have had.

How did the Lord guard the way to the garden afterward?

Junior

Children of this age need to be told that these early chapters of Genesis are

symbol stories telling us in figurative terms the great truths which the Lord wants us to know about the beginning of mankind and about how evil came into the world, and also about our own development and how we allow evil to come into our minds and hearts. Study the notes below for suggestions as to how the lesson may be developed.

What is the first chapter of the Bible about?

What did the Lord create first?

What did He create last?

In whose image and likeness was man created?

What powers does this give him which animals do not have?

What was man told to do with regard to the earth and everything on it?

What does the word *Adam* mean?

In the next few chapters of the Bible the first people are spoken of as if they were just one man and woman—Adam and Eve. *Eve* is another Hebrew word; it means “living.” Read verse 20 of our chapter. These first people developed gradually until they became a church, which is called the Most Ancient Church. They were good and innocent, trusting the Lord for everything just as a little baby depends on its parents. The state in which they lived is described in chapter 2 as a beautiful garden called the Garden of Eden, which means the garden of delight. Now read verses 15 to 17 of chapter 2.

What were Adam and Eve to do in the garden?

What was the one thing they must not do?

Do you always obey your parents? Can you tell why not? You know that they love you and that what they tell you to do or not to do is always for your good. And you know that when you disobey, you always get into trouble. And yet there just seems to be something in you that always tempts you to do the very thing you have been told not to do. In the story of Adam and Eve this selfish desire to have one’s own way is pictured by the serpent.

What did the serpent tell Eve?

What did Eve do?

What did Adam do?

Read Revelation 3:17-18. When the Lord in these verses tells the people that they are naked and need to buy white raiment of

Him, He is not speaking of clothing for their physical bodies but of true ideas to clothe their minds. Adam and Eve had listened to the serpent instead of to the Lord. Before that they had known that only the Lord can give us the truth. This is why they are said to have been naked. After they had eaten of the forbidden fruit, they suddenly realized how wrong they had been to disobey the Lord who gave them everything; and they were ashamed, just as you are ashamed after you have disobeyed your parents. And they tried to hide from the Lord just as you try to keep out of your parents' sight for fear they will find out what you have been doing. Sometimes you can hide things from other people but none of us can hide anything from the Lord, because He sees our thoughts and our hearts.

When you are a little older, you will study the meaning of the "curses" on the serpent, the woman, and the man which were pronounced because of their disobedience, but you can understand now that these curses did not really come from the Lord, except in the sense that the Lord in His wisdom created an orderly world in which we may be sure what the results of good or evil actions will be. The curses were the natural results of the disobedience itself. We learned previously that man is made in the image and likeness of God, with the power to reason and to choose what he will do and be. The Lord does everything He can to show us the way to happiness, but He will not make us follow it, because that would take away our human powers. When we choose to disobey, trouble always follows because we are going against the way of happiness. And we are very likely to blame other people instead of ourselves, just as Adam and Eve did.

In the story Adam and Eve had to leave the beautiful garden and work for their food instead of receiving it from the Lord. This means that once men had disobeyed, it began to be harder and harder for them to do right. You know how this is, too. One wrong thing leads to another and you form bad habits which are hard to break. From the time pictured in our story mankind as a whole grew worse and worse, although, as we shall see in an up-

coming lesson, there were always a few people who tried to do right.

There are two verses in our lesson which you should notice even though you will not understand them until later. One is verse 15. This is the first “prophecy of the Advent” which appears in the Word. This means that it foretells that someday a child would be born who would always refuse to do what the serpent suggested and so would stop the long downward trend of mankind. Only the Lord Himself could do this. Then read the last verse of the chapter. You will hear of the cherubim again and you want to remember where in the Bible they first appeared and what they were doing. They are symbolic figures, not actual creatures or people, and they stand for the power of the Lord to protect goodness.

Now let us see if you can think why our desire to do wrong is described as a serpent. What do you mean when you call a person a pig? When you call him a fox? When you call him a lion? All the animals have special characteristics for which they are known. The most ancient people knew what everything in nature represented and they spoke in the language of “correspondences,” naming the animal or thing when they meant its special quality. You know how the serpent or snake just slides along the ground and how it slips in and out of hiding, how snakes can “charm” their prey so that it cannot run away, and how a poisonous snake can bite even before you see it. This is just what our lower or “sense” nature does. It clings to the things of the world, not looking up to heaven and the Lord; it holds our attention so that we do not try to escape its reasoning, and it is always hiding in us, trying to “bite” us—to make us believe that the most important thing in the world is to have our own way and get what we want right now. Every time you are tempted to do what you know is wrong, your lower nature is arguing with your higher nature just as the serpent argued with Eve. Eve did not have to listen to the serpent, and neither do you.

Intermediate

The special lesson for this age group is the general correspondence of the Garden of Eden, the two trees, and the serpent. Point out to the class that these first chapters of the Bible treat of the early spiritual history of the human race and also of our individual spiritual development.

Plants represent thoughts, or things of the mind, and animals things of the heart or will. Trees represent great general principles. After the first people had been developed into a church, according to the process we studied in the first chapter of Genesis, their state is described as the beautiful Garden of Eden about which chapter 2 tells us. There were all kinds of trees in this garden, but there were two principal ones, the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The tree of life pictures the great general principle that everything lives from the Lord and that all wisdom and goodness come from Him. Read verses 9 and 17 of chapter 2 and then verse 3 of chapter 3 to see what change had taken place in the state of mankind by the time of the beginning of our lesson for today. The tree of life is no longer in the center of the garden. This means that people were losing their feeling that all they had came from the Lord. The tree of knowledge of good and evil is the principle that we of ourselves know what is right and wrong and do not need to look to the Lord for knowledge. We often hear people say, "If I do what I think is right, that is all that can be expected of me."

The serpent, like all other members of the animal kingdom, represents an affection. It is the affection for sense pleasures, eating, drinking, dressing well, dancing, movies, sports, having fun. It is a good and useful affection in its place, but it may easily lead us astray.

Things we have been told not to do often look pleasant and harmless. We tell ourselves that we know what is good for us better than our parents—or even the Lord—and that we can do these things without any harm. This is the serpent saying to Eve, "Ye shall not surely die." He spoke to Eve because Eve pictures our will, and it is our will which is tempted. Later we think out argu-

ments to prove that we are right; this is Adam receiving the fruit from Eve and eating it. We soon find out how little we really know. This is Adam and Eve discovering that they are naked. [Read Revelation 3:17-18.] But instead of turning back to trust in the Lord, we excuse ourselves by pointing to our good deeds. The fig leaves are such thoughts about our natural goodness. We say, “After all, no one can be expected to be perfect, and I’m pretty good most of the time.”

Once we have begun to believe that we can decide for ourselves without the Lord, we have lost the beautiful inner life of innocence and trust with which we started life. This is the death of which the Lord had warned Adam and Eve, and it is pictured by their being driven out of the garden. When we begin to look to self instead of to the Lord, we get into all kinds of trouble. The thorns and thistles of false thoughts spring up in our minds and we have to work hard for what goodness we can acquire. The Lord, when He was in the world, said, “My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” His way is really always the easy way, if we would only believe it. The curses on Adam and Eve picture the natural result of trying to go our own way—it becomes harder and harder for us to do right even when we see what is right.

Read carefully the serpent’s punishment (verse 14) and see how true a picture it is of our love of the pleasures of the senses. They never really rise higher than the things of this world and they live on “dust.”

Only one Person, the Lord Himself, has ever wholly overcome the temptations pictured by the serpent. Verse 15 is the first prophecy of His coming. It means that a time would come when a child would be born into the world who would feel all the temptations of the senses—the serpent would bite his heel—but would always say no to them—He would bruise the serpent’s head. The head is the governing principle of a thing, and the Lord put the principle of pleasure-seeking under His foot, where it belongs. Read the story of Moses and the bronze serpent in Numbers 21: 4-9 and the reference to it in John 3:14-15. The serpents which bit

the children of Israel in the wilderness were their appetites for sense satisfaction. The serpent of bronze pictures the right use of these appetites. The Lord used His sense life rightly and so lifted it up into a means of saving people. Our senses, like everything else, are given us as means of being useful to the Lord and the neighbor.

When our senses are made a guide, they lead us further and further astray. The serpent of our chapter for today becomes the dragon in the Book of Revelation. If we try to fight our temptations, the Lord and the angels fight with us and help us to overcome them. Read Revelation 12:7-9 and 20:1-3.

Now read verse 24. The cherubim are symbolic figures representing the Lord's protecting power, and the flaming sword is truth inspired by love which protects the good and checks the evil. This is why the sword is two-edged. Read Exodus 25:16-21. The Ten Commandments—which were kept in the ark—are our first and most powerful means of fighting temptation.

Basic Correspondences

the trees = general principles

the fig tree = the principle of natural goodness

the serpent = the affection for the things of
the senses

cherubim = the Lord's providence protecting
true goodness

Senior

The problem of the origin of evil in the race and in the individual is the center of this lesson. The Seniors need to be shown clearly the nature of trust in self and the mistakes and suffering to which it leads. They are about to pass from under parental and home influence, and they should be led to feel the need of the Lord's guidance.

We have studied the Creation story as it applies to the spiritual development of any individual. This spiritual development is known as regeneration. The inner state of the regenerate man or woman is described in chapter 2 as a garden, the garden of Eden or "delight." The regenerate person is happy because he is not always

thinking about himself but trusts wholly in the Lord, knowing that all goodness and truth come from Him alone and that if he obeys the Lord, whatever happens to him will be for his eternal welfare. This principle is pictured by the tree of life which was in the midst of the garden. As we have seen, however, man was to dress and keep the garden and to have dominion over all things in it. That is, the regenerate man must choose to continue to live the spiritual life, keeping his lower desires under control. The first men did not do this, just as none of us fully does it. They developed into a church—the Most Ancient Church—with a very high degree of spiritual life, and then they began to trust in themselves instead of in the Lord. Just in this manner it sometimes happens that a man or woman who has come to believe in the Lord, has set his life in order and perhaps joined the church, begins to think that he has learned enough and can henceforth decide for himself what is right and wrong, true and false.

The chapter we have for today treats of the decline of the Most Ancient Church and of the way in which evil entered the world. From verse 3 we learn that an important change has taken place in the garden. The tree of knowledge of good and evil has taken the place of the tree of life in the center. This tree is the principle that we can distinguish between right and wrong without looking to the Lord for guidance. When once we begin to think of ourselves as independent of the Lord, we tend to believe ourselves to be the source of goodness and truth. The Lord cannot prevent our developing this belief without taking away our freedom; He can only warn us against it. When He says of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, “Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die,” He is saying, “Never for a moment admit into your mind the thought that you have goodness and wisdom in yourself, for that is spiritual death.”

What is it that tempts us to choose our own guidance? It is first some desire for external satisfaction—the serpent of sense pleasure. It seduces our will—Eve. Here is something I want very much to do. I have been taught that it is wrong and dangerous, but it looks

just the opposite to me. I cannot believe that anything so attractive can really be bad. Someone is just trying to keep me from enjoying myself. So our desire, like Eve, passes on the tempting fruit to our reasoning faculty, and both yield.

The immediate result is a sense of our own wrongdoing and an attempt to cover it up with excuses—the fig leaves are thoughts about our own natural goodness. But we are driven out of the garden. We have lost our innocence and trust and all the delights that went with it. Doing right will now be harder for us and we shall constantly have to fight the thorns and thistles of selfish and worldly thinking.

We should note particularly the guard set at the gate of the garden “to keep the way of the tree of life.” Throughout the Scriptures cherubim are symbolic figures picturing the protecting power of Divine Providence. The sword is the symbol of truth fighting—the flaming sword the truth from Divine Love—one edge condemning evil and the other defending good.

Once our will has developed selfish feelings, the Lord can no longer guide us by means of it. We cannot go back to the garden. We must learn “the hard way.” That is, we must come to see for ourselves the unhappy effects of disobedience and make ourselves do right against our will. You may sometimes hear people say of an innocent baby, “I wish he could always stay like this.” They do not really mean it, of course, but they dread for their children the hard lessons they must learn. And there is no other way now to spiritual progress. Even though we often choose evil instead of good and suffer for it, we cannot become truly human beings without developing our independent reason and exercising our free choice.

The curses on the serpent, the woman, and the man picture the inevitable results of self-trust and disobedience to the Lord. The story of the human race as we follow it from chapter 2 of Genesis through the Old Testament is one of decline and constant struggle. In the New Church we do not believe in “original sin” in the sense that the sin of Adam and Eve made all people thereafter guilty.

No one is ever born guilty of sin. But tendencies to evil are handed down and, if not checked, increase. Mankind declined spiritually until the time came when no merely human being could resist its temptations. Then the Lord Himself had to come into the world to bruise the serpent's head and turn the tide for us. Verse 15 of our chapter is the first prophecy of the Advent.

Adult

The question of the origin of evil and the decline of the human race will furnish ample discussion material. The temptation of the serpent in our modern world is a powerful force for evil.

The serpent is the symbol of the sensuous part of man. If we think a little, we can see that there is a mental as well as a physical basis in each of the five senses. For example, when we are absorbed in a book, someone may speak to us several times without being heard. There is nothing the matter with our ears, but our consciousness is temporarily withdrawn from the sense plane. We are living in another world. The sensuous plane of our mind is closed for the time being. So we may walk along the street thinking so hard that we pass a close friend without seeing him, although we look right at him. In times of great excitement people can injure themselves severely and feel no pain until the excitement is past. So we can see that there is actually a distinct plane of our mind that is in contact with the natural world through the five senses. This is what Swedenborg calls the "sensuous" part of man (meaning simply that which pertains to sense impressions rather than thoughts) and what is signified by the serpent. The sensuous part is necessary to us. We could not live in this world without it. But it is meant to be merely the servant of the higher planes of our minds. The serpent has a good as well as an evil correspondence. The Lord said to His apostles, "Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves" (Matthew 10:16). This means to take advantage of all the knowledge which comes to us through our senses, but to use it always for good and never for harm to ourselves or anyone else. And we

remember that when the children of Israel were going through the wilderness and were plagued by fiery serpents because of their lust and disobedience, Moses was told to make a serpent of bronze and raise it up on a pole, and those who looked at it were healed. The serpent of bronze was the symbol of sensuous things turned to good use. Later, when this bronze serpent became an object of worship in itself, Hezekiah destroyed it because it was leading people away from the worship of the Lord, as today the doctrine that goodness is in external good works leads people to think it is not particularly important to go to church or to learn about the Lord. When the Lord was in the world, He likened His own human nature to this serpent of bronze lifted up.

But the serpent, as our lesson says, is “more subtle than any beast of the field.” Our senses are constantly bringing us impressions and appealing to us in many ways at once. Many of the things they bring us are delightful—the beauties of nature, music, odors, flavors, caresses. It is very easy to come to depend upon them and to refuse to believe anything which our senses do not confirm, and thus to look to ourselves for knowledge and power instead of to the Lord. This is the temptation of the serpent, first to the woman—our affections—and then through the woman to the man—our intellect. Pleasures of the senses first appeal to us because they are delightful, and then our minds begin to think up reasons why we should indulge in them; and if there is a command of the Lord which forbids them, we refuse to believe the Lord or that any evil can come because of our indulgence. So in the story the serpent first put doubt in the woman’s mind of the truth of the Lord’s words. This is the beginning of all evil—the temptation to reason and judge according to what our senses tell us instead of according to what the Lord has revealed through His Word.

This thought is stated very clearly in AC 196: “In ancient times those were called ‘serpents’ who had more confidence in sensuous things than in revealed ones. But it is still worse at the present day, for now there are persons who not only disbelieve everything they cannot see and feel, but who also confirm themselves in such

incredulity by knowledges [*scientifica*] unknown to the ancients, and thus occasion in themselves a far greater degree of blindness."

If we think of our sense life as the important thing, we shall lose sight of the true meaning which only knowledge of the Lord and of heavenly things can give to it. That the ancient people began to reason from nature to God instead of from God to nature and to refuse to believe what they could not confirm by their senses is meant by their eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. In this way they gradually lost that immediate perception of the truth which the celestial people had, but they did not lose it all at once. They retained enough of it to know that they were doing wrong—to recognize their evil state. This is pictured by verse 7, the fact that they knew that they were naked. Here is introduced another correspondence which we should note: the fig, symbolic of "natural goodness," the kindly feelings and thoughts which even the most worldly people may have. How often when we recognize some serious fault in ourselves, we try to cover it up in our own minds by recalling our "good deeds." These thoughts about natural goodness are the fig leaves with which Adam and Eve tried to cover themselves. Garments correspond to truths and nakedness to lack of truth. We may recall here that Hezekiah's boil was cured by a lump of figs and that the Lord condemned a fig tree which bore no fruit. These are stories which teach the necessity of kind, neighborly living. But we must not think that natural kindness will excuse a lack of acceptance of truth from the Lord. Without a desire for truth from the Lord natural kindness and good works are self-righteous and not genuinely good at all. Read Revelation 3:14-18.

In the study of the punishment meted out to the serpent, the woman, and the man, we have our first introduction to the "doctrine of appearances." The Lord is perfect love. He never punishes. Yet throughout the Word He is frequently said to be angry, to be jealous, to take revenge, to curse, to punish, etc. This is because the Lord had to write the Word by means of men and in terms which they would understand, and so the truth often takes the

form in which it appears to men, and when men are in evil states, the truth appears to punish them. In the same way, to a child bent on having his own way his parents' efforts to turn him into the right way seem harsh and cruel. The punishments which the Lord is said to mete out are inherent in the evils committed. So the sensuous part of man, when it leads man away from the Lord, is condemned to go on its belly and eat dust—that is, to see only the things of the earth and to feed on dead things. This is just what our senses do when we trust in them instead of in the Lord's revealed truth. The woman is told: "In sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." We remember that the woman pictures our own will and that the first people, whose affections were centered in the Lord, could be taught immediately through them. But when the affections became centered in the world and in self, they could not bring forth any truth or good except by bitter experience of evil and punishment. The birth of children in the Word always pictures in a good sense the bringing forth of truths and goods. And the man is told that the ground is cursed for his sake and will bring forth thorns and thistles. The mind of the self-centered man is full of false ideas which plague him and make it difficult for him to find the truth, and so he finds it hard to nourish his soul: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." Finally they are cast out of the garden, and cherubim with a flaming sword are placed at its entrance "to keep the way of the tree of life." The cherubim throughout the Word are the symbol of the Divine Providence protecting—in this case protecting men from profaning the highest things of their nature. The sword in the Scriptures is either truth or falsity used as a weapon. When a person persistently refuses to live according to a truth which he knows, the belief that it is the truth is finally taken away from him so that he may not go further into a state of willful disobedience.

From the Writings of Swedenborg

Arcana Coelestia, nn. 194-195: "By the 'serpent' is here meant the sensuous part of man in which he trusts; by the 'wild animal of the field,' here, as before, every affection of the external man; by the 'woman,' man's Own; by the serpent's saying, 'Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree?' that they began to doubt. The subject here treated of is the third posterity of the Most Ancient Church, which began not to believe in things revealed unless they saw and felt that they were so. Their first state, that it was one of doubt, is described in this and the next following verse. The most ancient people did not compare all things in man to beasts and birds, but so denominated them; and this their customary manner of speaking remained even in the Ancient Church after the flood, and preserved among the prophets. The sensuous things in man they called 'serpents,' because as serpents live close to the earth, so sensuous things are those next to the body. Hence also reasonings concerning the mysteries of faith, founded on the evidence of the senses, were called by them the 'poison of a serpent,' and the reasoners themselves 'serpents'; and because such persons reason much from the sensuous, that is, from visible things (such as are things terrestrial, corporeal, mundane, and natural), it is said that 'the serpent was more subtle than any wild animal of the field.' "

Suggested Questions on the Lesson

- P. Can you repeat the first verse of the Bible? *In the beginning . . .*
- I. What are the heavens and the earth in us? *higher and lower natures*
- S. Of what does the first chapter of Genesis treat in its spiritual sense?
steps in regeneration
- I. What is the difference between a man and an animal? *man image of God*
- J. What were the first people told to do? *rule "earth"*
- I. What is the first church developed on earth called? *Most Ancient*
- J. How is the beautiful state of the first church described? *Eden*
- P. After chapter 1, what names are used to tell about the first men and women? *Adam and Eve*
- P. What two special trees are mentioned? *life, knowledge*
- I. What does the tree of life signify? *principle that all life is from God*
- P. In the beginning of the story, where was this tree in the garden? *center*
- P. What were the first people told not to do? *eat of tree of knowledge*
- S. What does this mean? *not to decide for yourself what is good or evil*
- I. What is the serpent? *symbol of affection for sense pleasures*
- J. What did the serpent tell Eve? *wouldn't die*
- P. What did Eve and Adam do? *ate fruit*

- P. Why were they afterward ashamed? *guilt for disobedience*
- P. How did they try to cover their nakedness? *fig leaves*
- P. What was their punishment for disobedience? *driven out of garden*
- J. How was the garden protected? *cherubim*
- S. What was the first prophecy of the Lord's Advent?
verse 15—“it shall bruise thy head . . .”

CAIN AND ABEL

Genesis 4:1-15

After the review of the last lesson the teacher in each class will need to cover briefly the story of the Garden of Eden. The emphasis should be on the disobedience, the reason for it, and the resultant expulsion from the garden, treated in each case according to the level of understanding of the class.

Doctrinal Points

The Lord knows the future and makes provision for it.

The early people knew the correspondence of everything in nature.
Worship of the Lord has no goodness in it unless there is love in the heart.

All true love comes from the Lord as we learn of Him and obey Him.

Notes for Parents

When the first people created upon the earth had reached the stage of development pictured by the seventh day, they became the first great “church,” the Most Ancient Church. They were very different from people today. They cared little for the things of this world and lived in close touch with heaven, trusting the Lord and depending upon Him for guidance and care, just as a little baby depends on his parents. In the Bible the beautiful state in which they lived is pictured as a garden—the Garden of Eden. Mythology calls this the Golden Age.

But we all remember that there was one tree in the garden of whose fruit the Lord had commanded them not to eat, and that the serpent tempted them to doubt the Lord’s wisdom and to try the forbidden fruit. The tree of knowledge of good and evil pictures the belief that we ourselves are able to decide what is right

and wrong, and the serpent is our five natural senses, which show us only the things of this material world.

When Adam and Eve listened to the serpent instead of to the Lord and ate of the forbidden fruit, they were driven out of the garden. As soon as a child yields to the promptings of his physical nature and his natural inheritance and begins to think that he knows better than his parents, he loses the happy, trustful state of infancy. As soon as a man decides that this world is all-important and that he does not need the Lord to tell him how to live, he has started on the downward path away from heavenly happiness.

After Adam and Eve were driven out of the garden, two sons were born to them. Cain and Abel represent faith and charity. Faith is recognition of the Lord in the mind and charity is love of the Lord and the neighbor in the heart. They are brothers, meant to work together and help each other in the service of the Lord. But when men think that they can guide themselves, these two brothers are separated. Then faith in the Lord becomes mere "lip service"—Cain's offering—and all genuine love is killed; for true, unselfish love comes only from the Lord as we learn of Him and obey Him.

The Lord did not allow Cain to be destroyed even after he had killed his brother, because as long as we even say we believe in the Lord and go through the outward forms of worship, there is hope that we may read or hear something which will make us stop to think and change our ways.

Primary

The notes suggest a simple approach to the lesson and a practical way of connecting it with the children's experience. Stress the point of willful disobedience and its results rather than going into detail about the garden and the serpent. Cain's disposition can then be discussed as one of the consequences of the original turning to self-will.

In the Bible, after the story of the creation of the earth and everything on it, the Lord tells us a story about the beautiful

Garden of Eden which He gave to men to live in. They had everything they could possibly want. There was only one thing He told them not to do, and that was to eat of the fruit of one particular tree, the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

But the first people, who in the story are called Adam and Eve, wanted to try this fruit and so they disobeyed the Lord, just as you sometimes make up your mind to do the very thing your father and mother have told you not to do, even though you have been told plainly that something bad will happen if you do it. Adam and Eve, because they wanted to have their own way instead of obeying the Lord, had to leave the beautiful garden and go out and work very hard for their living.

After a while Adam and Eve had two sons. Let us read the story about them. [Read Genesis 4:1-15.]

Who was the first son of Adam and Eve?

Who was the second?

What was Cain's occupation?

What was Abel's?

What offerings did they bring to the Lord?

Why did the Lord not accept Cain's offering?

The Lord is never deceived when we only pretend to be good.

He knows our hearts.

How did Cain show that the Lord had judged him correctly?

What did he say when the Lord asked him where Abel was?

Really each one of us is his brother's keeper.

Each of us should do all he can to help others.

When we listen to the first part of this story, it seems to us, doesn't it, that both brothers were trying to please the Lord, and that Cain's offering was just as good as Abel's. But the Lord knows what is in our hearts, and He saw that Cain was only pretending to be good. Cain did not really love the Lord. The kind of feelings he had in his heart were the kind which led him to kill his brother. If there is love in our hearts, we will show it by trying never to hurt other people but instead always to help them and make them happy.

Junior

This class should have a thorough review of the story of the Garden of Eden. They should have the details of the story fixed in their minds, but should also understand that it is a Divine allegory which teaches us about the spiritual history of mankind and about developments in our own souls.

In how many days or stages was the world created?

What was the final creation?

How does man differ from the animals?

What is his proper relation to the other things in the world?

What did the Lord do on the seventh day?

How did He set the seventh day apart?

When the Lord was in the world, what did He do on the sabbath day?

What simple rule did He give for it?

You all know the story of Adam and Eve and the Garden of Eden which follows the story of creation. Let us see how many of the details we remember.

How was the Garden of Eden watered?

Into how many branches did the river divide?

What tree was in the midst of the garden?

What other tree is mentioned?

What were Adam and Eve told about this second tree?

What did the Lord say would happen if they ate of its fruit?

Who persuaded them to disobey the Lord?

How were they punished?

We know that this story is an allegory, a kind of parable, in which the Lord is describing for us—under the figure of the beautiful, fruitful garden and the man Adam and his wife Eve—the happy, peaceful state of the people of the Most Ancient Church, the first church formed among men after they had been instructed and developed by the Lord. Over and over again in the Bible the Lord tells us that if we will only learn the true way of life from Him and follow it, He will give us freely everything we need and will make us happy. The trouble with us—just as with Adam and Eve in the story—is that we think we know better than the Lord what is good for us. So we disobey first our parents and teachers and afterward the Lord Himself, and then we have to learn “the hard way.”

And our story goes on to show us that one disobedience leads to others. After they were driven out of the garden we learn that Adam and Eve had two sons.

What were their names?

Which was the older?

What was his occupation?

What was Abel's occupation?

What offering did Cain bring to the Lord?

What offering did Abel bring?

Which offering did the Lord accept?

When we first read this story, we sometimes think the Lord was unfair. The two offerings were different but apparently each man brought the best he had. When you are a little older, you will learn what each of these offerings really represents, but even in the literal story you can find the explanation of the Lord's rejection of Cain's offering if you look for it. Read verse 7 and remember what kind of person Cain afterward showed himself to be.

You know that we sometimes pretend to be good when we are not, but the Lord always sees our hearts. Cain pretended to be worshiping the Lord when he brought his offering, but his heart was selfish. He was really just trying to buy the Lord's favor. People today may do the same thing. They may pretend to believe in the Lord and may go to church regularly and give money to the church and for charity when there is no love for the Lord or the neighbor in their hearts. Like Cain, they are just trying to win favor and honor, and when they do not get what they want, they become angry and try to hurt other people, just as Cain in the story rose up and slew his brother Abel. Cain's character was just a further development of the wrong turning which Adam and Eve took when they chose to follow their own judgment instead of obeying the Lord. Cain did not want to acknowledge his obligation to love the Lord and cherish his brother. If we obey the Lord, each one of us sees that he must be his brother's keeper, helping those about him in every possible way.

You can see how this story pictures for us the difference be-

tween genuine love for the Lord and a declaration of belief in Him which has no real love in it. Love and faith are two brothers who must live and work together. When either one is destroyed, unhappiness follows. Cain became “a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth.” He would always have to live in fear and he would never have a settled home. Selfish and evil people are always in this unhappy state inside, even when they seem to be prosperous outwardly.

The Lord did not permit Cain to be killed. Cain represents faith, and faith is necessary. For as long as we even profess to believe in the Lord, there is always a chance that we may see our selfishness and turn from it and begin to do better. Read Ezekiel 18:23.

Intermediate

The emphasis should be on the use the people of the Most Ancient Church made of their freedom of choice, and on its direct result in the separation of faith and charity. Clear instruction should be given as to the meaning of faith and charity and the necessity of both in our lives.

We are all familiar with the story of the Garden of Eden, and you have perhaps learned that it is an allegory given us by the Lord to hold in our minds as a picture of the peaceful, happy state in which the man lives who is in genuine love to the Lord, trusting the Lord completely and looking to Him for guidance and support in all things. This was the state of the people of the Most Ancient Church and is the state of the celestial angels. The picture given us of the Garden of Eden is a more detailed development of the state described by the seventh day—the goal of creation.

But we know that the people of the Most Ancient Church did not remain in this happy state. They were men and women—not mere automatic recipients of the Lord’s blessings. They had their own reasoning faculty and they had freedom of choice, just as we have today. In time they became restless under the Lord’s direction and wanted to lead themselves. This is represented in the story of the temptation of Eve by the serpent and the eating of the for-

bidden fruit. Then they were driven out of the garden to “till the ground” from which they were taken. They had chosen to lead themselves, and the happy, innocent, peaceful state was gone. From that time on they had to work for their spiritual bread.

Now in the story Adam and Eve have two sons. All through the Word the birth of children pictures new developments of goodness and truth or of evil and falsity—depending on the spiritual state of the parents. When the first people were driven out of the garden, they had taken a downward step spiritually, but they were by no means evil. They still recognized the Lord and intended to serve Him. But their desire to decide for themselves led to a divided mind, because they were resisting the Lord’s guidance. In the Word when two sons are born, one always represents truth or faith, and the other goodness or charity. Faith is belief in the Lord in our minds. Charity is love for the Lord in our hearts. Both are necessary, because we have to learn what is right and we have to want to do it. The two “brothers” should always be each other’s “keepers.”

But we know that sometimes people have good intentions but do not make the effort to learn what is right, and also that sometimes people who know the truth and acknowledge it with their minds do not want to live according to it. In our story Cain represents faith. He was a tiller of the ground, and the ground represents the mind. Abel represents charity. He was a keeper of sheep, and sheep represent innocent good affections.

Each brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of his own toil and the Lord accepted Abel’s offering and rejected Cain’s. Does this mean that the Lord wants our hearts but not our minds? That He wants us to love Him without trying to understand Him? The Lord said, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment.” In our religion we must use our minds as well as our hearts. And in the story the Lord says to Cain, “If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?” It was not Cain’s offering that was at fault but what was behind it in Cain’s heart. For the Lord knows our hearts. Do people ever profess to believe in God,

go to church, and support the church because it will make them better pleased with themselves and more respected in the community in which they live?

When people try to appear religious for selfish reasons, charity—true love of the Lord and the neighbor—is killed. Cain’s jealous rage in the story is repeated again and again with all self-centered people. His question, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” is answered by the Lord Himself in John 13:34, an answer which is incorporated in our own Statement of Faith. We should all know this verse, for it is a bulwark against selfish passions.

When faith is separated from charity—that is, when people think it is enough to know what is right without doing it—their minds have no firm foundation. A good, kindly life is the true home of the soul. Selfish people are driven from this home and wander about from one disappointment to another, a prey to falsity and evil. So Cain became a fugitive and a vagabond. But the Lord protected Cain so that he should not be killed. Faith—the study and acceptance of the truth—is absolutely necessary to us, for without it we have only our own ideas to guide us. So the Lord always preserves faith in the world somewhere.

Basic Correspondences

Cain = faith

Abel = charity

the ground = the mind

sheep = innocent affections

Senior

The young people should be led to think seriously of the practical effects of the separation of faith and charity in the individual and in the history of the church and the world. The quotation from AC 362 at the end of the lesson should be read and discussed, as it describes a tendency to which we all are subject and which is the cause of many conflicts.

Cain and Abel are the first of several pairs of brothers in the Bible. When our desire and our thought unite—which all marriages

in the Word picture—they produce results in our hearts and in our minds. These are the children. Usually new desires are pictured by daughters and new thoughts by sons. But as our desires come to our consciousness in our minds, things of the will may also be pictured by sons. So two brothers always picture the will and the thought side of a new development.

We say that Cain and Abel picture faith and charity: mental acceptance of a truth and the will to do it. The two are brothers. They belong together. For truth is of no use to us if we do not live according to it, and the desire to do right comes to nothing if we do not know what is right.

Cain, who represents faith, is born first because every new step in our progress through life comes to us first through some new knowledge or idea entering the mind. But Swedenborg tells us that into each truth that we learn the Lord insinuates the feeling that we ought to live according to it. This is the birth of Abel, or charity. And it is the basis of what we call conscience.

Cain's offering of the fruit of the ground is our acceptance of truth with our minds. This is necessary and right, but it is worthless unless our will is to live according to the truth. Abel's offering represents this acceptance by the will. The Lord said to Cain, "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?" Goodness is nothing else than living according to the truth from a desire to serve the Lord. When we see the truth but do not try to live according to it, the Cain in us kills his "brother" Abel. His punishment is that he becomes a fugitive and a vagabond. When we do not apply to our conduct the truths that we learn, we live in constant fear of disgrace or punishment and our minds have no settled abiding place.

One common idea of faith is that it is blind belief in something we cannot understand, and a widespread idea of charity is that it is giving to the poor. The New Church regards them quite differently. Faith is belief in what we have found to be true, belief which actually directs our thought and action. And charity is the desire of the will to serve the Lord and the neighbor instead of self. Faith is not really faith unless we act according to it, and

charity is not really charity unless it looks to the Lord for guidance and recognizes Him as the giver of all good.

From our lesson for today we learn that the separation of faith and charity—which is something we find in ourselves as well as in the life of the world about us—began long ago in the Most Ancient Church. You may remember from our last lesson that the serpent's words to Eve (Genesis 3:1-5) picture the first inclination of men to question the truth as it came to them from the Lord and to rely on their own judgment based on what they saw about them in the world, and that this was the beginning of the decline of the Most Ancient Church. The separation of faith and charity is the inevitable result of the choice of self as a guide in place of the Lord. The quotations at the end of this lesson show how this separation affected all later history.

Adult

Since this lesson on the Ancient Church will be centered on the end rather than on the beginning of that church, it will be better to point out the difference between the two “churches” in this lesson. Discussion should also bring out the fact that “faith alone” is a doctrine still common in some churches and that as individuals we are all believers in that doctrine to the extent that we take it for granted that we shall get to heaven just because we go to church.

We have seen that the seventh day of creation—in addition to its meaning for our individual lives—pictured the celestial state of the people of the Most Ancient Church, a state in which, because they loved the Lord and trusted Him wholly, they could be instructed in His truth by an inner way. This beautiful state is further pictured by the description of the Garden of Eden.

But we remember that men were not content to remain in this state. Self-consciousness developed in them—represented by the creation of Eve—and through it the temptation to reason from the evidence of their physical senses—the serpent—instead of trusting the inner dictate of truth from the Lord. So they were driven out of the garden. Man, once he begins to develop self-consciousness and to assert himself, loses the innocent, trustful state of his early

infancy and comes into the hard necessity of learning from experience. We think of the development of a child as an advance from infancy to maturity, and on the external plane it is; but spiritually it is a decline, a progression downward from the celestial to the natural state.

In the internal historical sense of the Word we see this decline clearly in the description of the character of the successive churches. The story of the birth of Cain and Abel and the slaying of Abel by Cain is the basis of our understanding of this decline. Swedenborg says of it: “As this chapter treats of the degeneration of the Most Ancient Church, or the falsification of its doctrine, and consequently of its heresies and sects, under the names of Cain and his descendants, it is to be observed that there is no possibility of understanding how doctrine was falsified, or what was the nature of the heresies and sects of that church, unless the nature of the true church be rightly understood. Enough has been said above concerning the Most Ancient Church, showing that it was a celestial man, and that it acknowledged no other faith than that which was of love to the Lord and toward the neighbor. Through this love they had faith from the Lord, or a perception of all the things that belonged to faith . . . But the case is far different at this day, for now faith takes precedence of charity, but still through faith charity is given by the Lord, and then charity becomes the principal. It follows from this that in the most ancient time doctrine was falsified when they made confession of faith, and thus separated it from love. Those who falsified doctrine in this way, or separated faith from love, or made confession of faith alone, were then called ‘Cain.’”

The name *Cain* means “possession.” Cain represents faith, a faith of the mind, believed to be self-derived and so separated from charity. Abel represents charity, love to the Lord and the neighbor in the heart. Abel was a keeper of sheep. Sheep, we know, represent innocent affections. Cain was a tiller of the ground. The ground is the mind in its natural state. We are told (AC 345) that “Those were said to ‘till the ground’ who look to bodily and

earthly things.” Both Cain and Abel brought offerings to the Lord, the offerings representing worship. Of Cain’s offering Swedenborg says: “That by the ‘fruit of the ground’ are meant the works of faith without charity, appears also from what follows; for the works of faith devoid of charity are works of no faith, being in themselves dead, for they are solely of the external man” (AC 348). Abel’s offering of the firstlings of the flock and of the fat thereof represents love and the faith thence derived, the fat representing “the celestial itself.”

Even in the letter we are not left in doubt as to the reason why Cain’s offering was not accepted. The Lord looks upon the heart, and in the Lord’s sight Cain did not “do well.” The state of his heart became evident when he slew his brother. Of this, as it applies to the later state of the church, Swedenborg says (AC 369): “. . . while both faith and charity were from the doctrine of faith, yet faith separate from love could not but disregard and thereby extinguish charity; as is the case at the present day with those who maintain that faith alone saves, without any work of charity, *for in this very supposition they extinguish charity.*” Cain’s attitude is also clearly expressed in his question, “Am I my brother’s keeper?”

Nevertheless, the Lord does not permit Cain to be destroyed. The killing of Abel represented the destruction of the innocent love in the heart through which, up to that time, the Lord had been able to instruct and guide mankind. The Lord had foreseen that man would develop in this direction and was providing a new means of reaching him and saving him from himself. Of the successive churches on the earth only the Most Ancient Church was of the celestial type. In AC 393 we read: “The Most Ancient Church was of such a character as to acknowledge no faith except that which is of love, insomuch that they were unwilling even to mention faith, for through love from the Lord they perceived all things that belong to faith. Such also are the celestial angels of whom we have spoken above. But as it was foreseen that the human race could not continue to be of this character, but would separate faith from love to the Lord, and would make faith a

doctrine by itself, it was provided that they should indeed be separated, but in such a way that through faith—that is, through the knowledges of faith—men might receive from the Lord charity, so that knowledge or hearing should come first, and then through knowledge or hearing, charity—that is, love toward the neighbor, and mercy—might be given by the Lord, which charity should not only be inseparable from faith, but should also constitute the principal of faith. And then instead of the perception they had in the Most Ancient Church, there succeeded conscience, acquired through faith joined to charity, *which dictated not what is true, but that it is true, and this because the Lord has so said in the Word.*" Faith—even faith without charity—is better than no faith at all. So long as a man recognizes God with his mind there is a possibility that something in the Word may strike home to his heart and that he may "come to himself," as we read of the prodigal son (Luke 15:17-19): "And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants."

From the Writings of Swedenborg

Arcana Coelestia, n. 340: "With such as are called 'Cain' faith is recognized and acknowledged as a thing by itself . . . Previously, they had been as it were ignorant of what faith is, because they had a perception of all the things of faith. But when they began to make a distinct doctrine of faith, they took the things they had a perception of and reduced them into doctrine, calling it 'I have gotten a man, Jehovah,' as if they had found out something new; and thus what was before inscribed on the heart became a mere matter of knowing."

Arcana Coelestia, n. 362: "The doctrine of faith called 'Cain' is here described, which in consequence of separating faith from love, separated it also from charity, the offspring of love. Wherever there is any church, there arise heresies, because while men are intent on some particular article of faith they make that the main thing; for such is the nature of man's thought that while

intent on some one thing he sets it before any other, especially when his imagination claims it as a discovery of his own, and when the love of self and of the world puff him up. Everything then seems to agree with and confirm it, until at last he will swear that it is so, even if it is false. Just in this way those called 'Cain' made faith more essential than love, and as they consequently lived without love, both the love of self and the phantasy thence derived conspired to confirm them in it."

Suggested Questions on the Lesson

- P. Who created the earth and everything on it? *God*
P. In how many days or stages was it created? *six*
J. What was the final creation? *man*
P. What did the Lord do on the seventh day? *rested*
J. What did He say of this day? *blessed and sanctified*
J. What do *blessed* and *sanctified* mean? *made happy, made holy*
J. What does this teach us about how we should use Sunday?
make others happy, worship
I. By what story in the Bible is the state of the people of the first church
on earth pictured? *Eden*
J. What one prohibition did the Lord give them?
not eat of tree of knowledge
J. How were they tempted to disobey? *serpent*
J. What was their punishment? *driven from garden*
P. In our story for today what two sons were born to Adam and Eve?
Cain, Abel
P. What was Cain's occupation? *farmer*
P. What was Abel's occupation? *shepherd*
J. What offerings did they bring to the Lord? *grain, lamb*
P. Whose offering was accepted? *Abel's*
J. Why was Cain's offering rejected? *insincere*
P. What did Cain do which showed his true character? *killed Abel*
J. What was his punishment? *wanderer*
J. How did the Lord save him from being destroyed? *mark*
I. What do Cain and Abel represent? *faith, charity*
S. What is represented by Cain's slaying Abel? *thinking it is enough
to know what is right without doing it*

NOAH BUILDS AN ARK

Genesis 6

In the internal sense, the stories of the serpent and of Cain and Abel tell of the origin of evil in man's turning from the Lord to self, of the consequent loss of the innocent, celestial state, and of the loss of charity as men became more and more confirmed in self-esteem and self-will. It will be easy in all the classes to introduce the story of Noah by a question concerning the tree of knowledge of good and evil and a brief statement concerning man's first disobedience and its results.

Doctrinal Points

Since the time described by the story of Noah men have been of the “spiritual” instead of the “celestial” nature. This means that we all have to learn what is true and obey it until we come to love it. We cannot trust our natural affections to tell us what is right.

Notes for Parents

Today we have another of the wonderful symbol stories from the Ancient Word. If we realize its nature and meaning, we do not worry about the size of the ark or about how so many animals could be crowded into it and get along together and have enough to eat for a year (cf. Gen. 7:11, 8:13).

. The first people used their freedom to disobey the Lord. The tree of knowledge of good and evil—a symbol of their own desires and reasonings—was more attractive to them than the tree of life. This was the beginning of evil in the world, as it is the beginning of evil in each one of us, when we allow ourselves to think that we know better than the Lord what is good for us. Once we start on that path of reasoning we stray further and further from the right way. The early people eventually became monsters of selfishness.

The flood which destroyed them was not a flood of water but a flood of falsity and evil.

The few who still recognized their need of the Lord and tried to obey Him are pictured by Noah, and the ark in which he and his family rode out the flood is the character he was able to build by obeying the divine commands. Every detail of the story is full of meaning if we have the key. The pitch with which the ark was covered within and without is our natural selfishness which the Lord makes use of to deter us from doing many wrong things. The three stories in the ark are the three planes of our intellect: knowledge, reason, and understanding. The door in the side is our means of receiving from others and giving to others in our daily lives. The window above is our willingness to look to the Lord for guidance and strength. The animals are all our various affections and thoughts.

Your younger children will be interested in this story as a story. The Lord gave it in this form so that it would be read and remembered. But as you read on in the Bible, keep some of this inner meaning in mind, and you will soon realize what a truly wonderful book the Bible is and how much more it has to say to us than we at first suspect.

Primary

Even young children can get the idea that disobedience always leads to trouble. The fact that people got so bad that they had to be destroyed is the introduction for the lesson today. But Noah was good, and the Lord always takes care of us when we are good. The children will enjoy hearing about the ark and the people and animals in it. They should learn the name *Noah*, and, if possible, also *Shem*, *Ham*, and *Japheth*.

You remember how kindly the Lord took care of the first people in the beautiful Garden of Eden. Do you remember what was the one thing He told them not to do? They began to think about this tree, and its fruit looked very good to them, and so finally they disobeyed the Lord and ate of the fruit. They thought the Lord would not know, but He did. The Lord knows everything we do

and He knows our thoughts and feelings, too.

So the first people had to leave the beautiful garden and go out and work for their food. The Lord cannot give us things if we do not use them as they are meant to be used.

When we once begin to disobey our parents, we are very likely to begin to do more and more wrong things. So the early people, after they were sent out of the Garden of Eden, went from bad to worse until finally they became so bad that the Lord had to get rid of them altogether. They were destroyed by a great flood.

But there were a few people who still wanted to obey the Lord, and the Lord made plans to save them from the flood. Let us read the story of Noah and what the Lord told him to do. [Read Genesis 6:7-22.]

Who were Noah's three sons?

What did the Lord tell him to make?

An ark is a box or chest made to hold something and keep it safe.

What was Noah's ark made of?

How was it divided inside?

Where was the window?

Where was the door?

What people went into the ark?

What else was Noah told to take into the ark?

When the flood came, the ark floated on top of the water, and so they were saved.

Junior

The Juniors can easily understand the general meaning of this story, the gradual decline once selfishness creeps in, until the whole life is flooded with wrong thoughts. The lesson offers a good chance to point out that everything may have either a good or a bad correspondence because when a good thing is misused, it becomes bad. So water, which pictures truth, can become a destructive flood and picture falsity instead of truth. Have the children look up and read Matthew 7:24-29.

Where were the first people placed by the Lord?

How was the Garden of Eden watered?

What tree was in the midst of the garden?

What other tree was in the garden?

What did the Lord tell Adam and Eve not to do?

You have become familiar with the story of the disobedience of Adam and Eve, the story of Eve's yielding to the temptation of the serpent. After they disobeyed, they did not die physically, but something which had been in them died: the beautiful, innocent state in which they had lived was lost. They were driven out of the garden.

Did you ever do something naughty and have it lead to other things that were worse and worse? Sometimes a boy disobeys his mother and then lies about it and gets angry and even hurts someone rather than own up and say he is sorry. Did you ever think that every thief and murderer was once an innocent baby? How did he become so bad? It wasn't all at once, you may be sure, but little by little. So in the early times, after the Garden of Eden state was closed, people gradually became worse and worse, until most of them were so bad that the Lord could no longer make any impression on their hearts and minds. They could not even think anything but selfish thoughts, and this selfishness and false thinking is pictured in the Bible by a great flood which increased until it drowned them all.

But there were still some good people, and the Lord saved them in a wonderful way.

In the Bible story who is the person whom the Lord saved?
Who were saved with him?

We always think of Noah's ark as a sort of houseboat, don't we? But that is because it floated on the water. An ark is really just a box or chest, big or little, made to keep something safe. There are two other famous arks mentioned in the Bible. Look up Exodus 2:3 and 25:10. Noah's ark is a picture of something we can all have to keep us safe from the flood of wrong thoughts and feelings which our natural selfishness brings upon us. This ark is a strong character, built according to the Lord's directions. When you are older, you will be able to understand just what each part of the ark pictures, but first you must fix in your minds the description of it

as it is given in our chapter, and this is something you can do now.

What was it made of?

Gopher wood was some kind of pine or cedar, containing pitch.

How was it made watertight?

How many stories did it have?

What other inside divisions are mentioned?

Where was the door?

Where was the window?

Perhaps even now you can see what the door and window picture. Can you say our Sunday School benediction? As we live with other people in the world, we are always coming in or going out from the house of our character, and we want the Lord to be with our thoughts and acts to keep them always pure and kind. This is the “door” in the side of the ark. And we need to have a “window” in our minds always open toward heaven. That is, we want always to be conscious that the Lord is seeing us and always learning more and more of what He is saying to us in His Word.

Do you know what the birds and animals picture which Noah was told to take with him into the ark? They are all the thoughts and feelings—some good and some bad—which make us what we are.

When everyone was in the ark, who shut them in?

Have you ever watched the people boarding a large airliner at an airport? When everyone is on the plane, someone on the *outside* closes and bolts the door. Do you know why? It is the only way to be sure that no one can jump or fall out of the plane until it is safely back on the ground. So you can see why the Lord Himself shut the ark.

The size of the ark is given us in cubits. The word *cubit* first meant a “bending,” and so it came to mean the bending in the arm, or the elbow. In the early days, before people learned to measure things with the carefulness that scientists must use today, a man’s measuring stick was his own arm. A cubit was the distance from the tips of a man’s fingers to his elbow. We may think of a cubit as a little over a foot and a half. Thus the ark is pictured

as being more than 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high. In other words the ark was very large indeed. Be sure, however, to learn its dimensions in cubits—300 cubits long, 50 cubits wide, and 30 cubits high—because, as you will learn later, numbers in the Bible all have meanings which help us to understand the lessons which the Lord is trying to teach us.

Do you know how many days it rained after Noah entered the ark?

Intermediate

The most important thing to impress on the young people is that while the story of Noah and the flood is not historical fact, it is nevertheless a true story, a far more important story than if it had been mere historical fact. This lesson should be used to make clear in the minds of the young people the distinction between the terms *celestial* and *spiritual*, celestial always having to do with the will or love, and spiritual with the understanding or truth. The correspondence of the ark and its details should be carefully taught.

We all know the story of Eve and the serpent. It is a story of disobedience which led to the loss of the beautiful garden of innocent happiness. Eating the forbidden fruit led to great evil. So love of self and trust in self led men further and further from the Lord, until they became so evil that their wickedness was like a great flood, drowning out all spiritual life, all good affections, and all true thoughts, and leading finally to physical self-destruction.

The river in the Garden of Eden represents truth from the Lord, which makes everything live. But when people look to themselves for truth, they find only false ideas, which cause their destruction.

Everyone, however, did not become so bad. Noah and his family picture the people in whom enough good remained so that they could be saved. The ark, in which they were able to ride out the flood, symbolizes the character which they formed by obeying the Lord. It had three stories, the three planes of the mind. It had a window above, meaning that their minds were open to receive light from the Lord. And it had a door in the side, which is a picture of their coming and going in obedience to the Lord's commandments. You remember our Sunday School benediction: "The Lord keep

our going out and our coming in, from this time forth and even forevermore."

But it is also said that the ark had "rooms." This means that now the will and the understanding in man were separated. People were now to be able to keep their thoughts and their desires separate so that even when they wanted to do wrong, their minds could be shown the truth and they could obey it and afterwards learn to love it. So they could be saved. That is the way we are saved, too—by learning what is right and doing it, even when we do not want to. The first people were a "celestial" people: knowledge from the Lord flowed directly into their wills, and they could not think anything they did not also will. This was why, when their wills became selfish, they could no longer receive truth from the Lord. But the people called Noah, the people of the Ancient Church, were a "spiritual" people: truth from the Lord was first received into their understanding, and then, if they obeyed it, could enter their wills.

In working out the meaning of passages in the Word, it is helpful to know the meaning of some of the names used. Often the spiritual background of a story is given in a brief genealogy, and one who does not know the meaning of the names thinks it has no importance and wonders why it is a part of Scripture. The genealogy leading up to Noah is too long to detail here, but in general it pictures successive stages of departure from pure love to the Lord, each stage leading to further perversions, and each succeeding stage being more external than the last.

Noah means "rest," and pictures that point at which the Lord intervened in the downward course of human nature and "shut in" the remaining good qualities from further temptation by closing off the direct contact which men had previously had with the spiritual world.

Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. These three represent three approaches to the truth which the new state of life possessed. *Shem*, which means "name," recalls Adam's naming of the animals; he represents the new ability to recognize the quality

not of affections but of truths. *Ham* means “warm.” There is an affection for the truth with this church or stage which is further pictured by the gopher wood used in the ark—gopher means “burning,” and refers to the trees which contain pitch. *Japheth* means “extension.” When we first begin to explore the realm of truth, our curiosity leads us into wide fields of knowledge. These three abilities were preserved from destruction, together with the affections (the wives) properly related to them, the good affections (animals) which supported them, and the truths (food) which in turn supported both man and beast.

After Noah and his family had entered the ark, it is recorded (Genesis 7:16) that “the Lord shut him in.” So in our lives, when we are trying to do what is right, the Lord shuts us in—that is, He provides that we shall not be faced with any temptation which we are not strong enough to fight. Divine providence continues to stand between us and such temptations until the “ark” of our character comes to rest on firm ground where we can establish enough of a foothold to resist temptation. It rained forty days and nights.

Basic Correspondences

| | | |
|--------------------------------|---|---|
| a flood (water in a bad sense) | = | truth turned into falsity by selfishness |
| three | = | completeness on the three planes of will, thought, and act |
| forty | = | a state of temptation |

Senior

The Seniors will be interested in the fact that the tradition of the Most Ancient Church and the Ancient Church has come down in mythology in the stories of the Golden and Silver Ages, quite rightly named, since gold corresponds to love and silver to truth. Impress upon them the fact that since the time pictured by the story of the flood there has been no return on earth of

the celestial state; that is, we never “just naturally” know what is right. Our wills are inherently selfish and we have to learn what is right and make ourselves do it. And we never reach the stage when we know enough. We must be constantly learning more.

After men were cast out of the Garden of Eden, they became worse and worse. Once we start on a willful and selfish path, we are liable to stray further and further. You know from reading, if not from experience, how rapidly a boy or girl can drift away from good and orderly habits if he is allowed to go his own way. Every criminal started life as an innocent baby.

The river in the Garden of Eden stands for truth from the Lord. But when men look to themselves for truth, they get only falsity, and this falsity grows until it is a flood which destroys their spiritual life. With the Most Ancient people this destruction resulted in the destruction of physical life also. Swedenborg tells us why in one of the quotations which you will find at the end of this lesson. Even today men sometimes die from the violence of their own passions. So the flood in our story, though symbolic, pictures a very real and terrible time in the history of the human race.

Men, however, were not all evil. Some, although they had lost their first happy state, remained in general obedient to the Lord. These people are represented in the Bible story by Noah and his family. The character which they developed through obedience to the Lord is the ark, in which they were enabled to ride out the terrible period of temptation. Forty signifies fullness of temptation which is about to be overcome; so it rained forty days and forty nights. You remember also the forty years of wandering in the wilderness, and the Lord’s forty days of temptation.

Every detail of the ark is significant. It was made of gopher wood, a wood containing pitch. Wood represents natural goodness and pitch selfishness. So these people were partly good and partly bad. The measurements of the ark have a meaning, as all numbers do, but we have not time to go into this detail. Its three stories picture the three planes of the mind; its window above, the fact that the mind was open to instruction by the Lord; its door in the

side, the fact that in their daily life their coming and going was regulated by obedience to the Lord: “The Lord keep our going out and our coming in, from this time forth and even forevermore.”

Two details are especially interesting. The ark was pitched within and without with pitch, the symbol of self-love. We shall find it as the “slime” in the story of the Tower of Babel, and the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were built in a valley of slime-pits. But the Lord makes even our self-love serve as a protection, if we are trying to obey Him, as we can see if we think how many times we refrain from doing wrong for fear of punishment or of what people will say or think of us, or from hope of reward.

Also the ark was made with “rooms.” The earliest people were not “divided” in their minds. The Lord spoke directly to their hearts, and they thought and acted as they felt. So when their hearts became evil, the Lord could no longer reach them, and for the good remnant who survived, it was necessary that He separate the will and the understanding in order that even when their desires were selfish, they could see the truth with their minds and by obeying it learn to love it. Men have been so constructed ever since. We know how often we have to make ourselves do what we know is right even though we do not want to do it.

The animals and birds taken into the ark picture all the affections, both good and evil, which went to make up the character of those people, and the food the ideas which fed those affections. The fact that they were taken in by twos means that they were the affections in which thought had been “married” to will. But we notice in Genesis 7:2 that a distinction was made among the animals, in that seven pair of each “clean” beast were to be saved and only one pair of each unclean beast. In these people the good was stronger than the evil.

The civilization called *Adam* is known in the New Church as the Most Ancient Church and in mythology as the Golden Age. It was of the affectional or “celestial” type because in it men were led by their affections. The civilization called *Noah* was of a different

type: intellectual or “spiritual,” because in it men were led by their thoughts. It was the Ancient Church, or the Silver Age.

Adult

The nature of the Ancient Church with the reason for the separation of the will and the understanding in man is very important. Let it lead into a discussion of the nature of conscience and the fact that it must be developed through constant study of the Word, and must often be corrected.

We have seen how the first created people were developed by the Lord into a church—the Most Ancient Church—and how they lived an innocent, happy life led directly by the Lord and caring for the things of this world only as they taught of spiritual things—the state pictured by the Garden of Eden with the tree of life in the midst. Temptation crept in through their desire to be led by themselves instead of by the Lord, and to reason from what their senses told them instead of from what the Lord told them. This turning of their hearts away from the Lord made it impossible for the Lord any longer to teach them through their hearts, and so they lost the perception of truth which they had had and the ability to communicate directly with the spiritual world. They finally came to think only of themselves and of their life in this world, and they used the knowledge of heavenly things which had been handed down to them to excuse and confirm their selfish desires. This is pictured in our lesson today by the marriages between the sons of God and the daughters of men, the sons of God being the heavenly truths handed down to them, and the daughters of men the evil affections which had sprung from their self-love. The result was a race of giants; that is, they became very great in their own eyes and thought of themselves as gods. That this spiritual condition actually worked itself out in material ways we know from the mention of remnants of the giants in later portions of the Scriptures (Numbers 13:33; Deuteronomy 3:11). Goliath of Gath was one of the last of these physical giants. They were giants in body because of their monstrous perversions of heavenly things

and exaltation of themselves. These perversions—or falsities—ultimately destroyed them both soul and body, stifling all spiritual life within them and causing them to destroy each other. This is the flood which covered the tops of the mountains—a flood of false persuasions burying all points of approach to the Lord.

In our chapter for today we come to a statement of an apparent truth, when it is said that the Lord repented that He had made man and determined to destroy him. The destruction of the Most Ancient Church was not the work of the Lord, but of the evils and falsities which men had chosen themselves. Nor does the Lord change His mind. He foresees all things and makes provision for them. His love and wisdom are constant, but their working out in human affairs necessarily changes with the changes in men's states. So a father's love for his child does not change, but it cannot express itself in the same way when the child is bent on wrongdoing as when the child is good. When men became so evil that they had closed all ways of approach against the Lord, He permitted them to destroy themselves in order that a new church could spring up and develop among those few who had retained some desire to do right.

Those few among whom the new church could be developed are represented by Noah. They were by no means wholly good; indeed, they were so far perverted that they could not possibly be restored to the original state of the celestial church. The Lord had to take them as they were and provide a new means of approach to them. This is pictured in the building of the ark. It was made of gopher wood. Wood is the symbol of natural goodness—the only goodness that was left in the people of that time—and Swedenborg tells us (AC 643) that gopher wood is a highly inflammable wood; so it pictures natural goodness full of selfishness. The ark was to be made, as our translation gives it, with "rooms." This pictures a change which the Lord wrought in man's very nature in order to save him. We have seen that the people of the Most Ancient Church were taught through their wills; that is, their thoughts were the direct result of their desires. So long as their

inmost desire was to serve the Lord, they could think nothing but what was true; but when their desires became selfish, they could think only what was false. So it was necessary for the Lord to separate man's will from his understanding, in order that his mind could see what was true even when he did not wish to do right; then he could learn the truth and be led to make himself live according to it until he was so confirmed in right action that the Lord could give him a new will. Thus the people of the Ancient Church—as the church described by Noah and his descendants is called—were led to do right by conscience instead of by perception. This separation of the will and the understanding is what is pictured by the ark's being divided into rooms. The three stories picture the three planes of the mind: knowledge, reason, and understanding, comparable to act, thought, and will, through which the man of this church could be led to do right. The window open above pictures the mind open to receive truth from the Lord, and the door in the side, hearing and obedience to the truth. (AC 651-658) It is by obedience to the commandments that we open the door to the Lord's entrance into our lives (cf. Revelation 3:20). So the ark in every detail is a picture of the character of the people who constituted the remnant from the Most Ancient Church after they had been put into a new order by the Lord so that they might again receive a knowledge of the truth and by obeying it learn to love it. The first church was a celestial church because it was led by love of the Lord in the heart. The second, the Ancient Church, was a spiritual church because it was led by truth from the Lord in the understanding. This newly ordered mind enabled the good remnant to survive the flood of falsity which destroyed the rest of mankind.

But the story has an application to our individual lives as well as to the history of the race. We have compared our infancy to the Garden of Eden state, and we have seen how evil creeps in as soon as we begin to have enough self-consciousness to want to choose our own way. Have we not all seen spoiled children—children who have been allowed to have their own way? Are they not well

described by the picture of the giants of old, very great and important in their own estimation, and bending all their efforts and reasoning to the satisfying of their selfish desires, even to the point of violence against those who try to control or thwart them and even sometimes violence toward themselves when they cannot get what they want? Each one of us has an inheritance of evil which, if indulged and confirmed, would lead him to complete spiritual and even physical destruction. But in very early childhood we become conscious of the division which the Lord has provided between our will and our understanding. We are taught what is right and, if our parents are wise, we are made to do it even against our will; and so we gradually form good habits and develop a conscience which helps us to direct our conduct. The life of a little child so taught and directed is also pictured by the story of Noah and the ark. The animals taken into the ark are all his affections, good and bad, which form the basis of his personality and must be dealt with in the course of his regeneration. The flood is the long series of temptations to which his selfish desires and reasonings subject him. Noah and his wife are his recognition of the Lord and his desire to do what is right. Their sons and daughters-in-law are the thoughts and affections which grow out of this recognition and desire. And if he keeps these alive in the ark, the time will come when his ark will rest on the top of the mountain and the flood will subside; he will have acquired fixed habits of right conduct which he is no longer tempted to break; his mind will have come to rest in the Lord's will and he will be ready to go forth to his work in the world in freedom—"freedom is to be led by the Lord."

From the Writings of Swedenborg

Arcana Coelestia, nn. 607, 608: "But what is yet unknown in the world, and is perhaps difficult to believe, is that the men of the Most Ancient Church had internal respiration, and only tacit external respiration. Thus they spoke not so much by words, as afterwards and as at this day, but by ideas, as angels do; and these they could express by innumerable changes of the looks and face, especially of the lips. In the lips there are countless series of muscular

fibres which at this day are not set free, but being free with the men of that time, they could so present, signify, and represent ideas by them as to express in a minute's time what at this day it would require an hour to say by articulate sounds and words, and they could do this more fully and clearly to the apprehension and understanding of those present than is possible by words, or series of words in combination. . . . But in their posterity this internal respiration little by little came to an end; and with these it became such that they could no longer present any idea of thought except the most debased, the effect of which was that they could not survive, and therefore all became extinct. . . . When internal respiration ceased, external respiration gradually succeeded, almost like that of the present day; and with external respiration a language of words, or of articulate sound into which the ideas of thought were determined. Thus the state of man was entirely changed, and became such that he could no longer have similar perception, but instead of perception another kind of dictate which may be called conscience, for it was like conscience, though a kind of intermediate between perception and the conscience known to some at this day."

Arcana Coelestia, n. 639: "If the ark with its coating of pitch, its measurement, and its construction, and the flood also, signified nothing more than the letter expresses, there would be nothing at all spiritual and celestial in the account of it, but only something historical, which would be of no more use to the human race than any similar thing described by secular writers. But because the Word of the Lord everywhere in its bosom or interiors involves and contains spiritual and celestial things, it is very evident that by the ark and all the things said about the ark, are signified hidden things not yet revealed."

Suggested Questions on the Lesson

- P. Where did the Lord place the first people? *Garden of Eden*
- P. What were they to do there? *dress it and keep it*
- P. How was the Garden of Eden watered? *river*
- J. What tree was in the middle of the garden? *life*
- J. What other tree is mentioned? *knowledge of good and evil*
- P. What were the people told not to do? *eat of tree of knowledge*
- J. What did the Lord take out of Adam while he slept? *rib*
- J. Into what did He make it? *woman*
- P. How did the first people disobey the Lord? *ate forbidden fruit*
- P. What was their punishment? *driven from garden*
- J. Did they repent? *no*
- P. What did the Lord finally decide to do? *destroy man*

- J. Why did He save Noah and his family? *they were good*
- P. What did He tell Noah to build? *ark*
- J. Can you describe the ark? *gopher wood, pitch, three stories, rooms, window, door*
- P. Who went into the ark with Noah? *wife, sons, their wives*
- J. What were the names of Noah's three sons? *Shem, Ham, Japheth*
- P. What else did Noah take into the ark? *pairs of all creatures*
- S. What is meant by eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil?
looking to self for truth
- I. What is pictured by the flood? *truth falsified and made destructive*
- S. What is the symbolic meaning of the ark? *good character formed by obeying the Lord*

THE END OF THE FLOOD

Genesis 8

Every teacher should read for background the chapters which have been omitted, chapters 5 and 7 of Genesis, and should study the brief explanations of this transition period in the notes for the various age levels. From the Junior level up, emphasis should be placed on the difference between the Most Ancient Church and the Ancient Church as to the nature of the people. Throughout our study of the Bible there will be many references to these two churches and to the “celestial” and “spiritual” types, and the children should become familiar with them. The simplest illustrations come from their knowledge of the difference between a baby and an older child.

Doctrinal Points

When a church perverts the truth given it, the Lord always prepares the way for the reception of truth in a new form.

The Ancient Word, which preceded our Word, was given for the instruction of the Ancient Church.

After man's will became wholly perverted, the Lord separated the will and the understanding so that a new will could be formed in man's understanding through the development of conscience.

We must form the habit of doing right before the Lord can give us a love for doing it.

Notes for Parents

Have your children ever asked you, or have you ever wondered yourself, how so many human beings and animals and food enough to last them several months could have been crowded into a boat only about 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high? Or, for that matter, have you asked yourself how it was possible for it to rain so much—even in forty days—that the flood covered the

mountains? Many people have asked these questions. The truth is that this story is in that part of the Bible which was taken from the Ancient Word; it is written entirely in symbol language and not meant to be taken as literal history.

Sometimes when a person yields to a very severe temptation, we say of him: "It was too much for him to stand up to; he was just swept off his feet." And we often speak of the storms of life. The people of the Most Ancient Church did not always use their independence in an unselfish way. Neither do we. And we know that when our children want their own way, it is very often not a good way. It is all too likely to be selfish, injuring other people rather than helping them. The descendants of these early people yielded more and more to the temptation to use their independence selfishly, and these tendencies were inherited from generation to generation and grew until the people became monsters of selfishness. The stories of the serpent and of Cain and Abel describe this decline. The genealogies recorded in chapters 4 and 5 do not really tell of the birth of individual men but of the succession of whole generations of people. In time their selfish desires and false thoughts became so great that they were "swept away" as by a flood.

But always some few people continued to try to be good. These are described in the symbol story of Noah; and because they built their lives according to the Lord's commands, as Noah built the ark, they could ride out the flood of evil and falsity. Read Matthew 7:24-27. When we are tempted to do what we know is wrong, our only way of safety is to ask the Lord for help and stick fast to the commandments. It may seem hard at first—we may feel like Noah shut up in the ark and tossed about on the flood—but if we are steadfast, the time will come when the temptation will no longer trouble us and we shall be able to step out into a fuller and freer life. This is the lesson of our story today, but we should also know that each detail in the story has a particular meaning.

Primary

The literal story is easy to tell. Read as much as possible of it from the Word, and be careful not to add imaginary details. Tell the whole story but dwell particularly on the incidents in chapter 8. If the children are familiar with toy Noah's arks, try to take their minds away from the idea of the ark as a plaything by telling them what a wonderful thing it was that the Lord saved Noah in this way so that the whole human race would not die.

Do you know what a flood is? It is what happens when the water in a river or lake rises far above its usual level and flows over the land. Sometimes even now there are floods which sweep away houses and cattle and people and do all sorts of destructive things.

Our Bible story tells us about the worst flood ever known. You remember the story about Adam and Eve and the beautiful Garden of Eden in which they lived. The Lord gave them everything they needed to make them happy. And there was only one thing He told them not to do—that was to eat of the fruit of a certain tree, called the tree of knowledge of good and evil. When your mother tells you not to do a certain thing, are you ever tempted to go right away and do it? That is what happened to Adam and Eve, and they disobeyed the Lord.

And you know how bad things have a way of piling up. Sometimes when you have done wrong, you find yourself telling a lie so that your mother will not know you did it, and one lie is apt to lead to another, and each makes things worse. And finally you are found out and punished and you are very unhappy. Adam and Eve were sent away from the beautiful garden and had to work for their living. Their children did wrong things, too, and in time people became so bad that they had to be destroyed by a great flood—so great that the water even covered the tops of the mountains.

But one man and his family had remained good. His name was Noah. Just before the flood came, the Lord told Noah to build himself an ark. This was a sort of wooden houseboat big enough to hold him and his wife and his three sons and their wives and a great many animals and birds, and food enough for all of them.

The ark had rooms in it and was built with three stories. There was a door on the side and a window in the roof. When the flood came, the ark floated on the water and everything in it was saved.

It rained forty days and forty nights, and the water rose and rose. Finally the rain stopped and the flood began to go down. Let us read what Noah did then. [Read Genesis 8:6-12.]

What two birds did he send out to see if the waters had gone down?

What did the raven do?

What did the dove do the first time?

What did the dove bring back the second time?

What happened the third time?

What did this show Noah?

You see that the raven which Noah sent out just flew around and accomplished nothing, as we sometimes do when we are not trying to find the right way to behave; but the dove was able to help Noah.

Finally the Lord told Noah that he might go out from the ark to live again on the dry ground. The first thing Noah did when he went out was to build an altar to the Lord so that he could thank the Lord for saving him. Almost every church today has an altar in it, and it is put there for the same purpose for which Noah built his altar—to worship the Lord. Do you know where the altar is in your church?

And do you know what we in the New Church always have on the altar? It is a copy of the Bible, the Word of God, from which we learn all we know about the Lord and what He wants us to do.

Junior

The general significance of the flood can be taught to children at this age, and the knowledge will save them from being affected by the many light remarks they are likely to hear about Noah and the flood. The lesson suggested in the third paragraph of their notes is one they especially need. They should also be introduced to the thought that the story of Noah pictures the development of a new church in the world. Be guided by their interest and their questions.

What does the Bible call the beautiful state in which the people of the Most Ancient Church lived?

Why are the people of this church called “Adam”?
What was the one thing Adam wanted which was not in the Garden?
How did the Lord provide this helper?

In the story of the Garden of Eden we are told that the “tree of life” was in the midst of the garden, and that there was also there the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” Look back at the Creation story in chapter 1 and see when the trees first appeared. It was after the creation of light and after the waters above and below the firmament had been separated and the dry land appeared. The dry land is a picture of our character after we begin to learn the truth (the light) and to distinguish between heavenly and worldly things. It is then that we first begin really to think, and our thoughts are pictured by the plants that spring up out of the earth. The trees are the big general ideas that tower above all the others. We need to know this to understand how it came about that the descendants of the people who had known the beautiful Garden of Eden state could become so evil that they had to be destroyed by the flood. In the garden, the tree of life stands for the thought that all goodness and all truth come from the Lord alone and that we must learn them from Him. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil stands for the thought that we are smart enough to know what is right and wrong without learning from the Lord. In the story Adam and Eve were commanded not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil—but they disobeyed. And when they disobeyed, they were driven out of the garden. The thought that we do not need to learn of the Lord is the beginning of all our mistakes and all our wrongdoing.

The descendants of Adam and Eve became worse and worse. Their false ideas grew until they swallowed up all their spiritual life. This is pictured by the flood which covered even the mountains and destroyed all life from the earth. The flood was not a flood of water, but a flood of false ideas. There were always, however, some people who chose to follow the Lord instead of their own ideas; and these people are described in the story of Noah and his family. They did not have an easy time, but because they

obeyed the Lord He was able to save them and to build up among their descendants a new church, called by Swedenborg the Ancient Church. Mythology calls this period the Silver Age.

Did you ever find yourself among a group of boys and girls who were bent on doing something you knew was wrong? Perhaps you tried to argue with them, and they were able to answer all your arguments and make you feel foolish for objecting; but you still in your heart knew that you ought not to join them. It was not an easy or a comfortable position to be in. It was very much like Noah in the ark, tossed about on the flood. The flood pictures a great temptation, and Noah was saved only by staying in the ark until the waters had gone down. When you are tempted to do what you know is wrong, stick to your principles through thick and thin, and you will come through safely.

After the rain had stopped, it is said that Noah opened the window which was in the top of the ark. This is a picture of opening our minds to instruction from the heavens; and the birds Noah sent out were his thoughts going out over the earth to see whether the temptation was over. There were two birds: one black and one white. There were a great many false ideas in the minds of even these good people, as there are in the minds of all of us, and these are pictured by the raven. And you notice that the raven did nothing but fly around. False ideas do not accomplish anything for us. But Noah also had the dove, which pictures a true thought. This did not bring him at once the information he wanted, but it went out again and again until Noah could be satisfied. If we go at a thing in the right way, looking for help to those who know more than we—as the people called “Noah” looked to the Lord—we shall succeed in time.

And the first thing Noah did when he and his family came out of the ark onto dry land again, was to build an altar and make sacrifices to the Lord. Whenever we are saved from yielding to temptation and brought again into a peaceful and happy state of mind, we should thank the Lord for His help: for it is the Lord who watches over us all the time and leads us safely, if we are will-

ing to obey Him.

Sometime you will learn a great deal more about the meaning of this story. It tells of how the Lord saved the whole human race from destroying itself by evils, and found a new way to reach their minds and teach them after they had closed their hearts against Him. One thing you may remember is that the church which grew up from this beginning—the Ancient Church—knew a great deal about correspondences (the relation between spiritual and natural things) of which you are beginning to learn a little now as you learn of the meaning of light and of trees and of the flood and the raven and the dove. They understood these things and loved to study them, and they even wrote in the language of correspondences. The Ancient Word (the Bible which existed before our Bible and from which the first seven chapters of Genesis were taken by Moses) was written in the days of this church. In time this church also declined, as we shall soon learn; but its people spread all over the earth and many of the religions of the Orient and of other parts of the world are remnants of the knowledge of the people of the Ancient Church, remnants perverted because they have been handed down by tradition instead of in a written form dictated by the Lord.

How long did the rain last?

What was the first bird Noah sent out?

What other bird did he send out?

What is the difference between the raven and the dove?

What did the dove bring back in her mouth the second time?

What was the first thing Noah did when he came out of the ark?

What promise did the Lord make after this?



Intermediate

This group should have a running account of the spiritual meaning of the story of the fall and of Noah and the flood, particularly as it relates to the change from celestial to spiritual in the race and applies to our present nature and possibilities. They should know clearly what are meant by the Most Ancient and Ancient Churches and what the distinction is between “celestial”

and “spiritual.” Stress the nature of temptation and the way in which we should meet it.

The decision of the people of the Most Ancient Church to try to think from themselves was, as we have seen, a step—the first step—away from the celestial state, which is the highest and happiest state men can enjoy. So it was the beginning of a long downward trend. In the Bible story the next step was the temptation by the serpent, and this was followed by the expulsion from the garden and the killing of Abel by his brother Cain. The meaning of these stories is dealt with elsewhere, and may be guessed from what is said in verses 5 to 8 of chapter 6 of Genesis. When we use our independence in the wrong way, forgetting what the Lord has told us is right and trying to please ourselves instead of Him, our natural desires lead us further and further on the path to spiritual destruction.

The celestial church was a church in which people were governed by their hearts, and when their hearts became evil, the Lord could no longer reach them because their thoughts were wholly controlled by their desires. If you stop to think, you can see that we are not just like that now. We may want very much to do some selfish thing and yet our minds can see that it is wrong, and through our minds the Lord can lead us to refuse to do it. We have, through education in the knowledge of what is right, something called our conscience. That is, we are really governed through our minds and not through our hearts. This is a spiritual instead of a celestial state. If we try to build our conscience on the Lord’s teachings and choose to obey them, the Lord can form in us gradually an unselfish instead of a selfish will. This is called *regeneration* or *rebirth*. For we are all—ever since the first people turned from the Lord—born selfish, and we must be made over by the Lord if we are to become good and happy people. This is not something that can happen all at once. It is a lifelong work. But you can see from your own experience how it is done. Remember some naughty thing you used to do when you were a little child: First your parents told you it was wrong and you learned to stop doing it

when they said “no” so that you would not be punished, although perhaps you still did it when no one was looking; then you began to be ashamed of it and tried to stop for your own sake; gradually you stopped altogether, and in time found that you no longer had any desire to do it; and finally it seemed so unpleasant to you that you wondered how you could ever have wanted to do it. You had, in regard to that particular thing, a new will which was the very opposite of your first desire. The Lord gives us the new will, but we have to prepare the way by resisting the temptation to do wrong and persevering until we have formed a new good habit in place of the old bad one.

What the Lord had to do in order to save the few good people at the end of the Most Ancient Church—the few represented by Noah—was to separate their minds from their wills so that they could see what was right even when they did not want to do it. The story of the flood is, like the story of the Garden of Eden, a symbol story. The flood was not a flood of water, but a flood of falsity developing in the minds of the people as their wills became more and more evil, until they could no longer receive the inflowing life from the Lord and destroyed each other and themselves. Only a few survived the change. The good who were saved are described in the story of Noah, and the evil who managed to go on living were the giants who appear for a short while in the historical part of the Bible: the Anakim (Numbers 13:22), etc. Two who are familiar to us all are Goliath of Gath (I Samuel 17:4) and Og, king of Bashan (Numbers 21:33).

In the story, Noah and his family were saved by building an ark which would serve as a boat, according to the Lord’s directions, and staying shut up in it until the waters of the flood subsided. This is a picture of living within the limits set by the Lord’s commandments until the temptation to disobey has passed. The part of the story we read in chapter 8 tells of the gradual subsiding of the temptation and the way in which we begin to live a new life. First Noah opens the window in the top of the ark. This is a picture of opening our minds to instruction from the Lord. Then he

sends out two birds—a raven and a dove—to see if the waters have dried up. You remember that birds picture our thoughts which fly around in our minds. Some are good and some are bad. The raven pictures our false thoughts. Our first idea of the new life is, perhaps, that it will be more profitable for us. The raven flew about and accomplished nothing. But the dove—the thought that we ought to be grateful to the Lord and look to Him for guidance—did eventually bring back the news that the new life could be good and happy. Technically the olive corresponds to “the good of charity” (the *love* of serving the Lord), and the olive leaf to “the truth of charity” (the *knowledge* of how to serve Him).

When Noah finally went out of the ark, the first thing he did was to build an altar and make sacrifices to the Lord; and this was the first worship of the Ancient Church. How did Noah know about building altars and making sacrifices? Swedenborg tells us that the people of the Most Ancient Church knew “from perception” the correspondence of everything in the natural world to the things of spiritual life, and that this knowledge was handed down by tradition to the Ancient Church. The people of the Ancient Church—with whom, as we have said, the things of the intellect came first—cultivated this knowledge of correspondence and loved it more than anything else they learned, forming their way of life and their worship according to correspondences. It was in the time of the Ancient Church that the Ancient Word was written, from which the first seven chapters of Genesis were copied by Moses.

The last verses of our chapter, in which the Lord promises that man shall never again be destroyed by his evils and falsities, tell us that the Lord has now provided in man a permanent structure (the separation of the will and the understanding) through which it would always be possible for Him to reach those who were willing to be saved. We shall find that each church raised up on earth had its decline, but that before its end the Lord began to prepare the way for a new church among those not wholly perverted. This repeated succession of new growths is described in the last verse of the chapter.

Basic Correspondences

the raven = a false idea

the dove = a true idea concerning God

the olive = the good of charity

the olive leaf = the truth of charity

Senior

The separation of the will and the understanding and its effect on the race and on the individual are important for this age group. It is not true that we “can’t help” yielding to temptation. The Lord will give us strength if we obey the commandments. Such obedience may seem a hardship for a time, but this is a necessary step to greater strength and happiness. They know that we do not gain physical strength by doing easy things. The same is true of spiritual strength.

In Genesis 6:1-8 we have the key to the meaning of the story of Noah and the flood. The daughters of men are the affections which sprang from the selfish will of the degenerating race in the Most Ancient Church. The sons of God are the truths which they received by tradition and which had originally come from the Lord. We recall that the first people were governed through their hearts—the characteristic of the celestial type. This meant that when their hearts became evil, all the truths they knew were twisted to conform to their evil desires, and there was no possibility of change for them. They assumed credit to themselves for all truth, and became great in their own eyes: “there were giants in the earth in those days.” In fact, their opinion of themselves eventually resulted in actual physical overgrowth, so that they were giants physically, also. A few of these ancient giants survived the destruction of the race pictured by the flood, and we find them mentioned in the historical parts of the Word as the Anakim, etc., and as individuals such as Goliath of Gath, and Og, king of Bashan. “And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”

We see an analogy to this today in the case of a self-exalted man who twists everything he sees to suit his own ambition. But today

there is always the possibility of reform for such a man because his mind and his will are still actually separate: that is, he *can*, if he will, admit some truth which is contrary to his desire. The longer one persists in selfishness, the harder this is; but it never becomes impossible as it was with the Most Ancient people. Swedenborg tells us that at the end of the Most Ancient Church, the great majority of the people were actually suffocated because of their own fantasies; but that in those pictured by Noah in whom there still remained some desire to serve the Lord, the Lord wrought a change by separating the will and the understanding so that He could reach them through their minds. This is pictured in the letter by the fact that the ark had “rooms” in it. The ark is the character of the man of that time who was willing to obey the Lord. The heart was prevailingly evil; but through obedience to the Lord it could remain safe from destruction during the temptation represented by the flood. The animals and birds shut up in the ark with Noah picture his affections and thoughts, both good and bad. The pitch with which the ark was covered inside and out is the motive of self-preservation. The door in the side which was kept shut throughout the flood is his normal communication with others. The window toward heaven, which was also shut during the temptation but was opened immediately after the flood, represents the mode of access for truths from heaven.

Many people think of the Christian life as a life of restraint, and so it may be for a time to the man who has formed bad habits. This is Noah shut up in the ark. But when temptation ceases to tempt him—when he has formed new habits which he finds he likes better than the old—he comes to live the Christian life freely and with happiness. This is Noah coming out of the ark to repeople the earth. The raven and the dove which he first sent forth to see if the waters were abated, are his natural, false ideas and his true thoughts. The raven flew about and accomplished nothing, but the dove persisted until it found the olive, a symbol of goodness and truth in the new life. (The olive fruit represents the *good* of charity and its leaf the *truth* of charity.) If this seems obscure, let us think

of our own experience in trying a new way of life. Even after the strong temptation to “backslide” is over, we are a little shy of the new life, trying it out here and there to see if it is really all that was claimed for it. This is like sending out the raven and the dove. The raven says, “Will this new way really get me anywhere?” The dove says, “Is it really the good and useful way?”

Noah’s building the altar and making sacrifices thereon of clean beasts and birds, pictures a new type of worship of the Lord which developed in the second or Ancient Church. We recall that the people of the Most Ancient Church had open communication with the heavens and were instructed by the Lord by a direct impulse of the heart. This was the celestial state. But after the will and understanding were separated, ideas of God had to be formed in the mind; truth had to be presented there, and considered, and so chosen as a way of life. The people of the Most Ancient Church had seen in everything about them in the world, representations of spiritual things. This knowledge was passed on by tradition to their descendants, who formed the Ancient Church, cherished it, and made it their greatest study and delight. The altar and the sacrifices represented worship of the Lord and the dedication of their affections and thoughts to His service. In this way forms of worship arose whose meaning was at first fully understood. Also the symbol teachings were written down, under inspiration from the Lord, and formed what Swedenborg calls the *Ancient Word*. The nature of this Word we can know from the first seven chapters of Genesis, which we are told were copied from it; and some of its books are mentioned by name in our Word. Swedenborg said that in his day the Ancient Word might still be in existence in Great Tartary.

Our first desire after we have passed through a severe temptation and find ourselves moving freely in a new life should be, like Noah’s, to thank the Lord for our deliverance, and to offer to Him the service of our hearts and minds. And as we do this, our lives begin to fall into a new and lasting order, governed by the Lord. This is what is meant by the last verses of our chapter. The

Lord takes care of His church in the world, and sees to it that it shall never be destroyed. When one dispensation perverts its revelation and declines, He prepares the good remnant of its people to form a new church: “seedtime and harvest” never fail. We shall have more to say about this in a future lesson.

Adult

In regard to the individual experience, note that our chapter covers all three stages of the man who regenerates: his preparation for regeneration, his state during the process of regeneration, and his regenerate state. The difference between perception and conscience, the origin of representative worship, and the difference between the doctrine of “original sin” and Swedenborg’s teaching concerning hereditary evil are all good topics for discussion.

We have seen that the people of the Most Ancient Church were “celestial” in character: that is, this man “was so constituted that the will and the understanding with him formed one mind, or that with him love was implanted in his will part, and thus at the same time faith, which filled the other or intellectual part of his mind” (AC 927). He had open communication with the heavens and lived, so long as he was content to be led by the Lord alone, in a beautiful, childlike state of innocence and trust—the Garden of Eden. His first downward step was taken when he began to be dissatisfied with this state and to desire to be independent. Because the Lord had foreseen this desire and immediately provided for him a good way to satisfy it (the story of the creation of Eve), man was still for a time maintained in the Garden of Eden state. Gradually, however, his selfhood asserted itself more and more, his senses and their pleasures (the serpent) misled him, and he turned from the Lord, lost his innocence, and was driven out of the Garden. The final state of the people of that church is described in the first seven verses of chapter 6. AC 927 continues as follows: “Their posterity inherited the condition that the will and the understanding made a one; and therefore when the love of self and the consequent insane cupidities began to take possession of their will part (where previously there had been love to the Lord and charity

toward the neighbor), not only did their will part or will become utterly perverted, but so also together with it did their intellectual part or understanding, and this was still more the case when the last posterity immersed their falsities in their cupidities, and so became ‘Nephilim,’ for thereby they became of such a nature that they could not be restored, because both parts of the mind (that is, the whole mind) had been ruined.” The giants mentioned in Genesis 6:4 were men who had acquired tremendous importance in their own eyes; but this also in time affected their physical structure. The Nephilim, Anakim, etc., were some of these giants who survived the general destruction of the Most Ancient Church; individual giants were Goliath of Gath and Og, king of Bashan. The giants were not finally exterminated until David’s time. Swedenborg tells us that the insane evils of those people were so great that the hells of the Most Ancient Church have been closed by the Lord so that spirits from those hells cannot influence others.

Near the end of that church, however, there were still some who desired to serve the Lord, and in these the Lord wrought an actual constitutional change so that they might be regenerated and built into a new church. AC 597 states: “By ‘Noah’ is signified a new or second church dispensation, which is to be called the Ancient Church, for the sake of distinction between the Most Ancient Church which was before the flood, and that which was after the flood. The state of the Most Ancient Church was such that they had from the Lord a perception of good and the derivative truth. The state of the Ancient Church, or ‘Noah,’ became such that they had a conscience of good and truth. Such as is the difference between having perception and having conscience, such was the difference of state of the Most Ancient and the Ancient Churches. Perception is not conscience: the celestial have perception; the spiritual have conscience. The Most Ancient Church was celestial, the Ancient was spiritual.” We are also told that the people of the Most Ancient Church, because they were in communication with the heavens, had internal rather than external respiration, and that when the communication ceased, many of them actually died of

a kind of suffocation, so that the flood is a realistic picture of their end. But in the good remnant—and in the others who survived—the Lord set up external respiration. Internal respiration, for short periods, is not unknown even today. It is practiced by some of the Indian Yogis, and has the effect of making them practically unconscious of their material surroundings. Swedenborg also had this experience.

The most important change made in man at this time was the separation of the will and the understanding, so that man could see the truth of thoughts which were contrary to his desires. Men ever since have been of this nature. We know this from the fact that we ourselves often wish very much to do things which our minds tell us are not right, and that we are capable of making decisions contrary to our desires. This new character set up in the good remnant is pictured by the ark, the separation being indicated by its “rooms.” There was much falsity in the minds of these people and much selfishness in their hearts: the ark was pitched “within and without with pitch”; and all the animals and birds both clean and unclean were within it. But it had a window toward heaven, and because it was built according to the commandment of the Lord, and because the Lord “shut him in,” it could ride out the flood. We know in our own experience that there have been times when we were sorely tempted to yield to worldly and sensual desires and have been kept safe only by our knowledge of the right way and a dogged determination to stick to it. The Lord’s providence shuts us in, also. Noah, tossed about in the ark throughout the flood, pictures this period in our experience.

But the time comes, if we remain shut up in the ark, when the rain ceases and the flood begins to abate. We realize that our temptation is losing strength and we begin to reach out tentatively for a new and freer way of life which shall yet be good and righteous. This is the particular time described in our chapter for today. There are in our minds both false and true thoughts—the raven and the dove—with which we explore our condition. Rest and peace in the new way do not come immediately, but presently the dove

brings back tokens of promise. The olive leaf represents “the truth of charity.” Finally the flood is over and we can open the door and go out freely to build up a new life. This whole process is a common Christian experience, the duration of the flood representing the period of temptation which must follow the decision to lead a new life, if we are to lead that life with assurance and strength.

In AC 920 Swedenborg describes the origin of representative worship, pointing out that in the Most Ancient Church worship was internal, as it is in heaven, but that men saw in the things of the outward world representatives of internal things. As the internal perception was gradually lost, the knowledge of the representatives was more cherished, and this knowledge was handed down to the posterity of that church and became the basis of the representative worship of the Ancient Church. The altar which Noah is said to have built after he came forth from the ark is the first altar mentioned in the Word. The altar is the representative of worship of the Lord and the offerings made upon it picture the desire that our affections and thoughts shall be such as to serve Him. This recognition that the Lord is the Source of all goodness and truth is essential to anyone’s salvation.

The New Church does not hold the doctrine of “original sin” in the sense in which this is accepted in many churches, but neither does it teach that we are “born good” and acquire all our evils through our environment. Our natural inheritance is selfish, and this selfishness remains with us to eternity. Regeneration does not destroy it (cf. AC 868). But if we look to the Lord, obey Him, and become regenerate men and women, the Lord holds our natural self in subjection and permits us to enjoy the peace and happiness which are the result of unselfish love—the Lord’s love acting in and through us. The Lord’s promise in the last verse of our chapter describes the order of this change called regeneration, which under the Divine Providence is and always will be possible for anyone who seeks it.

From the Writings of Swedenborg

Arcana Coelestia, n. 927: “It has been shown that the man of the Most Ancient Church was so constituted that the will and the understanding with him formed one mind, or that with him love was implanted in his will part, and thus at the same time faith, which filled the other or intellectual part of his mind. From this their posterity inherited the condition that the will and the understanding made a one; and therefore when the love of self and the consequent insane cupidities began to take possession of their will part (where previously there had been love to the Lord and charity toward the neighbor), not only did their will part or will become utterly perverted, but so also together with it did their intellectual part or understanding, and this was still more the case when the last posterity immersed their falsities in their cupidities, and so became ‘Nephilim,’ for thereby they became of such a nature that they could not be restored, because both parts of the mind (that is, the whole mind) had been ruined. But as this had been foreseen by the Lord, He had also provided for man’s upbuilding, in this way, that he might be reformed and regenerated in respect to the second or intellectual part of the mind, in which there might be implanted a new will which is conscience, and through which the Lord might work the good of love (that is, of charity), and the truth of faith. Thus of the Lord’s Divine mercy has man been restored.”

Suggested Questions on the Lesson

- P. After men were created, where were they placed? *Eden*
- I. Why were they not satisfied? *wanted independence*
- I. How did the Lord meet their new need? *showed them how to use selfhood constructively*
- P. Why couldn’t men always live in the beautiful Garden of Eden? *disobeyed*
- J. Why did they become worse as they went on? *one bad deed led to another*
- J. What finally happened to most of them? *destroyed by own evil*
- P. Who was saved? *Noah*
- P. How was Noah saved? *ark*
- P. How long did the rain last? *forty days*
- P. Where was the window which Noah opened when the rain stopped? *top*
- P. What two birds did he send out to see if the waters had gone down? *raven, dove*
- P. What did the raven do? *nothing*
- P. How many times did Noah send out the dove? *three*
- P. What happened the first time? *came back*
- P. What did the dove bring back the second time? *olive leaf*

- J. What happened the third time? *did not return*
- J. What was the first thing Noah did when he came out of the ark? *built altar*
- J. What did the Lord promise? *no more floods*
- I. What is meant by the flood? *false ideas*
- I. What are meant by the raven and the dove? *false and true thoughts*
- S. To what does the olive leaf correspond? *knowledge of how to serve Lord*
- S. What change did the Lord make in man's constitution at the beginning of the Ancient Church? *Separated will and understanding; people were no longer led by perception, but now were led by conscience*
- J. What does mythology call the civilization described by Noah? *Silver Age*
- J. What does Swedenborg call it? *Ancient Church*

THE RAINBOW

Genesis 9:1-17

The review of the temptation by the serpent leads directly into the story of the decline of the Most Ancient Church and the necessity of the Lord's stepping in to save the remnant of good people from destruction. The story of the ark and the flood can be told briefly with the emphasis this time on the Lord's new promise and on the rainbow as the token of it.

Doctrinal Points

The will and the understanding in man.

The doctrine of reformation and regeneration.

The idea of successive dispensations as the basis of history.

The Ancient Word.

Notes for Parents

Often when we are driving through new country, we come to a fork in the road. A sign-post tells us plainly which way we ought to go. If we obey it, we know we shall reach our destination. The other fork is not marked but it seems to be going in about the same direction and looks like a more pleasant road, and we take a chance; we think, "It may take us a little out of the way but it will certainly get us to the same place in time." So we go off on the wrong fork and it swings gradually away from the right road and takes us farther and farther astray. How often in our own personal lives we take this kind of chance! The Lord has marked the right road for us plainly, but we think we know better. And one wrong step leads to another. "Because wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat" (Matthew 7:13).

The first people, after they listened to the serpent and chose to follow their own judgment, continued on the downward path until

they had gone so far from the Lord's way that their evil passions and false ideas actually destroyed them, just as they destroy some people today. This destruction is pictured for us in the Bible story of the flood.

But there are always some who stand up in the face of temptation and refuse to follow the crowd. These good people are pictured by Noah. By obeying the Lord they are enabled to ride out the storm and begin a new and better life.

When we have had a heavy storm and the sun suddenly breaks through the clouds, we see against the darkest part of the sky a beautiful arch of colors—a rainbow. It is the same—if we are of those who try to obey the Lord—when we have passed successfully through a severe temptation. He is able to light up for us the bits of truth from His Word which we have in our minds and make them suddenly beautiful with new meaning. What a perfect symbol is the rainbow of the Lord's power to protect and bless us no matter how dark life may seem!

Primary

Some children may never have seen a rainbow; so the teacher may have to explain what it is and when it is usually seen. The children can be encouraged to watch for one and to think of it as a sign of the Lord's care over us. Stress the fact that the Lord takes care of us if we are good, even when life seems dark. Even the Primary children can get the idea that the sun in this world is like the Lord in our souls.

You remember how the first people disobeyed the Lord and let the serpent persuade them to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Then they had to leave the beautiful Garden of Eden and go out and earn their living by hard labor.

You know that when one child does wrong, he is very likely to lead other children who are with him to do wrong, too. So the first people, once they had started to disobey the Lord, became worse and worse. Finally most of them became so bad that the Lord could not let them live any longer. They were destroyed in a great flood.

But there were a few good people left. Noah and his family were told by the Lord how to save themselves by building a boat, called an “ark,” and gathering into it a pair of every kind of bird and animal that had been created. The great rain which caused the flood lasted forty days and forty nights, and the waters rose until they covered the tops of the mountains; but the ark rode safely on top of the water. When the rain stopped and the waters began to go down, the ark rested on top of a mountain called Ararat.

When the earth was dry again, Noah and his family and all the animals came out of the ark, and a new race of people began on the earth. Did your mother ever show you something very fine and say, “See, I am going to put this up on the mantel where you can see it, and if you are good all day, you shall have it before you go to bed”? She made an agreement with you, and the thing she put on the mantel was a sign or token to you that she would keep her part of the agreement if you would keep yours. Another word for agreement is “covenant.” Now let us read our story for today.
[Read Genesis 9:8-17.]

Did you ever see a rainbow? Sometimes when it has been raining and the clouds are very black, the sun comes out suddenly and a beautiful bow of bright colors appears against the dark clouds. Whenever you see one, remember that it is a sign from the Lord that no matter how dark things look, the sun is still there and ready to shine again, and the Lord is taking care of you. If you are good, no trouble will last very long.

Junior

See how much the children already know of the story of Noah and the flood and fill in any gaps. The Juniors are old enough to be interested in the history of mankind, and it is a good thing to get into their minds the thought that man was not created evil or even a savage, but by his own selfish choice declined spiritually until the Lord had to come into the world to save the human race from destroying itself. In connection with the rainbow, if possible, show the children by means of a prism how the white light is broken up into its colors.

In the story of the Garden of Eden, by what names are the first men and women called?

What two special trees were in the garden?

What were Adam and Eve told not to do?

Who tempted them to disobey?

What was their punishment?

When we disobey, our disobedience often leads us into doing other wrong things, and it is likely to get other people into trouble too. After the first people began to think they knew better than the Lord what they should do, they grew worse and worse. Each generation became more selfish and evil until they could not be allowed to live any longer. Their evils destroyed them. This is described in the Bible by the story of the flood. In this story Noah and his family picture the few good people who had resisted temptation and so could be saved. You are all familiar with the story of the flood. Let us see how accurately we remember it. If you do not know the answers, you may look up the Bible verses.

Who went into the ark with Noah? (Genesis 7:7)

What else did Noah take into the ark? (Genesis 7:8-9)

How long did the rain last? (Genesis 7:12)

When the flood abated, where did the ark rest? (Genesis 8:4)

The word *Ararat* means “high land.” This is why the mountain in the story is given that name. In the previous lesson we had the story of how Noah sent out first a raven and then a dove to see if the waters were dried up from off the earth. Then, when he and his family came out of the ark, the first thing he did was to build an altar and worship the Lord. An altar is a symbol of worship; so in our churches we keep a copy of the Word on the altar. In the Bible people often built an altar to the Lord when they were grateful for something. We can build an altar in our minds by remembering always to thank the Lord for our blessings.

Now comes our lesson for today.

What did the Lord promise Noah?

What sign did He give?

When do we usually see a rainbow?

Sometimes, too, we see a rainbow in the spray of a fountain. A rainbow is formed when the sunlight strikes drops of water and is reflected back into our eyes. The white light is broken up into beautiful colors. A prism does the same thing.

You have heard that water is a symbol or picture of truth. And light is also a symbol of truth. That is why, when we suddenly understand something, we say, "I see!" Every verse from the Bible which you store away in your mind is like a drop of water, and when the Lord sees that you need to understand it, the light seems to shine into it suddenly and bring out all the beautiful things in it like the colors in the rainbow.

Of what was the rainbow to be a sign?

Just as the rainbow usually appears against the background of a dark cloud, so it is in times of trouble and temptation that we most need truth from the Lord and are most likely to ask Him for help. That is why the rainbow is the sign of the Lord's nearness to us whenever we need Him. The Lord's promise meant also that He would never again allow the human race to reach such a state of wickedness that it would be destroyed. It almost reached this state once in the course of history and then the Lord Himself came into the world and showed men the way back to safety.

Intermediate

The doctrine of the different churches which have been on the earth should be introduced at this age, and this lesson of the flood and the sign of the rainbow makes the best possible opportunity. Stress our need of learning the truth and making ourselves obey it, and the meaning of the rainbow with reference to our knowledge of the Word.

The story of Noah and the flood is a picture of the end of the Most Ancient Church—the first church which existed on the earth—and the beginning of the second or Ancient Church. It is also a picture of a change which takes place very early in our lives. The people of the Most Ancient Church were as innocent and trustful as little babies are, although in some ways they were much

wiser than we are today because they knew that the things of nature were important only as they teach us of heavenly things. They talked with spirits and angels, and their thoughts and actions came from their hearts. They could not even think anything which they did not will. We know that a baby always shows his feelings immediately and that his little life is governed by them.

But we know that it is not long before a little child learns that what he wants is not always right, and so his mind begins to judge his feelings and to control them. This helps us to see what the change was which the Lord had to make in mankind after they began to want to go their own way instead of His. For people who had to think and do just what their hearts wanted could not be “taught better” after their hearts became bad. Their thoughts and actions became bad, too, and in the end they destroyed themselves. You may hear it said today of someone who is letting bad habits get control of him that he is “going to destruction.” The flood is the Bible picture of this destruction of the people of the Most Ancient Church.

Before all the people had reached this point, however, the Lord made a change in the very nature of the few who still wanted to be good—the “remnant”—who are pictured in the story by Noah and his family. He separated their understanding from their will so that they could think the truth even when they did not want to live according to it. All people since that time have been of this nature. So they could be taught what was right and could make themselves do it until it became a habit and they learned again to like to do it. We know that this is the way we all learn. We are selfish to begin with, just as the people at the end of the Most Ancient Church had come to be, but we can learn what the Lord wants and be shown that it is best for us, and make ourselves obey Him until we come to love to obey Him. This is the process of “reformation and regeneration” about which we shall speak a good deal as our study goes on.

The story of Noah’s building the ark, taking his family and all the animals into it, and riding out the flood is a picture of how the

Lord protected the good remnant of the people while this great change was taking place in them. Perhaps you remember that the rain lasted forty days and forty nights. All numbers in the Word have a correspondence, and the number forty corresponds to temptation. In our own lives the flood pictures the time when the Lord is showing us by means of our own selfishness that it is better to do right than wrong, so that we may develop the habit of doing right. That is the way we all learn in the beginning: We try to do what our parents say is right, not because we want to, but because we know we shall be punished for doing wrong and rewarded for doing right.

It takes a long time for good habits to become so established in us that our hearts can be changed. Even after the rain stopped, it was a hundred and fifty days before the flood began to subside and several months after that before Noah could come out of the ark and move about freely and reestablish his life on the earth.

Read Genesis 8:20-22. An altar is always the symbol of worship, and Noah's building the altar pictures the establishment of a new church on the earth which is called the Ancient Church. The people of the Most Ancient Church had not had a Bible. The Lord had instructed them by an inner way, through their innocent and good hearts and by visions and dreams. Near the end of that church good people, realizing that selfishness was closing this inner door, had begun to write down the teachings that had been received in this way so that they should not be lost. So when the Ancient Church was established, it had a set of sacred writings—the Ancient Word. This has been lost, but we know something of what it was like because the first seven chapters of our Bible were drawn from it. It was written in the symbol language in which the people of that time spoke because they understood the spiritual correspondence of everything in nature.

The Lord made a new covenant with this new church. A covenant is an agreement. In the letter the Lord promised protection to all who would obey Him. He promised that never again would He allow a time to come when people would have to be destroyed

as the people of the Most Ancient Church had been. The sign or token of this covenant was the rainbow. This does not mean that there had never been a rainbow in the natural world before, but that the Lord showed them that the rainbow had a special meaning for them. The rainbow is very beautiful. It is caused by the breaking up of the sun's rays into their colors when the rays are reflected from the raindrops. This is a perfect picture of the new state in which men were to live from that time on. As we have seen, in the time of the people called Adam—the Golden Age or Most Ancient Church—the Lord spoke directly to people in their hearts. This was like the direct light of the sun. But in the time of the people called Noah—the Silver Age or Ancient Church—men had to learn truths from the Word—the drops of water from heaven—and then the Lord could enlighten their minds to see how these truths were to be used in their daily lives; the different applications of the truth are like the beautiful colors of the rainbow. So we today learn stories and verses from the Word and the Lord enlightens us to see their meaning and how they can guide and help us.

The rainbow, which comes against the dark clouds as a storm passes away, is a beautiful symbol of the Lord's truth leading us through temptation and trouble into happiness and peace.

Basic Correspondences

forty = temptation

the flood = falsities destroying the life

the rainbow = truths from the Word in our mind
used by the Lord to enlighten us

Senior

The important lesson for the Seniors is the way in which the Lord leads us to goodness by making use of our own states, and the fact that we never know truth instinctively but have to learn it from the Word.

We noted previously that once the people of the Most Ancient Church began to look to themselves and their natural senses for

guidance, they declined steadily in spirituality. They became possessed by their passions and by the falsities associated with them, which grew until they swallowed up all truly human life and every spiritual aspiration. This is pictured in the Bible by the flood which destroyed all living things and covered even the mountain tops. You will remember that the preservation of Noah and his family in the ark pictures the way in which the Lord saved the “remnant”—the few people who still recognized the Lord and wished to obey Him—during this time of the final devastation of the Most Ancient Church. In our own lives it pictures the way in which the Lord, as we come out of babyhood, at first leads us by means of our very selfishness, by showing us that we get along better when we obey our parents. So we form good habits and eventually can come to love doing right.

In the Bible story the drying up of the ground is the subsiding of the monstrous falsities of the past age. When this was accomplished the good remnant could be free in the earth again. We may perhaps think of an analogy to this in the dissipation of the idea of the “super-race” in middle Europe after the close of the Second World War. Noah’s first act was to build an altar to the Lord and bring sacrifices. This is the first mention in the Word of ‘burnt offerings’ of animals, but Swedenborg tells us that the people called Noah merely presented the animals at the altar and did not kill them. They knew that to present the animals before the fire on the altar meant making their affections sacred to the service of the Lord. In later times, when knowledge of this meaning had been lost, people began to burn the animals themselves, and the Lord permitted it in order to keep them from sacrificing their children as the idolatrous nations did.

Then in the Bible story the Lord makes a covenant with Noah, promising that He will protect men henceforth from being overwhelmed by their own evils and falsities, and He gives the rainbow as a sign.

The rainbow, we know, is caused by the breaking up of the white light from the sun as it is reflected from minute drops of

water. This is a perfect picture of man's new state. The light from the Lord no longer shone directly into his affections as it had in the time of Adam, but shone into the truths from the Word which he had received in his mind, and from these enlightened him according to his particular need. This application of the truth to particular states and needs is pictured in the beautiful colors, all harmonious. The rainbow always appears against the dark clouds when the storm is almost over; so it is a symbol of the Lord's protecting and enlightening presence with us in times of trouble and temptation. The Lord is actually nearer to us when we are in temptation than at any other time.

We can understand this story if we think how the verses which we have learned from the Word are brought up in our minds just when we most need them, and filled with new meaning. The more raindrops of truth we have and the darker the background of trouble or temptation, the brighter and more beautiful the rainbow.

The people pictured by Adam formed what we call the Most Ancient Church, which was an "affectional" or "celestial" church, and so came down in mythology as the "Golden Age" because among the metals gold is the symbol of love. The people called Noah formed the Ancient Church, an intellectual or "spiritual" church, termed the "Silver Age" in mythology because silver is the symbol of truth. Mythology is not an invention of the peoples of historic times to account for their origins, but old traditions handed down from the early people who talked in the language of correspondence.

Adult

Two main lines of discussion may be pursued: the significance of the philosophy of history found in the *Arcana*, and the difference between the people of the Most Ancient Church and all later people—including ourselves. We have a strong tendency to imagine that individually—if we learn the truths of the church in childhood—we arrive at a point when we no longer need to think about truth but somehow do good instinctively. There is nothing in the

writings of the New Church to support such an idea.

The New Church teaching with regard to history is like a powerful searchlight bringing into clear view an area which has previously been dark and uncertain. History as we study it in school is something which has been compiled from material remains of past ages and from man-made documents, both sources necessarily fragmentary. Studied in this way, history is inevitably regarded as a process of human achievement—man's gradual conquest of his environment and the dealings of man with man. God has no part in it except as men are thought to have developed one religious concept after another and in spreading their ideas to have affected external events. But the Word teaches us that “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” and that God's revelation of Himself to man has governed and directed all history. And the writings of Swedenborg teach us that in every age the church has been the “heart and lungs” of the social body, the center from which the life and thought of the age has sprung.

The character of the ancient people, as these writings reveal it to us in the interpretation of the early chapters of Genesis, is very different from the theories concerning it which men have formed from the study of material remains, and is much closer to the stories of the Golden and Silver Ages handed down through mythology. Our lesson today covers the period of the flood—the transition from the Most Ancient to the Ancient Church. In AC 605 we read: “The subject now treated of is the formation of a new church, which is called ‘Noah’; and its formation is described by the ark into which living things of every kind were received. But as is wont to be the case, before that new church could arise it was necessary that the man of the church should suffer many temptations, which are described by the lifting up of the ark, its fluctuation, and its delay upon the waters of the flood. And finally, that he became a true spiritual man and was set free, is described by the cessation of the waters, and the many things that follow.”

Here we have clearly stated the way in which the Lord raised up a new church—the Ancient Church—from the “remnant” who were

such that they could be regenerated. We are familiar with the thought that Noah and his sons picture this remnant. The change was not sudden. It took place gradually over a long period of time. The events described in chapter 7 of Genesis treat in their internal sense of the preservation of the remnant and their preparation for the new type of life to be developed, and chapter 8 treats of the development of the new church in them.

Finally in our chapter for today the state of the regenerate man of that church is described, and this is summed up in the “token” of the new covenant, the rainbow. We should note that this covenant was to be a perpetual one. That is, although the Ancient Church was to decline and perish and its knowledges to be lost, the character of man as to his means of regeneration would not again be changed. The human race on earth will not go back to the state of the man of the Most Ancient Church, although the regeneration of any individual may, if he is faithful, progress to the celestial degree. We are told that since the period of the flood no one has been added to the heavens of the Most Ancient Church, and the hells of that church have been closed. The succeeding churches have their celestial heavens but they are not reached except by the process described by the sign of the rainbow. Each of us is born natural and must learn truths and become spiritual before he can become celestial.

Swedenborg tells us (AC 1043) that the cloud pictures the obscurity in which our minds are as a result of the evil in our natural wills. But when we introduce truths from the Word into our minds and try to live according to them, light from the Lord shining in those truths—like the rays of the sun reflected in the drops of water against the dark cloud—can so modify our darkness as to produce beautiful appearances of truth in our minds, like the colors of the rainbow, teaching us that the Lord is always present with His love and protection however dark our surroundings may seem, and that if we are faithful to the truth, He will keep us safe and finally remove our temptations and “create in us a clean heart.” This is the covenant which He makes with all the human

race. Because the will with which we are born is evil, we cannot see truth directly by perception as the people of the Most Ancient Church did, but truth can be reflected from the knowledge of the letter of the Word which we have in our minds and so “reform” us that the Lord can come into our hearts and give us a new will. This is the method of regeneration with all people since the flood, and the rainbow is consequently the correspondential sign of regeneration with the “spiritual” as distinguished from the “celestial” type of man.

Swedenborg says (AC 1042): “Spiritual angels, who have all been regenerated men of the spiritual church, when presented to sight as such in the other life, appear with as it were a rainbow about the head.” He also tells us that the character of the rainbow is different with each, according to the particular way in which he has allowed the truth to modify the natural obscurity of his mind. The “white” light is broken up into colors by the absorption of some of its elements by darkness of one sort or another. All the colors of the rainbow are harmonious and all are present in the white beam. The particular content of our minds determines the colors which can be reflected there and which ones will be blotted out by persistent falsities. “Many are regenerated by the Lord in every dogma, and when they have been regenerated they do not receive any immediate revelation, but only what is insinuated into them through the Word and the preaching of the Word. But because they receive charity, the Lord works through charity upon their cloud, from which there springs light, as when the sun strikes a cloud, which then becomes more luminous and is variegated with colors. Thus also there arises in the cloud the likeness of a bow. The thinner the cloud, that is, the more numerous are the intermingled truths of faith of which it consists, the more beautiful is the bow. But the denser the cloud, that is, the fewer the truths of faith of which it consists, the less beautiful is the bow. Innocence adds much to its beauty, giving as it were a living brightness to the colors” (AC 1043). This gives us one clear answer to the question often asked, “If people of all religions can be saved, why is one

religion better than another?" We should all wish to have our cloud of falsities as thin as possible so that our characters may reflect more of the beautiful variations of the Lord's light. But we must remember that there can be no rainbow whatever if charity is not found in us. We must wish to serve the Lord and the neighbor instead of ourselves or we can have no enlightenment.

From the Writings of Swedenborg

Arcana Coelestia, n. 1042: "*I have set my bow in the cloud.* This signifies the state of the regenerated spiritual man, which is like a rainbow. Any one may wonder that the 'bow in the cloud,' or the rainbow, is taken in the Word for a token of the covenant, seeing that the rainbow is nothing but an appearance arising from the modification of the rays of sunlight in raindrops, and thus only something natural . . . And that the 'bow in the cloud' represents regeneration, and signifies the state of the regenerated spiritual man, cannot be known to any one unless it be given him to see and hence to know how the case is. Spiritual angels, who have all been regenerated men of the spiritual church, when presented to sight as such in the other life, appear with as it were a rainbow about the head. But the rainbows seen are in accordance with their state, and thus from them their quality is known in heaven and in the world of spirits. The reason that the appearance of a rainbow is seen is that their natural things corresponding to their spiritual present such an appearance. It is a modification of spiritual light from the Lord in their natural things. These angels are those who are said to be regenerated 'of water and the spirit,' but the celestial angels are said to be regenerated 'with fire.' "

Suggested Questions on the Lesson

- I. What story teaches us about the people of the first church on earth? *Eden*
- I. What was that church called? *Most Ancient*
- J. How did evil come into the world? *man's disobedience*
- I. What story tells about the saving of the good remnant? *flood*
- P. How long did the flood last? *almost a year (cf. 7:11, 8:13)*
- P. What was the first thing Noah did when he came out of the ark?
built altar
- J. What did the Lord promise? *no more floods*
- P. What was the sign or token of this covenant? *rainbow*
- J. How is a rainbow formed? *sunlight on drops of water*

- J. When do we usually see one? *end of storm*
- I. To what does water correspond? *truth*
- S. To what do the drops of water in the cloud correspond?
knowledges in mind
- I. How did the Lord tell the Most Ancient people what was right? *perception*
- I. How does He tell us? *conscience*
- S. Why was the rainbow the sign of the new covenant made with Noah?
to picture new state—light shines on truths in memory

THE TOWER OF BABEL

Genesis 11:1-9

With all classes above Primary the teacher will need to prepare in his mind a brief summary of the story of the flood and of Noah. Present the flood as the inevitable end of those who turn away from the Lord and rely on their own judgment, and the saving of Noah as the Lord's provision for the preservation of the race He had created. Then show how history repeated itself because of human conceit and folly and so introduce the lesson for today. The teacher should have in mind an example of a modern building of a Tower of Babel which will come close to the experience of his particular class.

Doctrinal Points

In the Bible the East is a symbol of nearness to the Lord.

The first seven chapters of the Bible were taken from the Ancient Word and are pure symbol stories.

If we build on our own ideas instead of on truth from the Word, we are always in a state of confusion.

The desire to set ourselves above others is destructive.

Notes for Parents

The story of the flood is the symbolic description of the end of the first great "church" on the earth. Most of its people were swallowed up by the wrong ways of living which they developed as they became more and more selfish. Those who still wanted to serve the Lord are pictured by Noah and his family. The Lord gave them a new revelation of truth—the Ancient Word, which existed before our Bible and is referred to and quoted here and there in our Bible. From this they learned the truths which the earlier church, as long as its people remained simple and innocent, had been given by an inner perception:

The people of the Ancient Church—this second church—became very wise from their study of the Ancient Word, much wiser than we are today, but gradually they began to be proud of their wisdom, as learned people sometimes are, and to forget that the Lord was the source of all their knowledge and that none of it was the product of their own minds. So they, too, separated faith from charity and strayed further and further from true worship of the Lord and true goodness.

The story of the Tower of Babel is the description of the end of this second church. Spiritually its people came to live in a low valley—a low, worldly plane of thought—and built their lives according to their own selfish ideas—the brick and slime—instead of with the stone of truths from the Lord cemented together by mortar—charity in the heart. This was because their object was to make a name for themselves.

When people are seeking only their own advantage, they cannot live together in harmony or work effectively together. Each one speaks his own language and they do not understand each other. They have to go their separate ways.

We know that the earliest historical records find men actually scattered over the surface of the earth, practicing many forms of idolatry, many of them at war with each other, and many in savage states. This is not the original state of mankind, as some historians assume. It is the condition which followed the breaking up of the Ancient Church. Mythology tells us of the Golden and Silver Ages before recorded history, and most peoples have such traditions, handed down by word of mouth through the centuries. The Lord Himself gives us this knowledge in the first seven chapters of our Bible, wonderful symbolic accounts of the two great civilizations which had risen, flourished, and died before written records began.

Primary

At this age level the desire to make a name for oneself appears in the childish tendency to “show off.” The story may be made the beginning of developing

in the children an objective attitude toward their own conduct which we all need to cultivate as early as possible.

These children can see in a simple way the meaning of the confusion of tongues. Be sure they learn the name *Babel* and its meaning.

This story took place long after the time of Cain and Abel. Many generations of people had come and gone, but people were still living in the same part of the world in which the Lord had put them in the beginning. They had learned a great deal since the first simple times, and they had come to think themselves very wise. But you know that people who think themselves wise are sometimes not wise at all, because wisdom is not in having a great deal of knowledge but in using the knowledge we have as the Lord wants us to use it.

Let us read a story about these people, and as we read it, see if you can find some things in it which show how foolish they really were. [Read Genesis 11:1-9.]

In the first place, they were foolish to imagine that they could build something that would reach heaven, weren't they? Then they were foolish to begin in a low valley instead of on a mountain top. And finally they were foolish to use anything but the best materials.

What did they use to build the tower?

Of what should they have built it?

They were very silly, weren't they? But you see they were not trying to do something good and useful, but just to make a name for themselves; that is, they were trying to "show off," as we say. Do you ever try to show off? People who do are apt to do things which are very foolish. Instead of making other people admire them, they usually get into trouble.

How did the Lord stop them?

Today we use the word *Babel* to mean confusion.

When people are thinking only about themselves, they cannot work together. They do not understand each other.

Selfishness and conceit separate people just as the Lord scattered the people of Babel.

Something like this happens to you sometimes. When you are playing with another child and each of you wants to have his own way, neither of you can understand why the other does not agree with him. You fall to quarreling and go off home. The pleasure you might have had together is spoiled. This is what always comes of thinking we are wiser than everyone else.

Junior

Something can be done in this class with the real meaning of the successive churches, the reason for their decline, and the general correspondence of the Tower of Babel story. The last statement in the Junior notes should interest the children.

Who were the first two sons of Adam and Eve?

What was Cain's occupation?

What was Abel's occupation?

What offering did Abel bring to the Lord?

What offering did Cain bring?

Why was Cain's offering not accepted?

What did Cain do to Abel?

What was his punishment?

How did the Lord save him from destruction?

What do Cain and Abel represent?

The Bible story tells us that the early people, after they once decided to depend on their own judgment instead of obeying the Lord wholly, became worse and worse. This is what always happens when anyone decides that he does not need to obey the Lord. Their selfishness and their false ideas finally became so great that they were destroyed by their own evils, just as a criminal eventually "comes to a bad end." Their destruction is pictured in the story of the flood.

But you remember in the story of the flood that some people who still wanted to obey the Lord were saved.

What were these people called in the story?

How was Noah saved?

What sign was given to him after he came out of the ark?

What promise did the Lord make?

Do you suppose that all the people after Noah kept the covenant the Lord had made with them? No, people again began to think selfishly and to forget that they owed everything to the Lord. This made them feel very important. They were not giants of selfishness like the last people before the flood, but they thought a great deal of themselves and of their own ideas. They gave themselves credit for their knowledge. They even thought they could reach heaven by their own way and be like God.

In the story we have today how did they try to reach heaven?

What was their purpose in building the tower?

Read the lesson and see if you can find three great mistakes they made to begin with. People who think themselves wise are always really foolish.

Where did they begin to build their tower?

What building material did they use?

What did they use instead of mortar?

What did the Lord decide to do?

Why did they have to stop building the tower when their language was “confounded”?

You would find it hard to work with anyone who could not speak English. But sometimes you do not understand other people even when they are speaking English, because they use words you don't know, or because they are talking about things you are not old enough to understand, or because you are not paying attention. And sometimes you don't understand because you don't want to understand. Selfish people are never interested in anything other people want. So selfish people never really understand each other. And people who “know it all” don't even listen to other people. So you see why it is said that the Lord “confounded” the language of the people in the story. They were so selfish and conceited that they could not work together at all.

What was the name of the tower?

Babel today is a synonym for “confusion.”

What happened to the people after their language was confounded?

The people described in the story of the Garden of Eden were the first great church upon the earth. This is called the Most Ancient Church. The people described in the story of Noah were the second great church, the Ancient Church. When this church departed from the Lord, it was really scattered all over the world, and all the religions in the world today except the Jewish, the Christian, and the Mohammedan are based on traditions handed down from this Ancient Church.

Intermediate

In its application to our own lives the lesson is very easy to illustrate for this age group. Its correspondences are simple and clear. Because of its brevity the lesson lends itself to verse by verse interpretation, and it may be a good thing to take advantage of this method, as we do not often have time for it in a Sunday School period. The class should also be given specific teaching concerning the character of the Ancient Church, why it declined, and how it ended, as there will be further references to it during the year.

In past lessons we have studied the stories which immediately follow the story of Cain and Abel—the stories of the flood and of Noah and the ark. These are such familiar stories that we need only speak of their spiritual meaning. The flood was a flood of falsity and evil which finally overwhelmed the people of the Most Ancient Church once they had turned from the Lord to self. Even an innocent child, once he determines to close his ears to instruction and advice, is likely to become worse and worse until finally he may actually become a criminal. A criminal is not made all at once, but little by little by accepting and acting upon false ideas instead of true ones. But all the people of the Most Ancient Church did not reach the state represented by the destruction in the flood. Some, even though they were in false ideas and had yielded to some evils, still recognized the Lord and meant to obey Him; so the Lord could save them. This good remnant is represented by Noah and his family, and their character is represented by the ark. And you will remember that when the flood subsided and they

came out of the ark, Noah built an altar and worshiped the Lord, and the Lord made a new covenant with him, the sign of which was the rainbow. This was the beginning of the second great church, the Ancient Church.

The Ancient Church was of a different character from the Most Ancient, in that its people were no longer instructed by the Lord through an inner perception of truth, but had to learn truth by an outward way, just as we do, before the Lord could enlighten their minds. The very fact that they had to study and learn gave these people a great respect for knowledge. Their particular study was the study of correspondences, which they developed into a science. At first, of course, they studied the correspondence of the world about them for the purpose of learning how the Lord wanted them to live. But after a while they began to forget the purpose and to study just for the sake of knowing more than other people. You can see how this might happen. A boy, for instance, may decide that he wants to be a doctor because he feels that as a doctor he can help a great many people. But by the time he has completed his long years of training, he may have fallen in love with his science and want to go on with it just in order to make a great name for himself, regardless of whether or not what he is doing is really helping people. You see we are getting close to our lesson for today, the story of the Tower of Babel; for the people in that story were working to make themselves a name—not with any thought of serving the Lord and the neighbor.

This story—like the story of the flood—describes the end of a church, this time of the second or Ancient Church. Let us think for a moment of the particular correspondences in it. Up to this time “the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech.” This means that in general and in particular people agreed as to the doctrines of their religion. But now they were journeying “from the east.” This means away from the Lord, for the East, where the sun rises, corresponds to the Lord and the love and truth that come from Him. And they went down into a valley, a low state of life, and there they decided to build a city and a tower whose top

should reach to heaven, for the purpose of making a name for themselves. A city represents doctrine and a tower the worship of self. We are building just such a city and tower when we think of ourselves as the most important thing in the world and form our ideas according to what we think will be most to our own advantage, so that people will admire us and do what we want.

The builders of the Tower of Babel had brick for stone. Stone, you remember, represents truth. Brick represents man-made ideas, and these bricks were burned thoroughly in the fire of self-love. And they had slime or pitch instead of mortar. Mortar, which binds stones together, represents true charity; but pitch, which melts when heated, represents self-love.

We can see from all this why it is said that the Lord confounded their language and scattered them abroad over all the face of the earth. When each person in a group is thinking of himself, each is unwilling to hear and accept any ideas which are not to his advantage. So they do not understand each other and cannot work together. Sometimes two boys or girls are friends for a while when they are looking for the same kind of pleasure, but it takes very little to break up such a friendship.

The Ancient Church actually did break up and scatter all over the earth. Some of its knowledges were handed down by tradition and appear in the Greek and Roman myths and in the hieroglyphics of Egypt and the magic of India. But the Lord was no longer in that church.

Basic Correspondences

| | | |
|---------|---|---------------------|
| a city | = | doctrine |
| a tower | = | the worship of self |
| stone | = | truth |
| brick | = | man-made ideas |
| slime | = | selfishness |

Senior

In addition to the general lesson on the folly of setting up human intelligence

above revelation from the Lord, stress the different interpretation of history which the knowledge about the Most Ancient and Ancient Churches makes possible for us, and the many things in the modern world which this interpretation explains.

The people of the Most Ancient Church, after the separation of faith and charity and the consequent destruction of charity as pictured in the story of Cain and Abel, developed more and more monstrous evils. This is what is meant by Genesis 6:4. The “sons of God” are the truths handed down in that church, the “daughters of men” are selfish loves, and their marriage pictures the falsification of truth when it is used selfishly. That this process actually developed physical giants we know from later history in the Word. All the giants—including the well-known Og, king of Bashan, and Goliath of Gath—were evil remnants of the Most Ancient Church. The destruction of the Most Ancient Church is pictured, as we know, by the story of the flood, and the establishment of a second great church—the Ancient Church—by the story of the salvation of Noah and his family in the ark, and the covenant of the rainbow. This church was of a new character, having lost the inner perception of truth by which the good in the Most Ancient Church were led. The will and the understanding in man had been separated, and men now had to acquire truth in the memory by an outward way—as we do—before they could be enlightened by the Lord. In its best days this was a church of great wisdom, delighting in the study of correspondences and developing varied and beautiful forms of worship according to correspondences.

But gradually pride in their own wisdom undermined the purity of their life and worship. The history of the decline of the Ancient Church is covered by a long chapter of genealogy (Genesis 10), each successive generation picturing some new development. Such a chapter may seem to us a mere tiresome succession of names, but Swedenborg tells us that it is nevertheless very useful for us to read it, for as we read, the angels who are with us are understanding the inner meaning.

The story of the Tower of Babel describes the end of the

Ancient Church. In only nine verses we have a wonderful picture. The people were journeying “from the east”—away from the Lord—and they came finally to dwell in the plain of Shinar, a low valley, representing a state far from the Lord. Read Isaiah 55:9. There they decided to build a tower whose top should reach to heaven in order to make a name for themselves. Their ambition was to become great by their own unaided efforts. We hear people boast of being “self-made.” An understanding of the folly of such an idea is expressed in the taunt, “He is trying to pull himself up by his own bootstraps.” Reason tells us that in order to rise a person must take hold of something higher than himself; yet we are always trying to exalt our own ideas and our own powers.

“They had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar.” Stone represents truth. It is God-given; no man can make it. Brick is man-made and represents our own ideas used as a substitute for the Divine truth. The slime or pitch (the word in the Hebrew is *bitumen*) symbolizes self-love. Self-love will hold people together for a time, as long as their interests coincide, but a very little heat of angry passion will melt the bond. Every man-made philosophy of life is a tower of Babel, begun in the valley and built up of brick and slime in an effort to reach heaven—to “make a name” for oneself.

“And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language.” This pictures the fact that up to this time the people had had but one doctrine of truth. Now this state was to be broken up. When men look to themselves for truth, there is no fixed standard. Men’s ideas differ. Each follows his own selfish line of thought. They begin to argue and quarrel and cease to understand each other because each is interested only in his own ideas. So the Ancient Church broke up in a “confusion of tongues,” or conflicting religious ideas, and as a result actually was “scattered abroad upon the face of all the earth.” *Babel* has become a synonym for “confusion.”

Historians make the mistake of assuming that the state of men at the beginning of history was but a step in a constant upward

development of civilization. So they believe that men started as godless wild beasts. Instead of this, the state of the world at the opening of recorded history was the end of a great civilization, the second great civilization since the beginning. Mythology, with its golden and silver ages, is really much nearer the truth than the modern naturalistic interpretation of history. The Greek and Roman myths are full of true correspondences, and the hieroglyphics of Egypt, as well as the magic practiced there and later in India, are based on the knowledges of correspondence handed down by tradition among the scattered remnants of the Ancient Church. In the Bible story itself we have Balaam's use of correspondence in his effort to curse Israel and—on the good side—we have the correspondent gifts brought to the infant Lord by the wise men of the East. All the pagan religions of the world have their roots in the Ancient Church. This is why in all of them there is enough genuine truth to form the basis of a good life, so that those who choose to believe in God and to live in love to the neighbor may reach heaven.

Adult

The reasons for the decline of the Ancient Church and the picture given of it in the series Noah, Ham, Cush, Nimrod, Babel are important for the Adults, especially in connection with the modern approach to Bible study. We might note that the First Christian Church followed the same historic pattern of decline which the Ancient Church presents.

The decline of the Most Ancient Church is described in Genesis 5 in the genealogy from Adam to Noah, and its final state of gross self-love in Genesis 6:1-7. The destruction of the people of the Most Ancient Church had to be permitted because they were so constituted that all their knowledge of truth came by perception through the will, and when the will became wholly selfish, they could think nothing but what was false. We are familiar with the general meaning of the story of the flood, the salvation of Noah and his family in the ark, and the new covenant whose sign was the rainbow. With the people of the Ancient Church which was

founded on this covenant, the will and the understanding were separated so that men could receive knowledge of divine truth by an external way, as all men have received it since that time.

Because of the brevity and simplicity of these early Bible stories we are apt to forget that, like the six days of creation, each of them describes a development which took centuries. The world does not pass suddenly from one state to another any more than an individual does. The germs of evil as well as the remains of good are often unnoticed for a long time and grow little by little. So the tremendous pride of self-intelligence which brought about the end of the Ancient Church was the culmination of a long, slow process of decline.

In our lesson for today we find them journeying “from the east”—away from the Lord—and they have come to a plain in the land of Shinar. There they build a city and a tower, which is called Babel. Babel is first mentioned in Genesis 10:10 as one of the productions of Nimrod, who was a son of Cush and a grandson of Ham. Of the three sons of Noah—the three different branches of the Ancient Church—Ham represents external worship without internal, or faith without charity. Cush represents the “interior knowledges of the Word, whereby such men [men who are in faith without charity] confirm false principles.” Nimrod represents the external worship of those who place religion in externals and not in internals. Nimrod was a “mighty hunter” and Swedenborg tells us that this is because the greater part of mankind do not know what internal things are, but only external things; and most men abide in things of sense, in pleasures and in cupidities, and have in view themselves and the world; and therefore they are easily captivated by such a religion.” (AC 1178) This gives us a background for our thought concerning the Tower of Babel.

In Isaiah 14:13-14 it is said of the king of Babylon: “For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High.” The word

Babylon is merely the Greek form of *Babel*; by a play on words they are both connected with a Hebrew root (*balal*) which signifies confusion. The state which causes spiritual confusion is the exaltation of self. The pride of the king of Babylon and the pride of the people of the degenerate Ancient Church are both described in the Bible in similar terms, but the older story, being part of the Ancient Word, uses the picture of the actual building of a tower “whose top may reach unto heaven.” “And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar.” Stone is one of the symbols of truth, standing particularly for the fundamental truths upon which we build our lives. So the Lord Himself is called the “Cornerstone,” and many times the “Rock.” Bricks are made by man out of the earth itself to take the place of stone. They picture principles which man makes up out of his own mind to take the place of the Lord’s truths; the fire with which he burns them “thoroughly” is the fire of self-love; and self-interest is the slime or *bitumen* with which he sticks them together, in place of the enduring mortar of neighborly love.

A businessman who believes that “the first duty of each of us is to look after himself” has definite principles upon which he carries on his business; he makes these up with the best of his understanding so that he may succeed. He may not lie or steal or cheat because he can see that “honesty is the best policy,” but his principles have nothing to hold them together except self-interest, and as soon as he is convinced that some other practice would serve him better, the structure that he has made falls to pieces, like the house founded on the sand: his “slime” has melted away. Every life that is built from the motive of self-love is a tower of Babel.

The people of the Ancient Church had a wealth of knowledges concerning spiritual things and how they work out in the substances of the material world. When they turned from the Lord to self, they began to use their knowledges and their worship to get power and fame for themselves, and if the Lord had not again interfered, they would have destroyed themselves as the people of

the Most Ancient Church had done. They would have become monstrous forms of falsity, just as the Most Ancients became giants of evil: “And now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.” So the Lord took away from them the understanding of the spiritual meaning of material things, so that they could no longer pervert and profane the holy things which are within all external effects. The Word says that the Lord “did there confound the language of all the earth.” That is, when the internal harmony which came from dependence on the Lord was destroyed through self-conceit, all the varieties of thought and worship, which had been like the harmonious colors of the rainbow, became sources of discord and division. So the people of the Ancient Church were divided and scattered, each group following its own form of worship from tradition instead of from any understanding of its spiritual significance.

This, we are told, was the origin of all the forms of idolatry in which the nations were found at the dawn of recorded history. Nature worship, ancestor worship, idol worship—instead of being the beginnings of religion as a prevailing modern theory holds—are the degenerate remains of the beautiful correspondential worship of the people of the Silver Age, the Ancient Church. Mythology is a corrupt survival of true correspondential accounts of the early peoples. Hieroglyphic writing has its basis in correspondence. The accounts of the flood found in the traditions of certain nations are corruptions of the original account in the Ancient Word which Moses copied from that Word for us. A very clear illustration of the building of a Tower of Babel is the “natural history” concept of the development of religion, which is made up by men from their knowledge of existing historical remains without any belief in Divine revelation or in spiritual causes. A knowledge of the spiritual meaning of the story of the Tower of Babel with reference to the Ancient Church should protect the minds of New Churchmen from infection by this “natural history” concept and its conclusions. Modern scholarship is so bound up with this concept that in examining its findings it is almost impossible to sep-

arate fact from imagination. When one starts with the premise that the Bible is merely the product of men, one's conclusions are unsound, no matter how painstaking and conscientious the research. It makes a vital difference whether we approach the Bible as God's Word to men or as man's "ascending search for God." The latter study builds a Tower of Babel. The former builds a church.

From the Writings of Swedenborg

Arcana Coelestia, n. 1304: "The church is of such a nature that when charity toward the neighbor departs, and the love of self succeeds in its place, the doctrine of faith is of no account except in so far as it can be turned into the worship of self; and nothing whatever is accounted holy in worship unless it is for the sake of self, and thus unless it is self-worship. All love of self is attended with this; for he who loves himself more than others, not only hates all who are not subservient to him, and shows them no favor except when they have become subservient, but also, in so far as he is not under restraint, he rushes on even until he exalts himself above God. That this is the nature of the love of self when the reins are given to it, has been shown me to the life. This is what is signified by 'a city and a tower.' The love of self and every derivative cupidity is of all things the most filthy and the most profane, and is the veriest infernalism; and from this any one may conclude what the quality of that worship must be which contains within it an infernalism so absolute."

Suggested Questions on the Lesson

- J. Who were Cain and Abel? *sons of Adam and Eve*
- J. What were their occupations? *farmer, shepherd*
- J. What offerings did they bring to the Lord? *grain, lamb*
- J. Why was Cain's offering rejected? *insincere*
- J. How did the Lord preserve Cain? *mark*
- J. In our story for today, in which direction were the people journeying?
from East
- P. Where did they stop? *Shinar (Babylon)*
- P. What did they plan to build? *tower*
- P. What was the purpose of their building? *reach heaven*
- P. What materials did they use? *brick, tar*
- J. How did the Lord stop the building? *confused language*
- J. What became of the people? *scattered*

- J. The end of what church is described in this story? *Ancient*
- P. What was the tower called? *Babel*
- J. What other name in the Bible is the Greek form of the Hebrew word *Babel*?
Babylon
- I. What is pictured by the building of the Tower of Babel? *building life on selfish premises*
- S. What was the difference between the Most Ancient and the Ancient Churches? *perception-truth acquired by an inner way; and conscience-truth acquired by an outer way*

THE CALL OF ABRAM

Genesis 11:27-32; 12:1-10

Noah's descendants, like the descendants of Adam and Eve, turned away from the Lord and wanted to go their own way, until finally they became so selfish that they could not live peaceably together and had to be scattered over the face of the earth. There is a good moral lesson for small children here because they know that when even one child in a group is selfish, there is always quarreling and trouble.

Doctrinal Points

In the Bible the first eleven chapters were taken from the Ancient Word and are not literal history. Literal history begins with chapter 12.

Notes for Parents

With the story of Abram we enter historic times. Abram and his family were real people who actually did the things recorded in the Bible. But the Lord chose them and so directed their lives that the record, just like the great symbol stories in the first few chapters, could contain within it deep spiritual lessons for all men in all times.

The second great church, pictured by Noah and his descendants, declined just as the first had through the increasing selfishness and pride of its members. The Old Testament story is a long series of beginnings, declines, and new beginnings. Isn't this true also of the history of the world and of the lives of individuals? Whenever a nation becomes so corrupt that there is no longer anything in it to which the Lord can appeal, the Lord steps in and draws out of it whatever individuals He can find who are still willing to obey Him, and forms of them a new beginning. And when an individual becomes corrupt and forsakes all that he has been taught of the

right way of life, he is lost unless the Lord can find within him something to which He can appeal as the basis for a new upward trend.

Abram and his family were called to leave their native place and go to the land of Canaan. Life is a journey, and all who wish to obey the Lord are called to make this journey of Abram. We all recognize the land of Canaan—the Holy Land—as a symbol of heaven or a heavenly character. The land of our nativity is our selfish natural state. The journey is long, but the Lord promises us as He promised Abram that if we will take the way He points out to us, He will be with us and bless us and protect us and bring us at last into possession of our heavenly home.

Everyone—even among those who mean to obey the Lord—does not go all the way. Abram's old father and his brother Nahor and his family stopped at Haran, a place to the northeast of Canaan. They prospered there and kept their contact with Abram and his descendants. In fact, Abram's son Isaac and grandson Jacob married wives from Haran. All people who believe in God and try to be good are the Lord's "sheep," cared for by Him; but all do not attain the same spiritual stature.

We should not be satisfied with doing less than our best in the Lord's service. We should want to go all the way, as Abram did. And this will bring us to a state of wanting to know more and more about the Lord and what He wants us to do—as Abram experienced a famine and went down to Egypt, the great storehouse of the ancient world, and brought back to the Holy Land the riches he acquired there. The happiness which the Lord can give us is necessarily measured by the degree to which we are willing to apply ourselves to learning the truth which He has revealed to us in His Word and the effort we make to live according to it.

Primary

This is the children's introduction to Abraham (who was first called Abram), someone they will hear a great deal about. Be sure they learn his name. It is

also their introduction to the Holy Land. They will also be interested in hearing about Abram's long journey and about the members of the family who started with him and those who did not go all the way. The group should remember *Abraham*, *Sarah*, and *Lot*, and should be told about the place called *Haran* or the *city of Nahor*. They should also learn the names of the two places in the Holy Land where Abram first stopped: *Shechem* and *Bethel*. Tell them about the building of the altars and what an altar stands for, and call their attention to the altar in the church and to the fact that a copy of the Word is kept on it. Impress upon them Abraham's obedience to the Lord and his gratitude to the Lord, as expressed in the building of the altars.

When the early people became so wicked that they had to be destroyed, who was saved?

How was he saved from the flood?

What can you tell about the ark?

Who were saved with Noah?

What else was saved in the ark?

After the flood was over, Noah and his family and all the animals came out of the ark to begin a new life on earth.

The first thing Noah did was to build an altar and worship the Lord. An altar is a sign of worship. In Noah's time most of the altars were built of large stones piled one on top of another. We have altars in our churches, too, but most of them are made of wood. Your Sunday School teacher will show you the one in your church. We always keep the Bible on our altars. That is because the Bible is the Word of God in which the Lord speaks to us and tells us what to do.

The Lord promised Noah that He would never again destroy mankind, and Noah promised always to obey the Lord. A two-way promise of this kind is called a "covenant." And the Lord gave Noah a beautiful sign of this covenant. Do you know what this sign was? It was the rainbow.

But Noah's descendants did not always keep the promise Noah had made to the Lord. They began to think that they could be wise without worshiping the Lord, and finally they became so conceited and selfish that they could not even get along with each other.

Do you remember the story of the Tower of Babel?

This time, instead of destroying the people, the Lord scattered them over the face of the earth.

But again He found one family who were still willing to obey Him.

This family lived in Ur in the country of Chaldea, far to the east of Canaan.

The father of this family was Terah, and he had three sons, Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

The Lord told them to leave their home and go to the land of Canaan.

It was a long, hard journey, and they did not all go all the way.

They stopped at a place northwest of Canaan and Nahor decided to stay there. He named the place for his brother Haran, who had died before they left Ur, but it is also the city of Nahor. The old father Terah died there.

Who went on to the land of Canaan? Lot was Haran's son.

What did the Lord promise Abram?

Where did they stop first in the land of Canaan?

What was their second stop?

What did Abram build in each place?

Why did they go down into Egypt?

Junior

The details of the story, with names and places, should be mastered. The Juniors will be interested in knowing that an *h*, one of the letters from the name *Jehovah*, was later put into Abram's name to indicate his closer relation to the Lord after he settled in the Holy Land. On account of later lessons special emphasis should be put on the settling of Nahor and his family in Haran, also called the city of Nahor. Be sure to have the children locate all the places on the map, and point out the great desert which caused them to go so far north instead of straight across. The meaning of the Holy Land, of Abram's call to go there, of the altars, and of going down into Egypt may also be touched on.

What finally happened to most of the people of the Most Ancient Church?

Who were saved?

How were they saved?

What did Noah take into the ark besides his family?

How long did the rain last?

After the flood the descendants of Noah repeopled the earth. At first they were good, but after a while they began again to want their own way and to think that their own ideas were better than the truth they received from the Lord. The story of the Tower of

Babel (Genesis 11:1-9) is a picture of how they tried to set themselves up, and had to be scattered to prevent them from destroying each other.

The rest of the eleventh chapter of Genesis is a genealogy. This means that it is a list of the sons and grandsons and great grandsons and so on of someone. In this case the someone is Shem.

Who was Shem?

Who were his brothers?

The men in these old lists seem to live much longer than men do now, but that is because the names are not the names of real people but of whole groups of people, just as we might perhaps call the United States *Uncle Sam* and say, “Uncle Sam has lived over two hundred years.” The first real person mentioned in the Bible was *Eber*, better written *Heber*, from whom the Jews were called *Hebrews*.

Our lesson today starts with a man named *Terah*.

Where did he live?

How many sons did he have?

We need to learn their names because we shall hear of all of them again.

Which one of the sons died in Ur?

What son did he leave?

What did the Lord tell Terah to do?

Trace on a map the route of the journey of the family from Ur. It was a long, slow journey. They did not have automobiles and airplanes in those days. They traveled on foot or on donkeys, and they took all their cattle and sheep with them. The cattle and sheep had to stop to graze every day. At night the people put up tents for themselves, and set a watch over the flocks and herds.

Where did Terah stop?

We learn afterward that Nahor and his family stopped there and decided to go no further. They named the city *Haran* after the brother who had died before they left Ur, but it is also often called the *city of Nahor*. Try to remember this city because we shall have

other stories in which it is important.

Why did Abram go further?

What did the Lord promise him?

Who went with him?

Into what land did they come?

The land of Canaan is also called the *Holy Land*; later it was called *Palestine* and today it is called *Israel*.

Where in the Holy Land did Abram first stop?

Where did he stop next?

We must remember the names of these places because we shall have stories about them later.

What did Abram build both times he stopped?

Why could not Abram settle in the Holy Land when he first got there?

What is a famine?

Where did Abram go because of the famine?

We usually call Abram *Abraham*. The Lord Himself later changed the name by putting in the *h*, which is one of the letters in *Jehovah*, the Lord's own name. And He changed Sarai's name to *Sarah*. This means that after they returned from Egypt and made their permanent home in the Holy Land, they came into a closer relation with the Lord than they had had before.

Intermediate

Set the young people's minds working on the correspondence of a journey to life. After you have pointed it out and illustrated it a little, they will be interested in thinking of other words and phrases in common use which are based on this correspondence, such as *progressive* and *backward* nations, the *road to success*, *following in the steps* of someone, *taking the wrong road* to happiness, *standing still*, the *highroad to fortune*, and the *march of time*. If they begin to think in these terms now, it will help their "feeling" for the correspondence of the whole Bible story.

Noah and his descendants picture a second great church, the Ancient Church, which the Lord had established on the earth. The Ancient Word—the Bible before our Bible—was written during the time of this church, and the delight of the people was the study of correspondences. But after a while man began again to turn from

the Lord to self. People forgot the symbolic meaning of the images they had set up in connection with their worship, and they became idolaters. The breaking up of this second church is described in the story of the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11:1-9.

After the story of the Tower of Babel, chapter 11 tells us the names of the descendants of Shem, the first son of Noah. These people came to be called the Semites, and they lived in what is now called Asia Minor. The names in chapter 11:10-13, like all the names in the earlier Bible story, are not the names of individuals but of whole generations. In verse 14, however, we come to the period of recorded history. Swedenborg tells us that the first real person mentioned in the Bible story is *Eber*. His name would be more correctly written *Heber*, and it is from him that the Jews were called Hebrews.

So the people in our story for today are real people. But the story has an inner meaning just the same, and it also deals with the formation of a third church, the Jewish Church.

Look at a map and find Ur of the Chaldees. You see that the great desert of Arabia lies between Ur and the land of Canaan. So when the Lord told Abram to leave Ur and go to the land of Canaan, he had to travel a long way around the desert. Follow his route north along the river—the Euphrates—and find Haran. Haran was named for Lot's father, who had died before the family left Ur. Haran also came to be called the city of Nahor, because Nahor, Abram's other brother, settled there with his family instead of going all the way to the Holy Land. We shall hear of Haran very soon again. Terah, Abram's father, died in Haran, and only Abram and his nephew Lot and their families and servants went on.

In addition to the place called *Haran* we should try to remember the two places in the Holy Land where Abram first stopped and built altars—*Shechem* (Sichem) and *Bethel*. All the names of people and places in the Bible story are very important because of their spiritual meaning. Still another appears at the close of our lesson—*Egypt*. Egypt, where the Nile River kept the land always fertile, was the storehouse of the ancient world, to which people

of other lands knew they could go for food in times of famine. We shall learn its meaning presently. Again and again in the Bible it is said that people went down into Egypt.

The story of the call of Abram in its inner meaning tells us of a call that comes to every one of us from the Lord: the call to leave selfish ways which “come natural” to us, and to travel toward the heavenly state of life which the Lord wants us to attain. The land of Canaan, the Holy Land, is the Bible picture of this heavenly state. It is in relation to this heavenward journey that every person and place has its spiritual meaning. Egypt pictures the great storehouse of facts which we need to know. You can easily guess what the famine pictures, but look up Amos 8:11. Again and again in our lives we come to situations in which we feel the lack of sufficient knowledge. Then we have to go down into Egypt. This is true of our spiritual progress also. We need often to “read and meditate upon the Word of God”—one of Swedenborg’s *Rules of Life*—to increase our knowledge of what the Lord wants us to be and to do. This is a spiritual going down into Egypt. Coming back to the Holy Land is putting our new knowledge to use in the Lord’s service.

Basic Correspondences

| | |
|--------------------|----------------------------------|
| Ur of the Chaldees | = our natural selfish state |
| the land of Canaan | = a heavenly state |
| Haran | = a good natural state |
| Egypt | = a state of acquiring knowledge |

Senior

The two points to be most carefully developed for the Seniors are the call to turn our backs on our natural selfish desires and thoughts, and our recurring need of new knowledge from the Word as we go through life, which is pictured in the Bible story by the frequent going down into Egypt. This ties in with our earlier lesson on the nature of the spiritual church. The young people know that in order to progress in any worldly occupation they need con-

stantly to learn new things about it. They should be able to recognize that this must be equally true of spiritual progress.

The story of Noah is the story of the rise and decline of a second great church—the Ancient Church—and its final dispersion is described in the story of the Tower of Babel. Then we have a long genealogy. You will understand that this tells of the passing of many generations and covers probably many centuries. But now we are coming down in the Bible story to historic times. Swedenborg tells us that the first real person whose name appears in the Bible is *Eber* (Genesis 11:14), or *Heber*, as it should be written, from whom the Jews were called *Hebrews*. So the story of the third church, the Jewish Church, is for the most part true in the letter as well as having an inner meaning. Although the inner meaning is the truth which the Lord wishes us to learn, we must first fix in our minds the literal story, for it is only through the letter that the inner meaning can be reached. The names and incidents in these early chapters are mentioned again and again as we proceed in our reading.

The people of the earth had now gone far from the Lord, and the Jewish Church, instead of being either spiritual or celestial, was to be wholly natural, a mere representative of a church, for there can be no true church without a spiritual interior. Yet the Lord could still be present in the world through the correspondence of the rituals which the Jews were commanded to observe (*Hebrews 8:5*).

Again a remnant of the old church was called to begin the new. Abram and his family were this remnant. Abram was called to leave his home and go to the Holy Land, which was promised him for himself and his descendants as a possession forever. Naturally the Jews take this promise literally and so do many Christians. The history of this land since the Second World War has been deeply influenced by this belief. But it is the spiritual descendants of Abram—those who obey the Lord, as Abram did—to whom the promise is really made, and the land promised is not the earthly Canaan but what it represents—a heavenly state of lasting peace

and happiness. Abram obeyed the Lord's call, and his obedience began a new history.

There is a beautiful lesson for us as individuals in the inner meaning of this story. Each one of us is called by the Lord to leave our own country—our natural selfish state—and journey to the Holy Land of heavenly living. It is a long, slow journey, with many stops on the way. Everyone who begins this journey does not attain the same state. Abram's father Terah died in Haran before they actually reached the Holy Land, and Abram's brother Nahor and his family settled in Haran. Haran represents a state of natural goodness, a state in which many people stop, people who want to obey the Lord and to be good, but are content with obedience of an external type and are not interested in learning and understanding the deeper spiritual lessons the Lord has to give us.

Abram and Lot and their families went on and reached Canaan, journeying steadily southward. As the east represents a state near to the Lord in heart, so the south pictures a state of spiritual intelligence, a progression into clearer light. Wherever he stopped Abram built an altar to the Lord. So we ought to do. We should recognize the Lord's providence in every attainment of our lives and thank him at each step for bringing us to another stage of our journey.

But before Abram could settle in the land permanently, a famine came upon him. The famine pictures a sense of need for more knowledge, which always comes periodically if we are really making progress (Amos 8:11). When we reach a point at which we think we know enough about the Lord and what he wants of us, we may be very sure we have stopped advancing spiritually. Throughout the Word Egypt pictures the store of natural knowledges—in its best sense knowledge of the letter of the Word. Abram went down into Egypt. Later Jacob, Joseph, and finally the Lord Himself went down into Egypt. All our learning periods are sojourns in Egypt.

Abram, as founder of the Jewish Church, pictures our first child-

like response to the Lord's call to lead a good life. We are to leave our country (the low state of spiritual life into which we are born), our kindred (our general selfish affections and thoughts), and our father's house (our own particular inherited weaknesses and evils), and go to the land which the Lord will show us—a heavenly state of life which will open to us gradually if we accept the Lord's guidance (Matthew 19:29). When we see that the purpose of life is to do the Lord's will and not our own, we are hearing the Lord's call, and our obedience to this call is the beginning of our heavenward journey.

Adult

The change to the period of actual history should be pointed out and explained. Cover the general points of the lesson briefly and then ask for questions and develop further the indicated subjects.

Up to this point our lessons have been on the portion of the Word Swedenborg says was copied by Moses from the Ancient Word, and we have not been dealing with historical fact in the letter.* *Arcana Coelestia* nn. 1140 and 1343 state that the first person mentioned in the Word who is a historical personage as well as a representative figure is Eber (Genesis 11:14), from whom the Hebrews took their name. AC 1343 says that Eber constituted a Second Ancient Church, which came to an end in idolatrous worship in Terah, the father of Abram, and that Abram signifies a Third Ancient Church (AC 1360), from or in which the Lord instituted the Jewish Church. The Second Ancient Church, like the First, recognized spiritual things and knew that its forms of worship had their value from their correspondence. It was in this church that sacrifices were instituted. But as the people degenerated, the knowledge of the spiritual meaning of the various acts and symbols of worship was lost until they regarded their images and sacrifices as holy in themselves, and became idolaters, knowing

*See AC 1401, but also see SS 103.

nothing of love for the Lord and the neighbor or of heaven and eternal life. So the Lord and the angels could no longer be present with men in their interiors—their hearts and minds—because they no longer had any internal thought, and because all real worship is internal, there could no longer be a real church on earth. Still the Lord had to keep His contact with men in order to keep them alive and to save those whose intentions were good. So He instituted the Jewish Church, which was not a real church at all but merely the representative of a church. One of the Epistles says of the Jewish priests who “offer gifts according to the law” that they “serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things” (Hebrews 8:5). The Hebrew nation was chosen by the Lord for this purpose not because they were a particularly religious people, as is commonly thought, but because they were a wholly external people, and could be led through fear of punishment and hope of reward, without interfering with their freedom, to carry on worship of Jehovah according to the particular forms which would correspondentially represent true worship, and so by the correspondence of these forms could keep the connection between heaven and earth. Their history could be so providentially directed by the Lord that, recorded in words, it would correspondentially express heavenly things and the divine life itself.

It is the history of this church which we are beginning now. Abram was a man who lived on the earth and did things of which we read in the letter of the Word; but if he had been no more than that, the story of his life would be of no more value to us than the history of any other man. He is also a representative figure—representative of the Lord and of the celestial man—and everything that is recorded of him in the Word has a meaning with reference to the Lord’s life and to our own lives. And we should remember that it is what the Lord chose to have recorded in the Word which has this meaning. The findings of archaeology with regard to conditions in Abram’s time may be interesting to us as natural learning, but they add nothing to our understanding of the Word.

We have learned that the stories of the Garden of Eden treated

of the rise and decline of the church in a celestial type of person, and that the stories of Noah treat of the rise and decline of the church in the spiritual type of person. Now we come to the development of a church among natural men. We are born natural men and women, and it takes a long time for us to develop on this natural plane; so the story is given us in detail, and every detail has a deep importance for us individually. The dealings of the Lord with the Jews throughout their history as it is recorded in the Scriptures picture His dealings with us in our progress through life. This is what makes the Bible the Book of Life for us.

Abram was called to make a journey. The symbol of a journey as the correspondent of progress through life is so woven into our common thought and speech that everyone should be able to recognize it. Indeed the journey of the children of Israel through the wilderness has always been recognized as a picture of the progress of the soul. Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* is a classic example of the use of this symbol. The very word *progress* embodies the same symbolism. We cannot talk at all without employing correspondences. In life we pass from state to state, from low to high or from high to low. Sometimes we go backward; sometimes we stand still. We reach lofty states of vision, like mountain tops, from which we can look back upon the whole of our life and see it in its true proportions, and forward to the new states we are approaching. We recognize this symbolism as a fact. But with Swedenborg's help—or rather, with the help of the Lord by means of Swedenborg—we are enabled to go further: we can understand the meaning of each detail in this Bible journey of Abram and apply it to our own experience. Abram was called to leave Ur of the Chaldees, the land of his birth, and go to the land of Canaan. The land of our birth is our natural inheritance of evil and falsity; the land of Canaan is a heavenly state. The Lord calls each one of us to turn our backs upon our natural selfish impulses and thoughts and, in obedience to His commands and under His guidance to travel toward a state of heavenly feeling and thought—thus toward heaven itself. We do not get there all at once. We sometimes tarry a long

time in halfway states, as Abram tarried at Haran. Some of us, without actually going backward, stop halfway, as Nahor and his family did. If we go on with Abram and reach our goal, we do not remain in the first heavenly state we taste, which is pictured by Abram's stop at Shechem in the valley, but we go on to the higher country of Bethel. Each new heavenly state fills us with gratitude to the Lord, which is pictured by Abram's building altars wherever he stopped.

Then we come inevitably to a time when we feel a hunger for more truth. There was a famine in the land. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord" (Amos 8:11). And we know that: "Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled." Spiritual hunger and thirst are meant by famine. Abram went down into Egypt. The land of Egypt is the Bible symbol of a state of learning on the natural plane—"the memory knowledge of knowledges," as it is called in AC 1461. There was no rain from heaven in Egypt, but its land seldom failed to yield crops because it was made fertile by the annual overflow of the Nile and watered from it by irrigation. In the same way, our memory knowledge comes to us not from within but from without, and its fruit is stored up constantly waiting to be needed. Whenever there was a famine in the ancient world, its people knew that in Egypt they could buy grain. So Abram went down into Egypt; later Joseph went down, and was followed by all the children of Israel; and finally the Lord Himself as a babe was taken into Egypt. We should have no difficulty in seeing what these journeys into Egypt mean in our spiritual life. They mean procuring knowledge from the letter of the Word where the Lord has stored it up for us. Whenever there is a famine in our spiritual life, what we need is to go to the Word and read it and learn new truths from its letter, into which the spirit of the Lord may flow, enlightening us and giving us new spiritual power. But we are never to stay permanently in this mere learning state. We are to take our new riches back to the Holy

Land as Abram did and use them in the Lord's service in our daily life.

From the Writings of Swedenborg

Arcana Coelestia, n. 1461: "And Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn. That this signifies instruction in knowledges from the Word, is evident from the signification of 'Egypt,' and from the signification of 'sojourning.' That 'Egypt' signifies the memory-knowledge of knowledges, and that 'to sojourn' signifies to be instructed, will be seen presently. . . . The external man is corporeal and sensuous; nor does it receive anything celestial and spiritual unless knowledges are implanted in it, as in ground; for in these celestial things can have their recipient vessels. But the knowledges must be from the Word. Knowledges from the Word are such that they are open from the Lord Himself; for the Word itself is from the Lord through heaven, and the Lord's life is in all things of the Word, both in general and in particular, although it does not so appear in the external form."

Suggested Questions on the Lesson

- I. Are the first eleven chapters of the Bible historical fact? no
- J. Who was the first real person mentioned in the Bible? *Eber*
- I. Who was chosen by the Lord to begin the establishment of a new church on earth? *Abram*
- J. Who was Abram's father? Who were his brothers? *Terah; Haran, Nahor*
- J. Who was his wife? *Sarai*
- P. Where did they live? *Ur, Chaldea*
- P. Where did the Lord tell them to go? *Canaan*
- J. Where did they stop first? *Haran (city of Nahor)*
- P. Who went on from Haran? Who was Lot? *Lot, Abram's nephew*
- J. What did the Lord promise Abram? *to be father of nation*
- J. Where did he stop first in the land of Canaan? *Shechem (Sichem)*
- J. What was his second stop? *near Bethel*
- P. What did he build in both places? *altar*
- J. Where did he then go, and why? *Egypt, famine*
- I. What does the land of Canaan represent? *heavenly way of life*
- I. What does Abram's journey represent? *leave inherited selfish tendencies...*
- S. What does going into Egypt represent? *gaining needed truth from the Word*
- S. What does this teach us about our own lives? *we will repeatedly need to learn more truth*

ABRAM AND LOT

Genesis 13:1-13; 14:1-16

In addition to the chapters assigned, the teacher should read Genesis 11, 12, 18, and 19, which cover the story of Lot. Familiarity with a map of the journey, and with the location of the cities mentioned in the Holy Land is also important. Archaeologists are uncertain as to the exact location of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, but it is beginning to seem probable that they may be found in an area now covered by part of the Dead Sea, which was in Bible times part of the plain of Jordan.

Doctrinal Points

When we are tempted, the Lord always manages to warn us in some way.

From chapter 12 of Genesis on, the Word is in general true history as well as parable.

We should examine our thoughts to see if they are based on heavenly or on worldly principles.

A life of willing obedience to the Lord leads toward heaven.

Notes for Parents

Abram, or Abraham as he was later renamed by the Lord, was a man chosen by the Lord as the founder of the Jewish Church. The church raised up among the few good people who remained after the Most Ancient Church perished (those described by the story of Noah) was called the Ancient Church. As you read in chapters 10 and 11 of Genesis, it continued for many generations, but eventually it also became corrupt. Its people were not destroyed like those of the earlier church, but they became hostile to each other and were scattered all over the earth. This is described in the symbolic story of the Tower of Babel. It was among these people that idolatry arose. Recorded history begins in this period

and finds men selfish and warlike and worshipers of idols. But even among these people there were some individuals who were better than others. They, too, were idolaters and had lost all knowledge of true worship, but they believed in a God and wished to obey Him rather than to follow their own desires. Such a man was Abram.

Abram was called by the Lord to leave his home in Ur of Chaldea and go to the land of Canaan, which is called the Holy Land. He obeyed, taking with him his immediate family, which included his orphaned nephew Lot. Some of them stopped halfway—as some of us stop halfway in our progress from natural selfish living to a state of heavenly living—but Lot went on with Abram. Read the story in chapter 12. The lesson begins as they were about to settle in permanent homes in the Holy Land. We see that, although Abram and Lot did not quarrel, their herdmen did, and Abram gave Lot his choice of the part of the country in which he wished to settle. Lot's choice of the low valley of the Jordan, because it looked pleasant and easy to live in, led him into many difficulties. Read with your children this week chapters 15 through 21 and see how Abram prospered while Lot failed even though Abram and later the Lord did their best to save him.

We all have choices to make every day, and we are often tempted to make Lot's choice of the way which looks easiest and most pleasant, without stopping to think of the temptations and dangers which the easy path so often brings with it. Yet we all admire people who are willing to do the hard things. And we know what we mean when we say of a person that he is "going downhill." Children should be taught that the easy way is not necessarily the right way, and that strength is gained—in mental and spiritual things as well as in physical ones—by measuring up to difficult tasks as they come to us.

Primary

The whole story of Lot can be told very simply, with emphasis on Abram's

kindness to him, on the Lord's blessing of Abram because of his obedience, and on the Lord's merciful provision for the rescue and protection of Lot, even after he made a foolish choice. Be sure the children learn the names of Abram and Lot and the fact that the "children of Israel" about whom they will hear so much were descendants of Abram, and that the descendants of Lot were the Moabites and the Ammonites who became enemies of Israel. Explain also that Abram's name was later changed to *Abraham*, and that he is usually referred to as Abraham.

How was Noah saved from the flood?

When the rain was over, what two birds did he send out to see if the ground was dry?

How many times did he send out the dove?

What was the first thing Noah did when he came out of the ark?

A whole race of people was built up from the descendants of Noah.

For a time they lived well, but after a while they again forgot the Lord and began to go their own selfish ways.

But the Lord had promised not to destroy mankind again; so this time He scattered them over the face of the earth.

The story of this is told in the first nine verses of chapter 11 of Genesis.

It is called the story of the Tower of Babel.

But again the Lord found a man who would obey Him.

The man's name was Abram. At first he lived in a city called Ur, but the Lord told him to take his family and everything he had and travel to the land of Canaan, because this was to be his home and the home of his children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Canaan was a long way from Ur, but Abram obeyed the Lord. He took his wife with him. Her name was Sarai. And he also took his nephew Lot, whose father was dead. Abram's brother Nahor and his family and old Terah, the father of Abram and Nahor, went, too, but they did not go all the way. They stopped at a place which they called Haran after Lot's father.

When Abram and Sarai and Lot reached the land of Canaan, one of the first places they stopped was Bethel. You will often hear of Bethel in our lessons. Do you remember what was the very first thing Noah did when he came out of the ark after the flood? He built an altar and worshiped the Lord. Abram did the very same thing at Bethel, because he was so grateful to the Lord for bringing

them safely into the promised land.

Then Abram went farther south in the land of Canaan and then, because there was a famine in the land, they had to go down into Egypt for a while. A famine is a time when food is so scarce that people cannot get enough to eat. While Abram lived in Egypt, the Lord helped him and he became very rich “in cattle, in silver, and in gold.”

When they came back to the land of Canaan, where did they go first?

There Abram worshiped the Lord again.

What trouble did Abram and Lot have?

How did Abram settle the difficulty?

Lot went to live near Sodom and very soon began to have troubles. Once Abram had to go down and save him when the people of Sodom were carried away by their enemies, and later the Lord had to send two angels to save Lot when Sodom was destroyed because of its wickedness. When we have a choice to make, we should be more careful, shouldn't we?

Junior

Have the class study a map and look up all the Bible references in the notes. Emphasize the fact that this is the beginning of true history in the Bible as well as the beginning of a third church. The important lesson is, of course, the foolishness of choosing the thing which looks easy and pleasant without stopping to think whether or not it is the right thing. Stress the importance of avoiding bad companions.

How did the people of the Most Ancient Church destroy themselves?

Why was it that Noah could be saved?

What was the first thing Noah did when he came out of the ark?

What did the Lord promise?

What does Swedenborg call the church which then grew up?

The people of the Ancient Church, like those of the Most Ancient Church, lived at peace with each other for a long time and were very happy and very wise, especially in spiritual knowledge. But as time went on, they began to be proud of their wisdom and to think that they were wise of themselves and did not need to

learn of the Lord. Then they began to have differences of opinion, and each one thought everyone else ought to agree with him because he believed himself to be wise. Finally they could no longer live together in peace and were scattered all over the earth. Read Genesis 11:1-9. This is the familiar story of the Tower of Babel, but with what you have learned you can understand that it is a picture of the condition of the people in the end of the Ancient Church. The tower they were trying to build was begun in the valley—way down on the level of their own minds—and they imagined they could reach up to heaven in that way. All sorts of strange ideas and beliefs grew up, and men began to worship idols which they themselves made. Our history books go back to this time, because it was at this time that men began to try to preserve records of their own greatness, and history depends on these records for its knowledge. So our history books do not tell about the Golden and Silver Ages.

With chapter twelve of the Bible we begin to study about individuals who really lived and did the things the stories tell about. We have seen that Adam and Noah were names which described whole generations of people. But Abram and Lot were individuals. Look at a map and find Ur of Chaldea, where they lived. They were idolaters like all the people around them, but they were men who meant to be good and to do what God wanted them to do, and not just to have their own way. So the Lord could use them to begin another church on earth, which was to become the Jewish Church. Abram, or Abraham as he was later named by the Lord, was chosen because he was always willing to obey the Lord, even though he had many false ideas about God in his mind just as his father and ancestors in Chaldea had.

Abram was told by the Lord to leave Ur and travel to the land of Canaan, and the Lord promised to make of him there “a great nation,” and to bless him. Abram obeyed, even though the journey was a long one and the new land was unknown to him. He took with him his wife Sarai, his father Terah, his brother Nahor, and his nephew Lot (whose father Haran had died). Look at your map

and see how they had to go way up to the north to avoid traveling across the desert. Find the place called Haran. This place was named for Lot's father, and it was also called the "city of Nahor" because Nahor and his family decided to settle there and not go on to the land of Canaan. Terah also stayed there and died before Abram went on. But Lot continued with Abram. When they reached Canaan, which we know as the "Holy Land," they stopped first at Shechem and then at Bethel, and at each of these places Abram built an altar and worshiped the Lord. Then they went toward the south and, because there was a famine in the land, they went down into Egypt and stayed there for some time. And the Lord blessed both of them and made them rich.

But now that they were about to settle in the land which had been promised to Abram, they found that they would not be able to live together. Our story tells us that their herdmen quarreled about where their herds and flocks should graze. We all know that quarreling is wrong, and yet we are tempted to quarrel even sometimes with friends. It is selfishness which causes quarrels. Abram refused to quarrel with Lot.

What did he propose?

By being generous he proved himself the better man, and the Lord did not let him lose by his kindness. Find Bethel on your map. It is on very high ground and from it you can see a long distance in both directions. It was a good place to make the choice of land.

What part of the land did Lot choose?

He chose it because it looked like good pasture for his flocks. He did not stop to think or to look ahead. We often choose the things that look best on the outside, without stopping to think.

What is mentioned in our reading from chapter 13 which suggests a possible danger in Lot's choice?

In chapter 14 we learn that this was a very real danger.

How was Lot taken captive?

Who saved him and brought him back?

When we choose to live with bad companions, we are very likely

to get into trouble just as Lot did. At first our friends step in and save us from the consequences of our foolishness. But each time we make the wrong choice, it is harder for us to be saved. Lot went on living in the low plain, and after a while he came to live in the very gate of Sodom. If you will read chapter 19, you will find that Sodom and Gomorrah had become so wicked that they were to be destroyed, and the Lord sent two angels to warn Lot and lead him out of Sodom. Even then he was not willing to go up into the mountains, as the angels advised him to do. You see that after Lot separated himself from Abram, he became weaker and weaker in character. Every time we choose to do what we know is not just what we ought to do, we grow a little weaker. Lot's descendants, the Moabites and Ammonites, were enemies of the Jews all through their history.

Can you see something of what this story means in its inner, spiritual sense? It means that when we choose to turn away from what we know the Lord wants us to do—the mountains always picture states near to the Lord—and choose to live for what we can get for ourselves—the low plain—just because that looks easiest and most pleasant, we are headed for trouble. And it means that we should be careful to keep good company and not imagine we are strong enough to go with bad companions without doing as they do. The story of Lot is written in the Bible by the Lord to serve as a warning to us.

Can you think of a sentence in the Lord's Prayer which we ought to say to ourselves when we are inclined to do as Lot did?

Intermediate

Trace in general outline the correspondence of the story of Abram's journey through his return from Egypt. Then take up the correspondence of Abram and Lot with reference to our individual lives, and follow through with Lot's choice and its consequences.

Just as selfishness crept into the Most Ancient Church and gradually destroyed it, so pride in their own intelligence and knowledge crept into the Ancient Church. Gradually people forgot what

the correspondences they had learned really meant; they came to worship as idols the images of animals and birds and fish which originally they had made to remind them of spiritual things. In this way many conflicting beliefs arose, and people quarreled and became enemies, and had to move away from each other. Recorded history begins with this state of the world, and therefore people imagine that men, to start with, were idol-worshipers and savages. The story of the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9) pictures this final breaking up of the Ancient Church.

But the Lord had promised that people would never again be allowed to separate themselves completely from Him and so destroy themselves. As before, He was able to find a few people whose intentions remained good, even though they were also idol-worshipers. Abram and his family were such people.

From chapter 12 of Genesis on, the Bible story is in general—and in most of its particulars—true history as well as inspired parable with a spiritual meaning within the letter. Abram was a man who was willing to obey the Lord in all things, and he was chosen to be the father of the next church, the Jewish Church. This was not a celestial church like the Most Ancient, or a spiritual church like the Ancient, but a church on the natural plane of life only. Obedience to the letter of the law was its requirement. When we have passed out of our babyhood—but are still very little children—all we know about right and wrong is that we must obey our parents. Abram pictures this stage in our life. This—obedience—is the beginning of the development of a heavenly character. If we do not learn to obey, we cannot be heavenly people. But there must be continual progress. Abram was called to leave his home, Ur of Chaldea, and go to the land of Canaan, which came to be called the “Holy Land,” and which represents heaven or a heavenly character. So we are called by the Lord to leave our natural selfish inclinations and fit ourselves to live in heaven.

Abram’s journey is described in Genesis 12:1-10. He stopped for a time at Haran, and his brother Nahor stayed there. Then Abram went on into the Holy Land, and stopped first at Shechem

and then at Bethel, building an altar in each place. Then because of a famine, he went to Egypt where he became very rich. All through the Bible the land of Egypt pictures the part of our minds in which we store up facts—Swedenborg calls them “memory-knowledges.” At every step of our progress, material as well as spiritual, we find that we need more knowledge before we can go on. The gaining of this knowledge is pictured by going down into Egypt; and we shall find that many people in the Bible went down into Egypt at some point in their lives. Coming back to the Holy Land is trying to use our new knowledge in the service of the Lord.

Our story for today teaches us a very important lesson. Lot was Abram's own nephew. He had spent all his early life traveling to the Holy Land under Abram's protection, and had gone down into Egypt with him and had come back rich. Yet Lot's descendants, the Moabites and the Ammonites, were to become bitter enemies of Abram's descendants, the Israelites. The first germ of this enmity developed in the story we are studying now.

There is something in us which, like Abram, is ready to accept whatever state of life the Lord gives us and to use all the learning we acquire in His service. That is why Abram came back from Egypt rich not only in cattle (affections for useful deeds on the natural plane), but also in silver and gold (truth and goodness). But there is also in us something which, like Lot, is not at first bad, but which loves the easy and pleasant places of life. Lot also had herds and flocks, but it is not said that he had silver and gold. Lot is good and safe so long as he remains with Abram, but when the herdmen of the two (which picture particular objectives—spiritual with Abram and worldly with Lot) began to quarrel, a separation had to be made. Lot chose to live in the valley of the Jordan because it looked fertile and pleasant. The valley represents the lower plane of our lives, the plane of sense enjoyment. The valley in itself was not evil, nor is sense enjoyment evil; but temptations lurk there, and when we deliberately choose to spend our lives on that plane, we find ourselves exposed to the influence of evils of all kinds (pictured by the wicked cities of Sodom and

Gomorrah).

Sodom and Gomorrah picture selfishness and the falsity that goes with it. Selfishness and worldliness create jealousy and quarrels, and these often bring trouble to the innocent as well as to the guilty. This is why we should keep away from bad companions. Lot soon got into trouble because he chose to live too near to Sodom. The story of this first trouble and of Abram's rescue of Lot is told in the second part of our assignment.

But Lot did not learn his lesson. He still chose to live in the plain, and in chapter 19 we find him living in the very gate of Sodom. He still means to be good; so when Sodom and Gomorrah are about to be destroyed for their wickedness, the Lord sends two angels to warn Lot and, because Lot received them gladly and heeded their warning, they could lead him out of Sodom in time. We need to know that the word translated *angel* really means "messenger." Those who warn us of danger and try to keep us from doing wrong are the Lord's angels, too; and when we are tempted, the Lord always does manage to warn us through our parents, our teachers, our friends, or our conscience. If we welcome this advice and heed it, we can be saved.

We should know also the meaning of the well-known story of Lot's wife, who looked back after they were led out of Sodom and was turned into a pillar of salt. Have we ever recognized that something we have been doing is wrong and made up our minds to stop it, and then started thinking how pleasant it was and thus lost our good resolutions? This is Lot's wife looking back at Sodom. Salt in its good sense is the wish to do as truth teaches; in its bad sense it is the acceptance of a truth without the desire to live according to it. The pillar of salt into which Lot's wife was turned is set up in the Bible as a warning to all of us. When we make up our minds to do right, we must go straight forward and not let ourselves look back longingly at the old ways. Read Luke 9:62 and 17:28-32. "Remember Lot's wife" is a good verse to remember.

The choice which Abram offered Lot is presented to us over and over again in the Bible, as it is in life. Read Deuteronomy 30:15-20

and Matthew 6:19-21. One way lie earthly delights, the other way heavenly treasures. Both may be enjoyed so long as Lot is led by Abram. Abram settled in Hebron, a high place in the southern part of the Holy Land, and built his final altar there. A life of willing obedience to the Lord leads toward heaven.

Basic Correspondences

the land of Canaan = a heavenly state

Egypt = a state of natural learning,
or memory-knowledge

a valley = the plane of natural living

Senior

With this class it is well to emphasize the way in which the natural tendency to worldliness grows upon us. They will find it prevalent in their environment and need to recognize its dangers and to be on their guard against it. The New Church differs from some of the other churches in its attitude toward external pleasures. Call special attention to the passage from the writing of Swedenborg quoted at the end of this lesson, which states the principle involved. Urge them to examine their recreations and pleasures to be sure that they are such as "agree perfectly with celestial things," that is, that they do not detract from their love to the Lord and the neighbor.

We have observed how when the Most Ancient Church became wholly evil, the Lord separated from the others the few who still retained a desire to serve Him, and formed them into a new church termed the Ancient Church, one of a different character and on a lower level of spiritual life than its predecessor. This Ancient Church, described in the story of Noah and his descendants, in time also perverted the revelation given to it, ascribing their knowledge of spiritual things to themselves and using it for selfish purposes. In the early days of this church men had set up images of animals and birds and other natural objects to call to their minds the spiritual realities which they represented. As the church declined, these images came to be worshiped as idols, and many degraded forms of worship sprang up. Because of their different beliefs and their pride in their own intelligence, they could no

longer live together in peace, and gradually their descendants were scattered all over the face of the earth. The dispersion of the remnants of this church is symbolically described in the familiar story of the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9). It is in this condition that recorded history finds the human race, and some historians have assumed that man's original state was one of idolatry and mutual hostility, not realizing that these things were the result of a long decline. In the Bible story true history begins after the period described by the Tower of Babel, so that from now on we are reading about actual individuals. But this history was guided by Divine Providence, and its record in the Word was inspired, so that it has a continuous inner meaning just as the early chapters of Genesis have.

The new church to be established out of the good remnant of the Ancient Church was to be on a still lower level. We recognize that in each of us there are three planes of life: the will, the understanding, and the outward conduct. The Most Ancient Church was connected with the Lord through the will, as we have seen, and the Ancient Church was led through the understanding. The third church, the Jewish Church, was to be governed wholly by the principle of obedience in the outward conduct. Indeed, Swedenborg tells us that it was not a real church at all since it had no "internal," but only the representative of a church. Yet so long as it remained faithful to the laws and statutes laid down for its observance, it served to keep the connection between the Lord and man, since these laws and statutes were correspondences of spiritual realities.

Abram was chosen by the Lord to be the father of the Jewish Church because he was a man who was willing to obey to the letter whatever commands he received from the Lord. He was called to leave his home in Ur of the Chaldees and his father's house, and go to the Holy Land—Canaan—where it was promised him that he should prosper and become a great nation.

In our own individual lives the great symbol stories of the first eleven chapters of Genesis describe the states which are in us by

heredity. We are gifted with will and understanding, but both of these are naturally selfish. Men do not like to believe this; they like to imagine that they are born good and that other people are responsible for the evils which develop in them. But we should know better. No one has to teach a child to be selfish, to want his own way, to strike, to rebel against order. We are born selfish and the Lord has to teach us, through our parents and teachers first and later through the Word, what the true way of life is, and how to live it. At a very early age we, like Abram, are called to leave our natural inheritance and begin the long journey to the Holy Land of heavenly living. The whole period of Abram describes our childhood states.

We saw in the Creation story that in each of us there is an internal and an external side to our being—the heavens and the earth. With reference to the development of our outward lives, Abram pictures the internal and Lot the external man. Lot was Abram's nephew. He left Ur with Abram, traveled with him to Canaan, went down to Egypt with him, and returned to the Holy Land very rich. Then the herdmen of Abram and Lot began to quarrel over pastureland for their herds. As very little children we are not conscious for a time of any distinction between our higher and our lower wants. But there soon comes a day when we have to choose between obeying our parents and having something we think we want. There is a contest within us between the principle of doing right and the principle of doing what pleases us at the moment. These opposing principles are the "herdmen" of Abram and of Lot. The Lord permits the separation of the higher and the lower in us, but in the story of Abram and Lot He points out to us just what the dangers are when the worldly side of us separates itself from the direction of the higher or internal man. Lot chose the low plain of the Jordan because it looked pleasant and fertile, just as we often choose to live for external pleasures and success. But in this plain were the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, which represent selfishness in the will and the falsities in the understanding which go with this selfishness. Lot was first involved

in the war which the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah were waging; he was taken captive and had to be rescued by Abram. So we are likely to become involved in the rivalries and jealousies of worldly ambition. And later in the story (chapter 19) when the wicked cities were to be destroyed, Lot was found living in the very gate of Sodom, and was delivered only by being led out by the two angel visitors. Even then, his wife—his affection—looked back and was turned into a pillar of salt as a warning to all who, having undertaken to lead a new life, look back longingly at the delights of the old life (Luke 17:31-33). Salt represents the fact that truth is of no value unless it is obeyed (see Matthew 5:13). Lot refused even then to go into the mountains as the angels advised him to do, and his descendants became enemies of the Israelites, just as the thoughts and desires which spring from our worldly choices continue to be stumbling-blocks in the path of our spiritual progress all our lives.

Adult

You may be surprised to find that some of the class know nothing of Lot except that Lot's wife was turned into a pillar of salt. This incident has proved so striking and controversial that it is important to see it as one of the last results of Lot's original choice, and so get it into its proper proportion to the rest of the story. As to the incident itself, there is no more reason to doubt it than to doubt any other miracle in the Scriptures. If the class is bent upon discussing it, be sure they realize that it is logically inconsistent to accept the Lord's miracles in the New Testament and refuse to accept the miracles in the Old Testament, just as it is logically inconsistent to accept the visions of Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Paul and refuse to accept Swedenborg's visions.

We have seen that the people of the Ancient Church—the Silver Age—were led by truth. Their great interest was in learning truths, and they had access to the knowledge of the Most Ancient people, which had been preserved and handed down to them. Thus they knew correspondence of the things of nature with spiritual things, and this study was their greatest delight. From our own little knowledge of correspondences we can imagine what wide variety

of interest this study must have had, and we can see how, as Swedenborg tells us (AC 1285), the people of that time could have developed a wide variety of forms of worship, depending upon their particular interests and points of view. Yet as long as they were in charity, that is, as long as they worshiped from love to the Lord and the neighbor, they were in perfect harmony as to doctrine. This is what is meant in the story of the Tower of Babel by their being “of one language and of one speech.” When people are working with a common interest and without thought of self, they easily understand one another. They “speak the same language,” and variety in knowledge and point of view adds to the harmony of their efforts. But again the love of self crept in, and the Ancient Church came to its end and its people were literally as well as spiritually scattered over the face of the earth. Most of the pagan religions in the world are perversions of beliefs handed down by tradition from the scattered remnants of the Ancient Church.

Up to this point our lessons have been on the portion of the Word copied by Moses from the Ancient Word, and we have not been dealing with historical fact in the letter. Swedenborg tells us (AC 1140, 1343) that the first person mentioned in the Word who is a historical personage as well as a representative figure is Eber (Genesis 11:14), from whom the Hebrews took their name. He tells us (AC 1343) that Eber constituted a second Ancient Church, which came to an end in idolatrous worship in Terah, the father of Abram, and that Abram signifies a third Ancient Church (AC 1360), from or in which the Lord instituted the Jewish Church. The second Ancient Church, like the first, recognized spiritual things and knew that its forms of worship had their value from their correspondence. It was in this church that sacrifices were instituted.* But as it degenerated, the knowledge of the spiritual meaning of the various acts of worship was lost, until they came to regard their images and sacrifices as holy in themselves and became idolaters, knowing nothing of love for the Lord and the

*See, however, Genesis 8:20.

neighbor or of heaven and eternal life. So the Lord and the angels could no longer be present with men in their interiors, because they no longer had any internal thought. There could no longer be any real church on earth, because all real worship is internal. Still the Lord had to keep His contact with men to keep them alive and to save those whose intentions were good, and He instituted the Jewish Church, which was not a real church at all, but only the representative of a church. It is said of the Jewish priests who “offer gifts according to the law” that they “serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things” (Hebrews 8:5). The Hebrew nation was chosen by the Lord for this purpose, not because they were a peculiarly religious people but because they were a wholly external people and could be led, through hope of reward and fear of punishment, to carry on worship of Jehovah according to the particular forms which would correspondentially represent true worship and so—through correspondence—keep the connection between earth and heaven which could no longer be maintained through the minds and hearts of men. Their history could be directed by the Lord so that it could be recorded in words which, by correspondence, would express heavenly things and the divine life itself.

The fundamental principle of the Jewish Church was recognition of the necessity of obeying the commands of God. Abram lived in Ur of Chaldea, and he and his people were idolaters; but apparently he above others was inclined to absolute obedience. When he was called by the Lord to leave his country and his father's people and take the long journey to Canaan, he obeyed. And throughout the story he obeyed unhesitatingly when the Lord spoke to him. He represents in us the beginning of the development of spiritual life. This beginning—when we are very little children—lies in obedience, first to our parents and then to the precepts of right conduct which have been taught us.

Abram did not leave Ur alone. He took with him his wife Sarai, his father Terah, his brother Nahor, his nephew Lot—whose father had died in Ur—their families, and all their servants, cattle, and

possessions. We start our journey of life just where we are by heredity, and must take with us all our qualities, all our abilities, and all our weaknesses. Abram's father died before he reached the land of Canaan, and his brother Nahor and his family stopped half-way and settled in Haran (also called the city of Nahor). There are in us tendencies which, while not evil, are "simple." We say we have "outgrown" them. Yet they remain in our background and we go back to them from time to time for renewal of our early simple faith. These are represented by Nahor. But Lot went all the way with Abram.

Each plane of our minds has its internal and its external. Abram pictures the internal man in its early state, and Lot the external or sensuous man. We are all perfectly familiar in our own experience with the struggle between higher and lower motives and principles. Lot chose to live in the low but inviting valley of present satisfaction, and Abram dwelt in the mountains of the Lord's promise.

In the fertile valley of the Jordan, Lot's choice, were the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Lot went to live near Sodom. Because of this he was captured and carried away when the four kings from the Tigris-Euphrates valley came over to make war on the five kings of the Jordan valley. This pictures our early temptation to do as others do. At first the childhood habit of obedience, like Abram, is near enough to be aroused and strong enough to go after us and bring us back to a good state. But temptations increase. In chapter 19 we find Lot living in the very gate of Sodom when it was about to be destroyed for its wickedness. We are familiar with the story of the angels who came to Lot to lead him out of Sodom. Even then, we recall, Lot refused to go to the mountain and chose to live in the little city of Zoar, and the Lord permitted him to make his choice. Lot was saved, but his two sons, Moab and Ammon, born to him after this escape, fathered the Moabites and Ammonites, who represent the evils and falsities that result when men live in the externals or worship without the internals. They were enemies of Israel for generations. All Lot's troubles began when his herdsmen quarreled with Abram's herd-

men, at which time he separated from Abram and went to live in the valley.

And what of Lot's wife who disobeyed the command of the angels and looked back toward Sodom? To look back or turn back means to recede from good once we have seen and undertaken it. When we make up our minds to do the right thing, we should go forward with it steadily and not dally with thoughts of the pleasures of the course from which we have turned. Salt in a good sense represents the affection of truth or the desire to live according to the truth. When this is lost, the salt has lost its savor. It was an old custom, coming from a knowledge of this correspondence, to sow a conquered city with salt. We should be able to learn from past experience not to "look back." The pillar of salt into which Lot's wife was turned stands as a perpetual warning. The Lord Himself said, "Remember Lot's wife."

From the Writings of Swedenborg

Arcana Coelestia, n. 1547: "Lot represents sensuous things, by which is meant the external man and its pleasures that pertain to sensuous things, thus those things which are outermost, and which are wont to captivate man in his childhood, and draw him away from goods. For so far as a man indulges the pleasures that originate from cupidities, he is drawn away from the celestial things that are of love and charity; because in those pleasures there is love from self and from the world, with which celestial love cannot agree. There are, however, pleasures that agree perfectly with celestial things, and that likewise appear similar in external form . . . But the pleasures that originate from cupidities are to be restrained and wiped out, because they block the way to celestial things. It is these pleasures, and not others, that are treated of in this chapter—by Lot, in that he separated himself from Abraham."

Suggested Questions on the Lesson

- P. What two men is our lesson about today? *Abram, Lot*
- J. Where did Abram and Lot come from? *Ur, Chaldea*
- J. Why did they leave Ur? *the Lord told them to*
- P. What did Abram do at the first two places where he stopped in Canaan?
built altars

- J. To what other country did he and Lot go before they settled in Canaan?
Egypt
- P. What happened in Egypt? *they became rich*
- J. Where did they go first when they came back? *Bethel*
- J. What difficulty came up between them? *herdmen quarreled*
- J. What offer did Abram make to Lot? *choice of land*
- P. What part of the country did Lot choose? *valley*
- J. Why did he choose it? *good pasture*
- J. What danger was there which he did not think about? *Sodom*
- J. Into what trouble did he fall? *captured in war*
- J. How was he saved? *Abram*
- I. In our lives what does Lot's choice picture? *doing whatever pleases us at the moment*
- I. What are meant by the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah? *selfishness, worldly thinking*
- S. Does this mean that we should avoid all the pleasures of the senses?
no, but should be kept in proper perspective
- S. How can we tell what pleasures are innocent? *not harmful, and in harmony with goals of spiritual life*

ABRAHAM AND ISHMAEL

Genesis 16

Review briefly the story of the Most Ancient Church and its destruction as a preparation for describing the decline and fall of the Ancient Church. Then review the raising up of the remnant called Noah and go from that to an account of the call of Abram. The thought of the Lord's stepping in while a remnant of good remained can be connected with the promise of which the rainbow was the token. Be sure the classes understand why *Abram* is used in our chapter and why we always speak of him as *Abraham*.

Doctrinal Points

The three planes in our lives.

The origin of idolatry.

Humility and obedience the basis of all spiritual progress.

Notes for Parents

Abraham was a real person. The Jews think of him as the father of their race. His home was in the city of Ur in the land of Chaldea, and he came of a nation of idol worshipers, one of the many branches into which the Ancient Church was divided after its fall, which is described in the symbol story of the Tower of Babel (*Genesis 11:1-9*).

In Abram the Lord found a man who would obey Him even at great cost to himself, and He called him to leave his home and go to the land of Canaan where He would make him the father of a great nation. Abram obeyed and the Lord prospered him greatly; but in our chapter for today we find that he and his wife Sarai have grown old and still have no child. How is Abram to become the father of a nation? Sarai tries to solve the problem by giving him her Egyptian bondservant Hagar as a wife. People in that

degenerate time had lost all knowledge of what a true marriage is. It seems strange to us that we should read in the Bible of men who had more than one wife and yet were blessed by the Lord. But we must remember that the Lord judges us not by the wrong things which we do ignorantly—which are many—but by those we do knowing that they are wrong.

Sarai meant to do the right thing, and when Hagar despised her, Abram upheld Sarai. Hagar had to be taught to submit to her mistress. We cannot escape the consequences of our misdeeds by running away from them. Yet the Lord dealt gently with Hagar, as He does with us. His Word is our “fountain of water in the wilderness” and also the angel—or “messenger”—of the Lord, recalling us to our duty and promising us happiness if we will obey.

Ishmael was to become the father of a great people, but he was not to be Abram's heir, as we shall learn later. You will notice that the names *Abram* and *Sarai* are not spelled in this chapter as we are accustomed to find them spelled. In chapter 17, verses 1-5 and 15-16, you will find the story of how the spelling of their names came to be changed. The *h* which was inserted in each is one of the letters of the Lord's name *Jehovah* and was added to show that they were to stand thenceforth in a closer relation to the Lord than before. Every letter of the Hebrew in the original language of the Bible is important.

Primary

Try to fix in the children's minds the series of names *Adam, Noah, Abraham*. Emphasize the fact that the descendants of Noah came to think they knew better than the Lord, just as Adam and Eve had, and so they stopped obeying Him and became bad. Then speak of Abram's call and its result, and read the chapter for today last. Help the children fix in their minds the relationships of Abram, Sarai, Hagar, and Ishmael.

This is a story of the father of the Jewish people. Jews still call themselves “children of Abraham.” The Lord founded a new church

in the world through Noah and his family and for a time people remembered the covenant of the rainbow and obeyed the Lord. But it did not last.

You know how happy you are when you are being good and everyone is pleased with you. But do you keep on always being good? No; sooner or later you forget and do something you know is naughty. That was just the way it was with the people of that Ancient Church. And they became worse and worse until they were no longer obeying the Lord at all; so they stopped being a church.

Then the Lord called Abraham, a man who was still willing to obey. He lived far to the east in a city called Ur. The Lord told him to leave his home and go to the land of Canaan, and promised that if he would obey, his descendants would become a great nation.

Abraham did obey, and the Lord blessed him in the land of Canaan. He lived in a city called Hebron, and became very rich. There was one thing, however, that Abraham needed which he did not have. What was it?

Who was Abraham's wife?

How did she decide to give Abraham a son?

Who was Hagar?

What did she do that was wrong?

Why did she run away?

Where did the angel of the Lord find her?

What did he tell her to do?

What did he say about her son?

Who was the son of Abraham and Hagar?

In the story in this chapter the names are Abram and Sarai, but later the Lord changed them to Abraham and Sarah, and that is the way we should remember them.

Junior

The reason for the decline of the Ancient Church is important for the Juniors. They should also be drilled on the first part of the Abraham story. The essential questions for this are given in their notes. The teacher should add ques-

tions on chapter 13. In this lesson stress the weakness and foolishness of trying to run away from the consequences of our wrongdoing.

After the time of Noah the people had a Bible from which they learned the truth. It is called the Ancient Word and certain books in it are referred to in our Bible. Read Numbers 21:14, Joshua 10:13, and II Samuel 1:18. The Ancient Word has been lost, but we may know something of what it was like because Moses copied from it the first eleven chapters of Genesis. It was all written in symbol language in which the people of that time spoke and wrote, since they knew to what everything in nature corresponds. They were very wise. But unfortunately they began to pride themselves on their wisdom and to forget that they needed to look to the Lord for guidance. So their church—the Ancient Church—declined, and again the time came when the Lord had to gather together the remnant of good people and build up a new church.

The beginning of this new church is described in the story of Abraham. The original names of Abraham and his wife Sarah were Abram and Sarai. The *h*, which is one of the letters of the Lord's name *Jehovah*, was put in later to show the closer relation they came to bear to the Lord (Genesis 17:1-5, 15).

Why did Abram go down into Egypt?

Where did Abram settle when he returned to the land of Canaan?

In Egypt Abram had gained great riches, but there was one thing he did not have. What was it?

How did Sarai decide to help Abram to have a son?

Abram and Sarai did not know that it was wrong for a man to have more than one wife at a time. So the Lord did not blame them. He saw the love in Sarai's heart which wanted to make her husband happy.

What was Sarai's servant's name?

From what country did she come?

When Hagar knew she was to have a son, how did she treat Sarai?

Do we ever make fun of someone because he can't do something that we can do? This is always wrong. In the first place, there are probably things he can do which we can't. But even if we could

do everything better than he, we should not let it make us proud, because it is the Lord who gives us all our abilities, and He gives them to us to use to help other people and never to hurt them.

Did Abram side with Hagar or with Sarai?

Abram was happy that he was to have a son, but he was a just man and he knew that Hagar was in the wrong.

Where did Hagar go when Sarai treated her harshly?

Where did the angel of the Lord find her?

What did the angel tell her to do?

What did He promise her?

We must never run away from the results of our own wrongdoing. That is cowardly and makes us weaker instead of stronger. We grow stronger by acknowledging what we have done that is wrong and by trying to make it right as far as we can. The Lord cannot make us happy while we are doing wrong. The word *angel* means “messenger.” The angel of the Lord speaks to us just as truly as he did to Hagar. The Lord’s messenger to us is the Bible, and He can speak to us through everything we know that comes from the Bible. You know that when you have done wrong, there is something inside you that seems to be telling you so and telling you just what you ought to do. We call this inside voice our conscience, but it is based on what we know from the Lord’s Word. It may help you sometimes, when you hear the voice of conscience, to think, “This is the angel of the Lord speaking to me by the fountain of water in the wilderness.”

Did Hagar obey the Lord?

What was her son’s name?

What did the angel say he would be?

Intermediate

The reason for the fall of the Ancient Church and the quality in Abraham which enabled the Lord to use him to begin a new dispensation should be made clear. In the lesson the meaning of producing children and the meaning of the Egyptian servant Hagar are the important parts to stress.

The character of the Ancient Church—the church called Noah—

was different from that of the Most Ancient Church. The people of the Most Ancient Church were governed by their will or emotions, but those of the Ancient Church were governed by their understanding. So at the height of the Ancient Church the people were very wise. They loved to study the inner meaning of their Word and they understood it much more fully than we do. But their wisdom was accompanied by a great temptation, the temptation to be proud of their knowledge and to forget to be humble before God. This “pride of self-intelligence” grew until they could no longer serve the Lord as His Church on earth. The end of the Ancient Church is described in the story of the Tower of Babel.

According to His promise—the covenant of the rainbow—the Lord did not destroy these people. He merely took from them the understanding of the truths they had misused, and scattered the people “upon the face of all the earth” (Genesis 11:8). Some of the religions of the Orient are based on ideas handed down by tradition from this church.

But again the Lord gathered a remnant of good people who still wished to obey Him, instructed them anew, and built them into a church. Abram’s virtue was implicit obedience. He had many false ideas in his mind because he had grown up in the last days of the decline of the true Ancient Church, but he was willing to do what he believed the Lord wanted him to do. So the Lord could promise to bless him and make of him a great nation.

In our chapter for today Abram and his wife Sarai are very old and, in spite of the Lord’s promise, Abram still has no heir. So Sarai offers Abram her Egyptian bondwoman Hagar that he may have a child by her, and Abram accepts the offer.

We know that it is wrong for a man to have more than one wife at a time. The people of the early churches—while they were true churches—knew it, too. But by the time of Abram men had forgotten a great many of the truths which had been given them in the beginning, and Abram and Sarai had no thought that they were doing wrong. So the Lord did not blame them for it. He does not blame us for doing wrong in ignorance unless our ignorance is will-

ful; that is, unless we have refused to learn the truth when it was offered us. This is one of the great mercies of the Lord. Nevertheless when we do wrong, there are always bad consequences. Hagar's son could not be Abraham's heir.

In spiritual terms, the desire for children is the desire to produce what is good and true, to make our lives count for something in the building of the Lord's kingdom. This is a good desire, but it is often at first united to false ideas of what is good and true. Hagar was an Egyptian and a servant. There are three great Bible countries: the land of Canaan, Assyria, and Egypt. Like all groups of three in the Word they represent the three great planes of our lives: will, thought, and act. You will learn more about these as we go on, but you may remember that Egypt is the land of "memory-knowledge," Assyria the land of thought and reasoning, and the land of Canaan the land of the will to make all that we know and think serve the Lord. Think, for example, how we come by our religion. First we store in our memories knowledge from the letter of the Word—this is Egypt. Then we think about these knowledges and come to understand what they mean—this is Assyria. Finally we come to love to obey what these knowledges teach—this is the land of Canaan. Women in the Bible represent affections for various kinds of truth. So Hagar the Egyptian represents the affection for memory-knowledges. This is one of our early affections—we like to "know things." This is a good and useful affection so long as it is made to serve the true purpose for which knowledge is intended, which is Sarai, Abram's true wife. But sometimes we become proud of our knowledge and think we know more than those who are really wiser than we. This is Hagar despising her mistress.

When Hagar was rebuked, she ran away into the wilderness. A wilderness is the opposite of a safe, cultivated place where one can be at home. Many times in the Bible we find people going into the wilderness. This is always a picture of a confused and unsettled state of mind, when one seems to have lost his firm hold on the truth, his spiritual home. Those who are proud of their own knowledge and despise others are often brought into such a state.

Yet, in the Bible stories, people in the wilderness are always, like Hagar, being led to wells or springs of water. This means that the Lord is always present to show us the truth when we realize our need of it.

The angel of the Lord found Hagar by the fountain of water in the wilderness. An angel is a messenger—that is what the word means. First he told her to go back to her mistress and do right, and then he made her encouraging promises about her son. When we have done wrong and are confused and unhappy, the Lord leads us to the truth, and His angel—which for us is the Word—tells us to go back and try to make up for the wrong we have done and that the result will be a great blessing.

Hagar's son was Ishmael. Later we shall take up the meaning of Ishmael and Isaac, Abraham's two sons. Notice here the prophecies which the angel spoke concerning Ishmael.

Basic Correspondences

the land of Canaan = the inmost plane of our life in
which we desire to serve the Lord

Assyria = the thinking and reasoning plane

Egypt = the outmost plane—
memory-knowledges

a wilderness = a confused and unsettled state

Senior

Try to make clear to the young people that Abram, although he is the third in the series of churches, is also the first in a new series of three—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob—all on the natural plane. Our lessons from now on will be interpreted mainly as they apply to our individual development from infancy to adulthood.

From chapter 12 of Genesis on, although it continues to be parable, it is also for the most part true history. Historical records other than the Bible go back approximately to the time of Abraham; so we may fairly say that the first eleven chapters of Genesis treat of prehistoric times. From the height of the Most Ancient

Church, described by the Garden of Eden before the creation of Eve, down to the fall of the Ancient Church, described in the story of the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9), we find people becoming less and less spiritual, and more and more external and worldly. The first church was a celestial church, the second a spiritual church, and the third—described by Eber (Genesis 11:14)—a natural church. We shall find presently that in the descendants of Abraham this third church gradually lost all interior understanding until in the church set up among the children of Jacob or Israel it was no longer anything but the “representative of a church,” because it had no spiritual life within it.

The Ancient Church declined and fell as a result of the growth of the “pride of self-intelligence.” Its people had had great wisdom, but after a time they began to forget that all their wisdom was a gift from the Lord. They had understood correspondences and developed a worship in which they used images of natural things to remind them of the spiritual things which they signified. But in time they forgot the spiritual significance and began to worship the images themselves. So they became idolaters, and all the idolatrous religions with which we are familiar in the world today are perverted remains of the Ancient Church.

While there were still, however, a few left who, although they worshiped idols, still were sincere in their desire to obey God instead of depending on themselves, the Lord called Abram to leave his home in Ur of the Chaldees and go to the land of Canaan and reestablish there the worship of the one God. Abram was chosen because he was willing to be obedient even at great cost to himself. He obeyed without question.

In our lives we may think of the Most Ancient and Ancient churches as picturing our inherited background, and of Abram as representing our early childlike obedience to the Lord. But we soon begin to grow up as independent individuals and, just as the early people wanted a life of their own, so in the literal Bible story Abram wanted a son of his own. Children always picture new developments: sons, truths; and daughters, goods or affections.

Abram's first son, however, was not to be his heir, because he was not the son of Abram's true wife Sarai. This is a very interesting story. In the letter Abram and Sarai do wrong as we see it. The early people in the Adamic and Noachic churches knew that a man should have only one wife at a time, but by the time of Abram this truth, along with many others, had been lost. Thus Abram and Sarai were innocent in their wrongdoing and the Lord did not hold it against them; but still there were evil consequences. The same law holds today. We are not held responsible by the Lord in His mercy for evils we commit ignorantly, if our ignorance is not willful; yet the consequences of our wrong deeds follow inevitably.

In the Bible the various countries picture different planes of life. Egypt pictures the plane of natural or external knowledge—that is, of memory-knowledge. As women picture affections for different kinds of truth, Hagar, the Egyptian servant, pictures the affection for natural or memory knowledges. Our first efforts to produce ideas and works of our own are often the offspring of purely natural affections. The ideas so produced are never truly spiritual. So Ishmael, the son of Abram and Hagar, was to be a "wild man," or, as the original Hebrew says, a "wild-ass man." When we are young, our affections cling to external satisfactions and we reason from these external things. We are always sure we are right and are likely to laugh at our parents and teachers, just as both Hagar and later Ishmael despised and laughed at those higher than they.

Hagar represents an external, natural type of affection. Ishmael represents our youthful reasonings. Hagar's pride drives her into the wilderness. Our state of mind at this time is very like a wilderness, with no regular paths, no fixed abode, no cultivated food. Yet even here we find water. The Lord shows us the truth in our time of need, and His angel, or messenger, the Word, tells us to go back and submit ourselves humbly to those who are wiser than we, and all will be well with us.

The great fault of our first reasoning power is pride. No matter how bright and clever we are, we always need to look to the Lord

for guidance, or we are really lost in a wilderness. And in trouble and temptation the Lord is very close to us and ready to show us the way home as soon as we really acknowledge our need.

Adult

The three main lines of thought to be followed are the transition from the Ancient to the Jewish Church, the change of application in our interpretation as we pass to the historical part of the Word, and the meaning of Hagar and Ishmael.

We have thought of Noah as picturing the Ancient Church which was established on earth after the flood. We commonly think of this as the second church and of the Jewish Church as the third. But Swedenborg points out that the three sons of Noah picture different derivations of doctrinals and worships in the Ancient Church—Shem true internal worship, Ham “internal worship corrupted,” and Japheth “external worship corresponding to internal” (AC 1146)—and the explanation of the internal sense of the genealogies in chapter 10 of Genesis shows clearly how these three types deviated more and more widely as time went on from the true pattern of the Ancient Church. As might be expected, the descendants of Shem continued to be the core of the Lord’s connection with mankind, and in this line there developed a “second Ancient Church” in Eber. Of this church we read in AC 1343: “That ‘Eber’ was a nation called, from Eber as its father, the Hebrew nation, and that thereby is signified the worship in general of the second Ancient Church, is evident from those historical parts of the Word wherein it is spoken of. From that nation, because the new worship commenced there, all were called Hebrews who had a similar worship. Their worship was of the kind that was afterwards restored among the descendants of Jacob; and its chief characteristic consisted in their calling their God ‘Jehovah,’ and in their having sacrifices. The Most Ancient Church with unanimity acknowledged the Lord, and called Him Jehovah, as is evident from the first chapters of Genesis, and elsewhere in the Word. The

Ancient Church, that is, the church after the flood, also acknowledged the Lord, and called Him Jehovah, especially those who had internal worship, and were called ‘sons of Shem.’ The others, who were in external worship, also acknowledged Jehovah, and worshiped Him. But when internal worship became external, and still more when it became idolatrous, and when each nation began to have its own god whom it worshiped, the Hebrew nation retained the name Jehovah; and hereby were distinguished from the other nations. Together with their external worship, the descendants of Jacob in Egypt lost this also—that they called their God Jehovah; nay, Moses himself did so; and therefore they were instructed first of all that Jehovah was the God of the Hebrews, and the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob.”

AC 1360 tells us that Terah, the father of Abram, was a “third Ancient Church” which had become idolatrous, and Terah’s death in Haran (AC 1375) signalized the end of this idolatrous worship and “the beginning of a representative church through Abram.”

In AC 1403 Swedenborg says: “From the first chapter of Genesis up to this point [Genesis 12:1], or rather to the mention of Eber, the historicals have not been true but made-up historicals, which in the internal sense signify celestial and spiritual actualities.” This is further explained in AC 1409: “The Most Ancient Church, which was celestial, looked upon all earthly and worldly, and also bodily things, which were in any wise objects of the senses, as being dead things; but as each and all things in the world present some idea of the Lord’s kingdom, consequently of things celestial and spiritual, when they saw them or apprehended them by any sense, they thought not of them, but of the celestial and spiritual things; indeed they thought not from the worldly things, but by means of them; and thus with them things that were dead became living. The things thus signified were collected from their lips by their posterity and were formed by them into doctrinals, which were the Word of the Ancient Church, after the flood. With the Ancient Church these were significative; for through them they learned internal things, and from them they thought of spiritual

and celestial things. But when this knowledge began to perish, so that they did not know that such things were signified, and began to regard the terrestrial and worldly things as holy, and to worship them, with no thought of their signification, the same things were then made representative. Thus arose the Representative Church, which had its beginning in Abram and was afterwards instituted with the posterity of Jacob. From this it may be known that representatives had their rise from the significatives of the Ancient Church, and these from the celestial ideas of the Most Ancient Church. But with representatives the character of the person is not considered at all, but the thing which he represents; for all the kings of Judah and Israel, of whatever character, represented the Lord's kingly function; and all the priests, of whatever character, represented His priestly function. Thus the evil as well as the good could represent the Lord and the celestial and spiritual things of His kingdom."

The story of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob pictures in the internal historical sense the development of this representative church, and in its internal sense the development of any one of us. So we may think of the whole story of Abraham—which is more or less familiar to all of us—as picturing our spiritual state in infancy and very early childhood. Our lesson for today deals with the beginning of the change from this innocent, trustful, obedient age to the part of our childhood when we are beginning to try to think and act for ourselves. Swedenborg summarizes our chapter in its inmost meaning as follows: "The subject treated of in this chapter is the Lord's first rational, which was conceived by the influx of the internal man into the affection of memory-knowledges [*scientiae*] of the external. The internal man is 'Abram'; the affection of memory-knowledges in the external is 'Hagar the Egyptian handmaid'; the rational thence derived is 'Ishmael.' " The name *Hagar* means a "stranger" or "sojourner" and in a simple way we can see that our conclusions from our early thinking are inevitably temporary. They are based on our knowledge of the external world alone. We reason from appearances. And it follows

that we resent efforts to correct our ideas and conduct by those who are older and wiser and whose standards are based on deeper spiritual truths. This is pictured in the story of Hagar's despising her mistress, being rebuked, and fleeing from the face of her mistress.

Hagar is found by the angel at the fountain of water in the wilderness. Our affection for external knowledges, under the Lord's providence, is always supplied with some external knowledge of the Word, which serves for rebuke, advice, and encouragement in goodness. So Hagar returns and is again subject to her mistress. But Hagar's son, although he is to be the father of a great people, is not to be Abraham's heir. This means that our first natural reasoning is necessary and will always play a part in our lives, especially in the conduct of our worldly affairs, but it is not adequate to lead us in our spiritual progress.

From the Writings of Swedenborg

Arcana Coelestia, n. 1949: “*He shall be a wild-ass man.* That this signifies rational truth, which is described, is evident from the signification of ‘a wild-ass,’ as being rational truth. In the Word there is frequent mention of horses, horsemen, mules, and asses; and as yet no one has known that these signify things of the intellect, of the reason, and of memory-knowledge. That these animals and their riders have such a signification will of the Lord’s Divine mercy be fully confirmed in the proper places. Of the same class is the ‘onager,’ for this is the mule of the wilderness, or wild-ass, and it signifies man’s rational; not however the rational in its whole complex, but only rational truth. The rational consists of good and truth, that is, of things belonging to charity and of things belonging to faith, and it is rational truth that is signified by the ‘wild-ass.’ This then is what is represented by Ishmael, and is what is described in this verse. It seems incredible that rational truth when separated from good should be of such a character, neither should I have known this to be the case unless I had been instructed by living experience. Whether you say rational truth, or the man whose rational is of this kind, amounts to the same. The man whose rational is of such a character that he is solely in truth—even though it be the truth of faith—and who is not at the same time in the good of charity, is altogether of such a character. He is a morose man, will bear nothing, is against all, regards everybody as being in falsity, is ready to rebuke,

to chastise, and to punish; has no pity, and does not apply or adapt himself to others and study to bend their minds; for he looks at everything from truth, and at nothing from good. Hence it is that Ishmael was driven out, and afterwards dwelt in the wilderness, and his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt (Gen. xxi. 9-21); all of which things are representative of one who is endowed with such a rational."

Suggested Questions on the Lesson

- P. Who was the father of the third church? *Abraham*
J. In what place did he settle in the land of Canaan? *South (Negeb)*
P. What was his wife's name? *Sarai*
P. What one thing did Abram not have that he wanted? *a son*
J. How did Sarai try to supply this lack? *gave Abraham Hagar as a wife*
P. From what country did Hagar come? *Egypt*
J. What fault did she commit? *despised her mistress*
J. Why did she run away from her mistress Sarai? *harsh treatment*
P. Where did she go and where did the angel of the Lord find her?
wilderness, spring
P. What did he tell her to do? *go back and obey*
J. What did he say about her son? *to father great nation*
P. What was her son's name? *Ishmael*

ABRAHAM AND THE ANGELS

Genesis 18

This lesson is from the middle of the Abraham story. Review briefly the facts concerning Abraham up to this point, leaving the rest of his story to be covered later. In the story this time Abraham's desire to be directed by the Lord should be emphasized, in contrast to the general state of mankind especially as it was pictured in the lesson on the Tower of Babel.

Doctrinal Points

Before His Advent the Lord appeared to men by filling an angel with His presence.

In the Word literal history begins with Genesis 12.

Faith is really of the heart. The mind tends to doubt.

Abraham's trust in the Lord and obedience to Him are essentials of charity.

Notes for Parents

In this story Abraham is nearly a hundred years old. The Lord has kept his promise—made when He called Abraham to leave his ancestral home in Chaldea and go to the land of Canaan—and Abraham is rich and well established in the land. But one promise of the Lord is still unfulfilled. For the Lord has said that Abraham's descendants shall inherit the land and become a great nation, and as yet Abraham's wife Sarah, who is also very old, has had no children. Abraham has one son, Ishmael, born to him by Sarah's bondwoman Hagar, but the Lord has told him that Ishmael cannot be his heir.

Abraham's outstanding virtues were trust in the Lord and obedience to Him. It was these virtues which made it possible for the Lord to be with him and to prosper him, and also to speak to him as He does in our chapter. As we read the chapter, we find that

Abraham almost immediately recognizes the three men as angels or messengers of the Lord, and as the chapter goes on, he speaks to them as one person and is answered by the Lord, until in the last part of the chapter his whole conversation is with the Lord. The renewal of the promise of an heir to be born to him by Sarah he accepts without question. Sarah cannot conceal her doubts, but we know that within the year she did have a son, Isaac.

The lesson for us in this chapter is that trust and obedience are never in vain. They always bear fruit which carries on into the future. Sometimes it seems to us that the good have many hardships to bear and that the evil prosper, but that is because we are thinking only of what happens in this world and forgetting that this is only the beginning of our life and that what counts in the end is what is happening in our souls. This is what the last part of our chapter tells us. We all have in us the spiritual counterparts of the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, selfish desires and wrong thoughts, but if we do our best from day to day to learn the Lord's will and do it, the Lord will surely spare us and bring us safely to heaven.

Primary

Only the first part of the chapter is chosen for these younger children. The Lord's promise to Abraham and the fact that he and Sarah were old people and had had no son will serve to point up the lesson. The details of his entertainment of the angels will interest the children. Tell the children that the word *angel* means "messenger."

Our story is about Abraham. Abraham was one of the people who still wanted to be taught by the Lord and to obey Him even after most of the world had become self-willed and ignorant of heavenly things. So the Lord could teach Abraham and be with him and help him.

The Lord told Abraham to leave his home and go to the land of Canaan and settle there. It was a long journey but Abraham obeyed, and he finally settled in a place called Hebron—or sometimes called Mamre. The Lord prospered him and he became very

rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold. He and his family were shepherds and herdmen and lived very simply—not at all as most of us do today. Their homes were tents, which they could take down and move about so that their flocks could always find pasture.

The Lord had promised Abraham that he would be the father of a great nation, but Abraham and his wife Sarah had had no children and they were now old people. This troubled Abraham very much, but the Lord always keeps His promises.

Who came to see Abraham?

How did he receive them?

What did he tell Sarah to do?

What other food did he give them?

What did they promise him?

What did Sarah do of which she was afterward ashamed?

The three men who came to Abraham were angels or messengers of the Lord, and Abraham recognized this and welcomed them and was happy to entertain them with the best he had. And he believed what they told him, even though Sarah doubted.

Junior

For this class the story of Abraham is best taught with the help of a map, and this story should be treated as an incident in the total story, with the emphasis on the promise of Isaac. Do not, however, neglect the general lesson of Abraham's questions concerning Sodom and Gomorrah. The exact location of these two cities geographically is not known, but their general location may be assumed from the story of Lot.

What is the first great church on earth called?

How is its end described in the Bible?

What is the second great church called?

What serious fault developed in it?

What happened to it when it would no longer serve the Lord?

By what story in the Bible is its end described?

The Lord never lets the world be without a church. You remember that Cain represents faith and that the Lord kept Cain from being killed even after Cain had killed Abel. To start the third church the Lord chose Abram. Abram and his family had grown

up with a great many wrong ideas about God and religion, but they still wanted to do what would please God instead of just trying to have their own way. So the Lord could teach them.

The Lord told Abram to take his family and leave Ur of Chaldea and travel to the land of Canaan. Abram made his home at Hebron, where the Lord renewed His promise to Abram that he would be father of a great people, and as a sign changed his name to Abraham and Sarai's name to Sarah. This was a sign because the letter *h* is the principal letter in the Lord's name *Jehovah*, and it meant that Abraham and Sarah, because they were obedient to the Lord, had come to stand in a very special relation to Him.

Now we come to our story for today. *Mamre*, in the first verse of our chapter, is another name for Hebron.

Who came to see Abraham at Mamre?

What did Abraham offer them first?

What did he tell Sarah to do?

What else did he give them to eat?

What did they promise him?

What did Sarah do?

On your map find the two cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. These were in the valley which Lot had chosen for his home, and perhaps you remember that Lot had already had trouble because he lived too near these wicked cities. He and his family had been captured, and Abraham had had to go and rescue him. Now the two cities have become so wicked that they must be destroyed.

What does Abraham ask the Lord?

What were the numbers in order as Abraham gave them?

When you are older, you will understand more of what this story means, but you can see now that it teaches us that the Lord is very kind and merciful and does everything He can to help and save us, so long as there is any real goodness in us. It is never the Lord's fault if a person does not get to heaven. But the Lord cannot save us if we turn from Him altogether and become wholly selfish. And of course the more obedient and unselfish we are, the more happiness the Lord can give us.

Intermediate

The principal lesson for this class is the correspondence of Abraham, the meaning of his call, and the importance of the good states of our infancy in our later development.

Abraham obeyed the Lord. When the voice of the Lord came to him, telling him to leave his home in Ur of Chaldea and make the long journey to the land of Canaan, he gathered together his family and his possessions and started out. You remember the story. Abram and his wife Sarai—their names were later changed to Abraham and Sarah—together with Abraham's brother Nahor and his family, and their nephew Lot—son of another brother, Haran, who had died—and their old father Terah took the route up around the northern edge of the Arabian desert, living in tents and stopping often to pasture their flocks and herds. At one of these stopping places, not too far from Canaan, Nahor decided to settle. They named the place Haran after Lot's father, and in the Bible it is also sometimes called "the city of Nahor." There Terah died. We need to remember this place because of its importance in our later stories.

Abraham and Sarah and Lot, with their servants and their animals, went on into the land of Canaan, stopping at Shechem and Bethel, where Abraham built altars, and then going on southward. You remember that because of a famine they had to go to Egypt for a time and that they prospered there and became rich. When they returned to the land of Canaan, they separated, Lot choosing to live in the rich Jordan valley, in spite of the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah in that area, and Abraham taking the more mountainous region and making his home at Hebron.

This is a true story, but it is also a story of a spiritual journey which we take in our early childhood, for Abraham represents the state of every little child, a state of simple trust and obedience. At that state of our lives we are all ignorant and we know only the external things which we see and touch—just as Abraham was an idolater—but the Lord has seen to it that there is something in us which accepts instruction about Him. The land of Chaldea rep-

resents our first natural self-centered state, but we are called by the Lord to go to the land of Canaan, which represents heaven or a heavenly character. And the Lord promises each one of us, as He promised Abraham, that if we obey Him the land of Canaan shall be ours forever.

In our present chapter Abraham is settled in Hebron and is prosperous and happy except for one thing. He has no heir. Ishmael has been born to him by Hagar, Sarah's Egyptian bondwoman, but the Lord has told him that Ishmael is not to be his heir. We soon recognize that the three men who come to Abraham are messengers of the Lord, or angels, for they speak for the Lord.

In fact, if you read carefully, you will find that the angels are sometimes called "he" and that in verse 13 they are even called "the Lord." Swedenborg explains this for us by telling us that before the Lord came into the world as Jesus Christ He sometimes appeared to men by "filling an angel with His presence." Abraham received the men with joy and gave them the best he had. This again shows Abraham's openness to direction by the Lord, and it is a picture of the simplicity and of the pleasure with which little children receive instruction in the stories of the Word.

The angels told Abraham that Sarah would bear him a son, even though by this time Abraham and Sarah were both old. Sarah doubted, but Abraham believed. The promise of an heir is the promise that the truth we learn and the good we do will not be wasted but will "bear fruit," that is, will lead to further development of heavenly character.

The latter part of our chapter, although it seems to have no connection with this promise in the letter, really carries it further. The wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah picture the evils and falsities which "come natural" to us because we are born selfish. Sometimes we get to thinking that we just can't help being bad, and we become discouraged with ourselves and are tempted to give up trying to be good. This is pictured by the angels going down to look over Sodom and Gomorrah to see if they are so wicked that they must be destroyed. Every number in the Word has a corre-

spondence. So the numbers which Abraham uses in our chapter describe different kinds and degrees of goodness, beginning with fifty, which pictures a life full of goodness and truth, and ending with ten, which pictures "remains," the good states of our infancy stored up in us by the Lord. Perhaps you have read stories of how a young man who seemed about to become a criminal has suddenly thought of his mother and his innocent childhood and decided to change his ways and reform. This is an example of how the Lord can work through these childhood "remains."

So the conversation between the Lord and Abraham in our chapter teaches us how the Lord uses every bit of goodness and truth we ever had, and is trying always to save us from becoming wholly selfish and destroying our spiritual life.

Basic Correspondences

- | | | |
|---------------------|---|--|
| Abraham | = | the state of infancy and very early childhood |
| the land of Chaldea | = | the natural state into which we are born |
| the land of Canaan | = | heaven or a heavenly character |
| Sodom | = | evil from the love of self |
| Gomorrah | = | falsity from the love of self |
| fifty | = | what is full (truths full of goods) |
| ten | = | remains |
-

Senior

More can be done in this class with the conversation concerning Sodom and Gomorrah. One of the temptations young people have to meet is the question—not only in their own minds but from other people—"What's the use?" They need to be impressed with the fact that the Lord's presence with us is very real, and that no right choice of ours is ever wasted.

The story of Abraham's call to leave his home in Ur of the Chaldees and go to the land of Canaan pictures something in the experience of every one of us. We are born wholly ignorant and with a deep-seated tendency to selfishness which comes to us by

inheritance from our natural ancestors. The evils and consequent false tendencies which developed in the Most Ancient and Ancient churches are born in us just as they were in Abraham. But the Lord sees to it that each of us has also an inheritance from Him in the form of a “counter-urge” to overcome our selfishness and make spiritual progress. When you were a very little child you began to feel this prompting to be good instead of naughty. It was the voice of the Lord calling you to leave “the land of your fathers”—your selfishness—and go to the land of Canaan—the heavenly character which the Lord would make your own if you obeyed.

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob picture our spiritual development as we grow from infancy to adulthood. Abraham stands for our infancy and very early childhood. Abraham trusted and obeyed the Lord just as we, when we are little, trust and obey our parents. We have studied Abraham’s journey, the settling of his brother Nahor in Haran, the arrival of Abraham and Lot at Shechem and then at Bethel, their sojourn in Egypt because of the famine, and their return and separation, when Lot chose the Jordan valley and Abraham took the more mountainous part of the land. You will remember the story of Lot and the difficulties he had because he lived too near the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, and that this represents the tendency of the natural, external part of our minds to be lured into evil by the attractions of the world.

At the time when our lesson for today opens, Abraham is settled at Hebron—also called Mamre—and has been made rich and secure through his obedience to the Lord. He has one son, Ishmael, born to him by his wife’s Egyptian bondwoman Hagar; but the Lord has told him that Ishmael is not to be his heir. Yet he has been promised that his descendants shall inherit the land after him, and that his wife Sarah shall have a son.

This promise is renewed and made definite as to time by the three men who come to Abraham in our chapter. Notice that although there are three, they are referred to and addressed as one, and that Abraham not only receives them with all possible honor but evidently recognizes that they speak for the Lord. Swedenborg

tells us that before the Advent the Lord appeared to men by “filling an angel with His presence.” Isaiah (63:9) speaks of “the angel of his presence.” Of the three men who appeared to Abraham Swedenborg says: “That this signifies the Divine Itself, the Divine Human, and the Holy proceeding, may be seen without explication; for it is known to everyone that there is a Trine, and that this Trine is a One.” (AC 2149) He explains this story as it refers to the Lord’s early childhood, and says: “In the internal sense the subject here treated of is Jehovah, in that He appeared to the Lord, and that the Lord perceived this; but not by an appearing such as there was to Abraham; for it is historically true that three men were seen by Abraham, but this represents the Divine perception, or the perception from the Divine which the Lord had when in the Human.”

The promise of an heir is the promise that our obedience to the Lord will have lasting good results. Sarah’s laughter at the promise of a son pictures our natural tendency to doubt whether it is really worthwhile to try to be good. Abraham did not doubt and therefore we have the account of his conversation with the Lord concerning Sodom and Gomorrah, which is really a further explanation of the promise of an heir. The numbers picture various states of goodness and truth. Fifty is a full state. Five always means “a little.” So five less than fifty means lacking only a little of a full state of goodness and truth. Forty pictures temptation, and we are told that the Lord never lets anyone come into temptation unless he has the strength to resist it if he chooses to do so. Thirty is a lesser degree of temptation. Twenty is “the good of ignorance” and is used of those who are good but are not yet adults. Ten signifies “remains”—states of good stored up in us by the Lord, especially from our early childhood, to help us when we are tempted. The lesson is that any one of these states of goodness has in it the elements of salvation. We all have in our natural heredity the elements of our spiritual destruction—Sodom and Gomorrah—but if we will hold fast whatever truth we learn and do our best to live according to it, the Lord will be able to save us

in spite of our many mistakes and backslidings. It is only when we stop trying to learn of the Lord and to obey Him that we are following the road to spiritual destruction.

Adult

The story of Abraham and its general correspondence should be familiar to the Adult class unless the group contains newcomers to the church. Most of the time should be spent on the details of the chapter, with special attention to Swedenborg's explanation of the visit of the three men, of Sarah's laughter, and of the conversation about Sodom and Gomorrah.

In approaching the familiar story of Abraham we need again to remind ourselves that all history is the record of slow changes, and that events which seem to us sudden and sometimes inexplicable are nevertheless the result of the development of seeds sown long before. As the devastation of the Ancient Church was accomplished gradually, so the inauguration of the Jewish Church was not by a sudden sweeping creation.

The Jews look to Abraham as the father of their race, and we are accustomed to think of the call of Abraham as the beginning of the Jewish Church. But if we read the writings carefully, we find that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob constituted the last phase of the Ancient Church. Swedenborg speaks of three Ancient Churches. The first is pictured by Noah and his sons. The second began with Eber, who is the first real person mentioned in the Word and from whom the Jews take the name of Hebrews. The third is described in the story of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. For although Abraham was an idolater, having lost all understanding of spiritual things, he still had the desire to serve God rather than self, the desire which is essential to a true church. Isaac and even Jacob retained something of this desire. The Jewish Church, which was not a true church at all but merely the representative of a church, was instituted among the sons of Jacob and their descendants. Swedenborg has much to say about this in connection with the interpretation of Genesis 32, 33, and 34.

In explaining the stories of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Swedenborg deals principally with the celestial sense, with their application to the states through which the Lord passed from infancy to adulthood, as He progressively opened the planes of His Human and united them to the indwelling Divine. But we are frequently reminded in the writings that the process of regeneration with man is analogous to the process of glorification in the Lord. So we rightly think of Abraham as picturing our spiritual state in infancy and very early childhood, a state of celestial innocence and trust but also a state of ignorance. The call of Abraham to leave his father's house in Ur of the Chaldees and go to the land of Canaan is the call we hear when, as little children, we first recognize that we ought to be good instead of naughty. If we obey the call, we begin our journey and eventually reach the Holy Land. Like Abram we go down into Egypt for the sustenance we need—the knowledges of the Word necessary to our spiritual life—and return rich “in cattle, in silver, and in gold.” We experience the separation from Lot when we see that the natural part of us seeks external satisfactions; and our early struggles with ourselves are on this most external plane, as Abraham had to rescue Lot when he became involved in the difficulties of the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Sodom and Gomorrah appear in our chapter for today. We may wonder at first what connection there is between the first half and the last half of the chapter, but the connection becomes evident when we think what the promise of an heir means. We are approaching the birth of Isaac, who represents our higher rational faculty. Ishmael—the natural rational—is already in the picture. That is, we are passing out of the infant state and have developed the ability to “reason from appearances.” We are at the stage when we begin to argue with our parents. At heart we know we ought to continue to trust and obey them—Abraham’s confidence does not waver—but our innocent delight in their complete wisdom—pictured by Sarah—is attacked by doubts. The promise of an heir is the promise that our efforts to do right will surely bear lasting

fruit. The doubt comes to the child in the form of a question: “What is the use of trying to be good all the time? I try and try, and never seem to satisfy people.”

In verse 1 of our chapter Swedenborg’s translation is “the oak-groves of Mamre,” and as the Hebrew word is *terebinth*—the terebinth tree or oak of Palestine—there seems no reason for the translation “plains” of the King James Version. The Revised Standard Version translates it “the oaks.” The oak groves signify perception from memory-knowledges, and the fact that Abraham sat in the tent door signifies a state of worship. So we have present the conditions necessary for receiving a communication from the Lord. We are told in the writings that before the Advent the Lord appeared to men by filling an angel with His presence, and we find that Abraham received the three men immediately as angels or messengers of the Lord. In AC 2149 Swedenborg says that the three men signify “the Divine Itself, the Divine Human, and the Holy proceeding,” and he continues: “for it is known to everyone that there is a Trine, and that this Trine is a One.” Then he analyzes the conversation between Abraham and the angels to point out that they are addressed as one, that they speak as one, and that this One is identified with the Lord. A similar circumstance may be noted in chapter 19, where the two men who come to Lot are referred to as “they” while they are in Sodom, but become “he” after Lot has been led out.

The mission of the angels is to confirm the promise of an heir and to name the time of his birth. Concerning Sarah’s laughter, which revealed doubt, Swedenborg says in AC 2216 that laughter is “an affection of the rational” and he continues: “So long as there is in the rational such an affection as displays itself in laughter, so long there is in it something corporeal or worldly, and thus merely human.” Even in the Lord, at the time in His earthly life which is pictured here, the rational still had much of the human in it, which was to be expelled, and this in the celestial sense is signified by Sarah’s laughing.

Abraham’s questions concerning Sodom and Gomorrah and the

Lord's replies are an answer to our childhood question, "What is the use of trying to be good?" They are a study in the basic requirements for salvation. "If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes." Fifty signifies "what is full," in this case "truths full of goods." This is a spiritual picture of the man who has persisted in the effort to learn truths from the Word and to live according to them. But we all recognize our shortcomings in this respect. "Peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous." Five signifies "a little." Forty and thirty both signify temptation—thirty a less degree than forty. We are told that genuine temptations come to no one who is not regenerating, for spiritual temptations are not mere external trials but are the urge to despair of our power to do right and to give up the battle, to take the easy downward path. So long as we have these inner struggles, we may know that our state is not hopeless. Twenty represents "the good of ignorance," "those who have not been in temptations and yet are good," and Swedenborg ascribes this especially to the state of young people between the ages of ten and twenty, because they have not reached the age of full responsibility for their choices. All these are saved. Finally the number ten signifies "remains." All little children—in whom the Lord always stores up remains of good and truth—and all adults who have not by their own choice destroyed these remains in themselves are saved.

From the Writings of Swedenborg

Arcana Coelestia, n. 2216: "It is an affection of the rational, and indeed the affection of truth or of falsity, in the rational, that is the source of all laughter. So long as there is in the rational such an affection as displays itself in laughter, so long there is in it something corporeal or worldly, and thus merely human. Celestial good and spiritual good do not laugh, but express their delight and cheerfulness in the face, the speech, and the gesture, in another way; for there are very many things in laughter, for the most part something of contempt, which, even if it does not appear, nevertheless lies concealed; and laughter is easily distinguished from cheerfulness of the mind, which also pro-

duces something similar to it. The state of the human rational with the Lord is described by Sarah's 'laughing'; and thereby is signified with what kind of affection the truth of the rational, at that time separated from good, regarded what was said: that it should be put off, and the Divine put on; not that the Lord laughed, but that He perceived from the Divine what the rational still was, and how much of the human there still was in it, and which was to be expelled. In the internal sense this is what is signified by Sarah's 'laughing.' "

Suggested Questions on the Lesson

- J. Where was Abraham's first home? *Ur*
- P. What did the Lord tell him to do? *leave, go to Canaan*
- J. Where did he finally settle? *Hebron (Mamre)*
- P. Who came to him there one day? *three men*
- P. How did he receive them? *as honored guests*
- P. Who were they really? *angels*
- J. What did they tell Abraham? *Sarah would have a son*
- J. Why did Sarah laugh? *she was old, doubted*
- J. Where did the angels go when they left Abraham? *to Sodom*
- J. Why were they going to Sodom and Gomorrah? *to destroy them*
- J. What was the first question Abraham asked of the Lord? *destroy the good with the bad?*
- J. What did the Lord tell him? *If I find fifty righteous . . .*
- J. How many questions did Abraham ask? *- 5, 40, 30, 20, 10 (five questions)*
- J. How did the Lord answer each time? *I will not destroy if . . .*
- J. What was the smallest number of good people Abraham mentioned? *ten*
- I. What does Abraham represent? *state of simple trust and obedience*
- S. What is pictured by his being told to leave Ur and go to Canaan? *leave selfish outlook, start to develop heavenly character*
- S. What is pictured by the birth of a son? *new development of truth or new intellectual faculty*

THE BIRTH OF ISAAC

Genesis 21:1-21

In this lesson, some of the details of the birth of Ishmael are reviewed in order to contrast sharply the first rational—Ishmael—with the second rational—Isaac. The reiterating of the promise of an heir in the last lesson will lead naturally into the story of the birth of Isaac.

Doctrinal Points

We need to develop a higher reason than that which judges according to worldly values and standards.

Notes for Parents

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the three great patriarchs of the Jews, were men like ourselves with weaknesses and faults. The Lord did not choose those whose lives He recorded in His Word because they were better than other men, but because He saw that He could direct them in such a way that from the record of their lives we could learn truths which we need, and He dictated that record to the men who wrote it down in such a way that every word might contain deep lessons for future ages. The Lord leads us as we are, and uses our sins and our mistakes as well as our good deeds and better feelings in His effort to lead us away from evil and toward the heavenly life.

In our lesson for today we review briefly the fact that Sarah, because she had no child, had given her Egyptian maid servant to Abraham to wife. Men in that time had, as we have already learned, traveled very far from their first innocent and happy state. They had by Abraham's day lost all knowledge of true marriage, and polygamy was generally accepted as permissible. Sarah and Abraham had no thought of doing wrong in this story, and they were

not condemned for this decision by the Lord. Indeed Ishmael, the son of Abraham by Hagar, was not only preserved, but was promised that his seed should be a great nation.

However, he was not to be Abraham's heir. Sarah finally gave birth to a son—Isaac—through whom the line of Abraham was to be carried on. This line of Abraham pictures our own development from infancy to adult life. As little children we are simple and obedient, as Abraham was. But it is not long before we begin to try to think and reason for ourselves. We parents all know how "difficult" our children can be while this first reasoning is developing. They do not have experience enough to see beneath the surface of things or to realize that what looks pleasant is not necessarily good, and they are always sure they are right and their parents wrong. This is Ishmael. Ishmael was a "wild-ass" man. The Hebrew word translated merely "wild" in Genesis 16:12 really means "wild-ass." Ishmael and his mother both showed the same disposition we see in our young teenagers. Yet this faculty of independent thinking about our external conduct, when put in its proper place, is a necessary and useful one. The Lord promised Abraham that Ishmael also should become a great nation although his place would not be in the Holy Land.

The birth of Isaac pictures the birth of a higher type of reasoning power which bases its judgments on knowledge of divine truth and the desire to serve the Lord, instead of upon outward appearances and principles of self-interest. It is from this higher reason that we are able to progress spiritually.

Primary

Center the story on Ishmael's being sent away because he mocked at the baby Isaac. Even little children have this tendency to make fun of younger brothers and sisters and need to be taught to be gentle and kind. The story of both Ishmael and Isaac will interest the children. They should learn the names *Hagar, Ishmael, and Isaac*.

By this time Abraham and Sarah were very old people. Abraham was nearly a hundred years old and Sarah was nearly ninety.

The Lord had made a promise to Abraham that his descendants would inherit the Holy Land and become a great nation, but Sarah had never had a child. Therefore, as we learned recently, she had finally given Abraham her Egyptian servant Hagar for his wife, and Hagar bore him a son, who was named Ishmael.

Abraham loved Ishmael dearly, but the Lord told him that Ishmael was not to be his heir, and that Sarah herself should have a child.

When Ishmael was fourteen, Sarah finally had a son.

What was his name? *Isaac* means “laughter.”

How old was Abraham when Isaac was born?

What did Ishmael do which made Sarah ask Abraham to send him away?

Where did Hagar and Ishmael go?

What promise did the Lord make for Ishmael?

Junior

Have the Juniors find Hebron and Beersheba on a map. Dwell on the story of Hagar's first dismissal and then of how Ishmael showed the same spirit as his mother. If the children get clearly in mind the character of Ishmael, they will more easily understand later the difference in the correspondence of Ishmael and Isaac. Stress the fact that Isaac was Abraham's heir, but that the Lord gave Ishmael a promise also.

The Lord had promised Abraham that his descendants should inherit the Holy Land and should become a great nation, but Abraham and Sarah had had no children, and now they were very old. So Sarah had given her husband her Egyptian servant Hagar. In the depraved state of religion at that time, it was not considered wrong to have more than one wife; so Abraham and Sarah were doing no intentional wrong.

What was the name of the son of Abraham and Hagar?

Why did Sarah want to send Hagar away?

How did the Lord save Hagar?

What did He tell her to do?

Hagar obeyed the Lord and returned to her mistress. The son who was born to her was named *Ishmael*. Abraham was very happy

to have this son, but the Lord told him that Ishmael was not to be his heir, but that Sarah herself would have a son. When he was finally born, Abraham was a hundred years old and Sarah ninety.

What was he named?

How old was Ishmael when Isaac was born?

How can you tell?

What did Ishmael do which made Sarah angry?

Are we ever inclined to make fun of people who may be better than we?

When we do this, it is because we see only the outside of things and have not learned to judge wisely. When we are young, we often get into trouble by just such hasty and foolish judgments. Remember this when you are tempted to think you know better than your parents what you ought to do.

Sarah was angry with both Hagar and Ishmael.

What did she ask Abraham to do?

How did Abraham feel about it?

What did the Lord tell him to do?

Parents often have to punish their children when they would much rather not. Sometimes they even have to send them away from home. Many children have been sent away to school for this reason. But if we do what is right, the Lord will always take care of the consequences.

So Abraham sent Hagar and Ishmael away, giving them bread and water to take with them. Again they went into the wilderness, but this time Hagar did not find the well herself. When she thought she and Ishmael were about to die, she wept and, it is recorded, God heard the voice of the lad (see AC 2691) and “opened her eyes and she saw a well of water.” Do you think Hagar was wandering around with her eyes shut? No, we have other eyes besides the ones we usually mean when we say “eyes.” We have the eyes of our minds, and these may be shut when our physical eyes are open. When some hard problem is given us, we sometimes say, “I don’t see the answer to that.” And sometimes we shut the eyes of our minds on purpose, because we just don’t want to see. We do this when we want to have our own way instead of doing what we

really know is right. But then, when our own way leads us into serious trouble, we become humble and anxious for help, just as Hagar did when she thought she and Ishmael were going to die in the wilderness. The Lord can open our eyes to see the truth just as He showed Hagar the well of water.

What did Ishmael become?

What country did his wife come from?

What country had his mother come from?

Intermediate

Young people in their early teens are at the stage when they are beginning to exercise the natural rational freely. They are, whether openly or in private, examining the opinions and conduct of their elders from what seems to them a superior height of knowledge. They are very sure they are right—their parents are simply behind the times, getting old and dull. Children at this age are sometimes very disagreeable without realizing it at all, because they can see no flaws in what their natural reason tells them. It is the “wild-ass” stage. The Intermediate teacher will do their parents a great service if he can impress them with the story of Ishmael and Isaac in such a way that they will see the limitations of Ishmael and why he had to be put in his place and can be led to realize that there is a higher type of reasoning into which they themselves may soon grow if they will. It may be helpful to show them that they have a promise of this higher faculty in themselves whenever they find themselves arguing with their own conscience, for their conscience is the beginning of their higher reason.

We are told in Genesis 13:1-2 that when Abram came back from Egypt, he was very rich “in cattle, in silver, and in gold.” This is a picture of the great treasure of knowledge we acquire when we are children. It is knowledge of the things of the natural world and also knowledge of the Bible and of how the Lord wants us to live. We bring this knowledge back to the land of Canaan—the Holy Land—when we use the things we have learned in the Lord’s service. Abram settled in the southern part of the land at Hebron, which became the center of the Jewish Church in its early years. Like Abram himself, Hebron represents a state of simple, childlike goodness and obedience.

The Lord had promised that all the land of Canaan should belong to Abraham and his descendants, and that they should become a great nation. Yet Abraham and Sarah were now old and still had no children. Sarah's giving Abraham her Egyptian servant Hagar to wife and Abraham's having a son by her was not wrong in their sight, for it was customary in those times for a man to have more than one wife. By the time of this third church, the truths originally given to mankind had been so far forgotten that nothing was known about true marriage. The Lord did not condemn Abraham—He does not condemn us for our unintentional sins—but He did not continue Abraham's line through Ishmael.

When Abraham was a hundred years old and Sarah was ninety, the Lord permitted Sarah to bear Abraham a son. The boy was named *Isaac*, which means "laughter." Read verse 6 of chapter 21 to learn one reason for this name, but also read verse 19 of chapter 17, which shows that the Lord Himself gave the name. We can well believe that Abraham and Sarah were joyful when he was born.

Ishmael was fourteen when Isaac was born. We know that many boys at that age are not much interested in babies. Babies seem to them very little and weak, and they can't see why people make such a fuss about them. Ishmael was this kind of boy, and he pictures the kind of reasoning that such a boy uses. To him physical strength and physical ability meant a great deal, and he was scornful of weakness.

Just as Hagar had been sent away when she was scornful of Sarah, so now the same thing happened to Ishmael. Abraham loved Ishmael and did not want to send him away, but the Lord told him to obey Sarah. Sarah pictures our love for heavenly things and her son Isaac pictures a higher type of reasoning power than that pictured by Ishmael, a reasoning which judges according to spiritual standards instead of natural ones. The "Ishmael" in us would tell us that we should do the things which will bring us the most obvious profit now; our "Isaac" would tell us that we should do the things which will please the Lord and help other people. Ishmael would call a rich man successful; Isaac would call a good

man successful. Ishmael would think of death as a tragedy; Isaac would think of death as the beginning of real life.

If we want the Isaac type of reasoning to grow in us, we have to keep Ishmael in his proper place. He is useful to us all our lives and the Lord wants him to live and prosper, but not to direct our thinking and acting. We remember that all through the Bible the Holy Land pictures a heavenly character, while Egypt pictures mere knowledge in the memory. The wilderness pictures our state of mind when we do not see anything above the worldly or natural level and so have no real spiritual home or abiding place, no fixed foundation from which to think and decide our problems. Our minds wander about from place to place.

It is said that Ishmael became an archer. Arrows picture arguments. The natural reason is very clever in the use of argument. Remember this when you are inclined to argue with your mother or father about something they say you ought or ought not to do. Can you see why Ishmael married an Egyptian wife? Think how beautifully all the details in this story fit into the picture as the internal sense of the Word explains it.

Basic Correspondences

Hebron = the church as to good

a wilderness = a spiritual state in which
the mind has no settled home

Abraham = simple, innocent obedience
(the infant state)

Ishmael = the natural reasoning faculty

Isaac = the higher or spiritual
reasoning faculty

arrows = truths or falsities used in argument

Senior

It is often helpful to go back to the first verse of the Bible and point out that the whole Bible is a study of the development of the heavens and the earth in man, as a race and as an individual, and that it is our principal business in life to recognize both and to develop them in their proper relationship. Seniors

are beginning to outgrow the Ishmael stage. They are facing such questions as, "Can a man be honest and succeed in business?" "Can a girl be popular without 'petting'?" "What is the use of going to college when I might be earning money now?" These are questions to which the answer of Ishmael is very loud and positive. We need to do all we can to strengthen the baby Isaac in them.

Today we come to the fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham by the Lord. Sarah bears a son, and he is named Isaac. Abraham was a hundred years old when Isaac was born, and Sarah was ninety.

In the Scriptures the birth of a son pictures a new development of truth or a new intellectual faculty. Abraham's first son, Ishmael, fourteen years older than Isaac, was born to him by Hagar, Sarah's Egyptian bondservant, and represents our first reasoning power, born of our observation of the world about us and judging according to appearances, without taking spiritual things into consideration. When we are developing this kind of reason, we are very sure that we are right and are impatient with those who disagree with us. We like to argue with everybody, and we are scornful of the ideas and advice of older and wiser people. We may make ourselves so disagreeable that people avoid us, as Sarah wanted Ishmael sent away.

But if we believe in the Lord and the Word and really want to do right, there comes a time when we begin to see more deeply into life, and to reason on the basis of the Lord's purposes for us instead of from merely worldly considerations. This is the birth of Isaac, whose mother was Sarah, the affection for spiritual things. Isaac represents the true reasoning power which the Lord intends to be ruler of our minds. Isaac and not Ishmael was to be Abraham's heir.

Then Ishmael had to be cast out. For instance, when we are young, we are likely to think that having fun is the object of life and that bodily strength and ability, good looks, and good clothes are the most desirable things. We admire "football heroes," good dancers, those who dress well, those with money to spend. Even

when we begin to look for deeper qualities, it is often hard for us to believe that they are not necessarily present in the people and things we have admired. It is hard for us to put the physical attractiveness of a person out of the question and to look more deeply into those things which seem to produce desirable external results and ask, "Are they based on right principles?" Abraham grieved because he had to send Ishmael away. Some people never outgrow the Ishmael stage; they never really grow up spiritually. They may live good moral lives and even belong to a church and attend it regularly, but their idea of doing good, both for themselves and for their church, never gets beyond externals, the things which are called good in a worldly sense. They are scornful of those who dare to question the actual "goodness" of what they propose.

Ishmael mocked Isaac, just as Hagar earlier had scorned Sarah. Our natural reasoning power looks askance at spiritual things and makes fun of them. So if our spiritual reasoning faculty is to develop, the lower must be thrust out. This is hard to do, and at first it may seem about to die altogether. But it is not to die. Our lower reasoning power—the "natural rational," as Swedenborg calls it—is useful in its proper place. When we recognize that it is helpless by itself and must look to the Lord in the Word for life and guidance, it can see the truth. When Hagar saw that she and her son were about to die and wept in despair, the Lord opened her eyes to see the well of water in the wilderness.

From that time on Ishmael, protected by the Lord, prospered. The fact that his mother took him a wife from the land of Egypt is quite proper in the internal meaning, for the affection for natural knowledge is the true "wife" of the natural rational faculty. He continued to dwell in the wilderness because the natural reason is concerned with many different natural fields and has no fixed abiding place. He was an archer, because arrows picture arguments and the natural reason is interested in argument concerning external things. But the Ishmaelites continue to play an important role in the Bible story. Our natural reason, properly placed, is strong

and useful, helping us to make our way in the world, to defend ourselves and others, to master those things which are necessary to our natural life and to our occupations and to confirm spiritual things by what we experience in the world. The truly good man bases his thinking and acting upon what the Lord teaches him in the Word, but he does not withdraw from the world and live in a world of dreams. He lives a useful, practical life from love to the Lord and the neighbor, thinking always what the Lord would have him do rather than what will bring him the praise of men.

Adult

The lesson should center on the nature of the natural and spiritual rationals and the difference between them. Ishmael is the reasoning that is born of the world, Isaac the reasoning that is born of the church.

Our writings tell us that we commit sin only when we do what we know or believe to be wrong. When we do wrong, believing that we are doing right, the inevitable external consequences follow, but our souls are not injured. The Lord is always striving to keep us from destroying our spiritual life; so when He sees that men are no longer able to resist certain evils, He takes away the knowledge that these things are wrong, and lets them live under lower standards in order that they may still be able to choose to do what they believe is right and save themselves from hell, if they will. The Hebrew nation began after men had degenerated to such a degree that the inner planes of their minds had been closed and they thought only of this world, and not at all of spiritual things. All spiritual knowledge had thus been taken from them and many things seemed right which the people of the Most Ancient and Ancient churches had known to be wrong. One of these things was marriage with more than one wife. This is why the Old Testament Scriptures contain so many instances of multiple marriage. We should understand this in order that we may not be troubled by the question of why the Lord permitted such things to become part of the Bible. Abraham and Sarah did no conscious wrong

when Abraham, at Sarah's prompting, took Hagar to wife. They were old and had had no children and the carrying on of their family meant a great deal to them, especially in view of the Lord's promise that Abraham's seed should inherit the land of Canaan and should become a mighty nation.

But in the Lord's sight the son of the Egyptian bondwoman was not a proper heir for Abraham, and fourteen years later the Lord performed a miracle and permitted Sarah, then ninety years old, to bear Abraham a son. When, on the day when Isaac was weaned, Ishmael mocked at him, Sarah was more clear-sighted than Abraham. Abraham's love for his first son would have prompted him to keep Ishmael in the home, but the Lord told him to obey Sarah and send Hagar and Ishmael away.

In general Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob picture the development of three planes in our lives: the celestial, the spiritual, and the natural. When we are babies, we live in a celestial state—although we have no real knowledge or understanding of it—in which we are close to the Lord (Matthew 18:10) and depend wholly upon His care without thinking for ourselves or trying to govern ourselves. This is the period represented by Abraham. Then comes a time when our reasoning faculty begins to develop. This general period is represented by Ishmael and Isaac. Then follows the period when we have to carry out our ideas in the conduct of our daily life and occupations—make them practical, or put them into practice. This period, the hardest of all, is represented by Jacob and his sons. We must pass through all these stages of development before we are really ready for the work of regeneration.

Isaac, when he is grown up and has become the head of his family, represents our reason when it is fully and rightly developed, but this does not come all at once. When a child first begins to use his reason, he makes a great many mistakes because he has only superficial knowledge to draw upon and because he is proud of his new faculty and unwilling to admit that others may know more than he does. This first type of reasoning power is represented by Ishmael. Ishmael was a son of Abraham. That is, our first

reasoning power, as well as our higher reason, comes to us from the Lord in the course of our normal development. But Ishmael's mother was an Egyptian bondwoman. We recall that women represent the affections and that Egypt represents external or memory knowledge, a purely natural affection. All children at a certain age are eager to learn all sorts of things, to fill their minds with information of various kinds without discrimination, and their first reasoning faculty springs from this affection and is fed by the material which they gather into their memories. But Hagar was only a bondwoman. This pictures the fact that the mere affection for learning is not the true affection from which our thoughts and feelings should spring, but only one of the servants of that affection, and that it should be kept in control and not permitted to set itself up. If it is not kept in its place, it easily becomes scornful of spiritual things. So first Hagar and then both Hagar and Ishmael had to be sent away to make room for Abraham's true heir.

Yet both times the Lord preserved Hagar and her child. The love of learning and the reasoning which springs from it are both orderly and useful in their place. Ishmael married an Egyptian woman. That is, our natural reason—or natural rational, as Swedenborg calls it—not only springs from an affection for natural knowledges, but this affection is its proper “wife” from which its further developments come. Ishmael became a great nation, but he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran, the Arabian desert. Our natural rational continues to develop and to function throughout our lives, but its field of usefulness is in the constantly changing environs of our external lives, and not in the Holy Land of our inner thought and feeling. Our spiritual development is carried on through the higher rational, the spiritual rational, which is represented by Isaac, the son of Abraham by his true wife Sarah, who represents the affection for spiritual truth.

Ishmael has his place in our lives. The Lord gives us our natural rational and wishes it to develop and to serve in our outer lives: prudence, thrift, foresight, executive ability, salesmanship are all “children” of Ishmael; they are useful and worth cultivating so

long as they are recognized as servants and not considered spiritual virtues or allowed to interfere with our spiritual life and development. The Lord said to Abraham, “In Isaac shall thy seed be called.” The spiritual rational is later in developing—Isaac could not be born until Abraham and Sarah were old—but it is the thoughts and affections which spring from it—Isaac’s descendants—which connect us with the Lord and enable us ultimately to possess the Holy Land of heavenly happiness.

Examples of the distinction between Ishmael and Isaac in our own experience are not hard to find. Ishmael tells us that we are in this world for only a short time and that therefore we should get as much as possible for ourselves from it in pleasure, in money, and in fame. Isaac also tells us that we are in this world for only a short time, but he tells us that we shall live to eternity in a world where nothing counts but the character we have developed here, and that therefore it makes little difference whether or not we have pleasure, money, and fame here so long as we are developing heavenly character. Ishmael uses many sharp arguments to uphold the necessity for considering self first—he was an archer. Isaac is quiet and gentle, at home in the Holy Land, seeking to learn the Lord’s will and to base the daily decisions upon that will. He takes his wife from among his father’s kindred. He does not contend for the wells of the Philistines. He is forbidden by the Lord to go down into Egypt. The spiritual rational must maintain its integrity against all worldly temptations if our spiritual life is to be preserved.

From the Writings of Swedenborg

Arcana Coelestia, n. 2654: “The human rational—that namely which has its birth from worldly things through impressions of sense, and afterwards from analogies of worldly things by means of knowledges—is ready to laugh and mock if told that it does not live of itself, but only appears to live so; and that one lives the more, that is, the more wisely and intelligently, and the more blissfully and happily, the less he believes that he lives of himself; and that this is the life of angels, especially of those who are celestial, and inmost,

or nearest to the Lord; for they know that no one lives of himself except Jehovah alone, that is, the Lord. . . . This rational would mock if it were said that in heaven the greatest are they who are least, the wisest they who believe and perceive themselves to be the least wise, and the happiest they who desire others to be the most happy, and themselves the least so; that it is heaven to wish to be below all, but hell to wish to be above all; consequently that in the glory of heaven there is absolutely nothing the same as in the glory of the world.”

Suggested Questions on the Lesson

- J. What story in the Bible tells of the end of the second church on earth?
Tower of Babel
- J. What happened to its people? *scattered*
- P. What family was chosen by the Lord to begin a new church? *Abram (Eber, Terah)*
- P. Where did they live? *Ur, Chaldea*
- P. What did the Lord tell them to do? *go to Canaan*
- P. Where did some of them stop? *Haran*
- P. Who went on? *Abram, Sarai and Lot*
- P. In what two places in Canaan did Abraham build altars? *Shechem, Bethel*
- P. Why did he go down into Egypt? *famine*
- J. Where did he settle when he came back? *Hebron*
- J. What promise did the Lord make to Abraham about his descendants?
to be as sand of sea
- P. What one necessary thing did Abraham lack? *son*
- J. How did Sarah try to make up for this lack? *gave Hagar as wife*
- P. What was the name of Hagar's son? *Ishmael*
- J. What did the Lord tell Abraham about Ishmael? *not your heir*
- P. How old was Abraham when Sarah's own son was born? *hundred years*
- P. What was Sarah's child named? *Isaac*
- P. What did Ishmael do which displeased Sarah? *mocked Isaac*
- P. What did Sarah tell Abraham to do? *send them away*
- J. What did the Lord tell him? *do as Sarah said*
- J. Where did Hagar and Ishmael go? *desert*
- J. What did the angel promise them? *“I will make him a great nation”*
- J. What did Ishmael become? *archer*
- J. From what country was his wife? *Egypt*
- I. What does Egypt represent? *memory-knowledge*
- S. What do Ishmael and Isaac represent? (1) *natural or first rational*
(2) *spiritual or second rational*

THE SACRIFICE OF ISAAC

Genesis 22:1-14

Review the last lesson. Remind the children that the Lord had promised Abraham that his descendants should inherit the land. This makes a good background for the story of how Abraham and Sarah longed for a son and were given Isaac in their old age. It will show how much depended upon Isaac, and how dear he was to Abraham.

Doctrinal Points

The Lord never tempts us. Temptation comes from our selfish desires. The Lord merely permits temptation to come when we make it necessary.

The Word is written in the language of appearances in order to reach the evil as well as the good.

Our first faith in the Lord is often mixed up with a lot of false ideas.

The Lord will always give us the power to do right if we persist in obeying His commands as we are given to see them from the Word.

Notes for Parents

The Lord performed a miracle for Abraham and Sarah, enabling Sarah to bear a son when she was ninety years old and Abraham a hundred. By command of the Lord the boy was named *Isaac*, which means “laughter.” (Read Genesis 17:15-19; 21:3, 6.) Naturally Isaac was deeply loved by his parents. But when he was still a young boy, a strange idea came into Abraham’s mind. He believed it came from God, and so the Bible says, “God did tempt Abraham.” We all tend to think that our troubles are “sent” by the Lord. Really they are always the result of evils either in us or in other people, and the Lord saves us from all but those He sees

may help us to learn lessons we need.

The people from whom Abraham came and the people living about him in Canaan believed the Lord to be a “jealous” God who needed to be pacified by sacrifices of animals, and sometimes by the sacrifice of their own children. Abraham naturally had many such false ideas in his own mind. So his desire to prove his complete devotion to the Lord took the form of the thought that he ought to sacrifice his dearest possession, which was Isaac. The story of his journey and of how the Lord stopped him at the last moment is our lesson for today. Read again verse 12 of chapter 22 to see why the Lord permitted Abraham to go almost to the point of the actual killing of his son.

We are told in the writings of Swedenborg that the people of the corrupted Ancient Church had the idea of sacrifice so ingrained in their minds that the best the Lord could do for them and for the church which followed was to teach them to sacrifice animals instead of human beings. That is one reason why the letter of the Old Testament is so full of laws regarding the birds and animals to be offered. But we should know that all these animals and birds and all the details of the laws for their offering represent spiritual things, and that even the word *sacrifice* does not mean to kill or even to “give up,” but rather to “make holy.” When we live our lives from day to day in love to the Lord and the neighbor, we are making the sacrifices commanded in the Word.

It is interesting to know that Mount Moriah, where Abraham went for his sacrifice, was the hill which long afterward became part of the city of Jerusalem and which was the site on which Solomon built the Temple.

Primary

Isaac is the name to be remembered by the little children, and they can understand that his father Abraham loved him very much. Tell the story very simply, dwelling on Abraham’s desire to serve the Lord even if it meant giving up the dearest thing he had, and dwelling on the Lord’s goodness in saving him from making a mistake, and in giving Isaac back to him. Point out that

we are often mistaken, even when we mean to do right, and that the Lord always sees our good intention and tries to help us not to make mistakes, because mistakes can do a great deal of harm. Review the meaning of an altar. In addition to the name Isaac, they should be impressed with the name Hebron as Abraham's home, and with Mount Moriah as the place of his sacrifice.

After Abram and Lot separated, Abram and his wife Sarai went to live in the southern part of the Holy Land, making their home at a place called Hebron. Abram obeyed the Lord in everything, so that the Lord even changed his name and that of Sarai by putting into each a letter from His own name to show how close they were to Him. This was the letter *h*. So their names became Abraham and Sarah, and this is the way they are remembered. And finally the Lord gave them the one thing they wanted and did not have—a son. They were both very old when this son was born; so he was all the more dear to them. His name was Isaac. *Isaac* means “laughter.”

But while Isaac was still a young boy, a strange idea came to Abraham. He was so grateful to the Lord that he felt he ought to prove it, and so he decided that the only way really to prove it was to give up to the Lord his very dearest possession.

What was his dearest possession?

In those days people thought that in order to give anything to the Lord they had to kill it and burn it upon an altar.

This was called making a “sacrifice.”

Where did Abraham go to sacrifice Isaac?

Try to remember the name of this place, because you will hear of it again.

Abraham did not tell Isaac what he was planning to do.

What did Isaac ask him on the way up the mountain?

What did Abraham answer?

When he was about to sacrifice Isaac, who stopped him?

What did the Lord say?

What did Abraham find at hand to sacrifice instead of Isaac?

Abraham was very happy that he was allowed to keep Isaac, and Isaac grew up to be a very great man like his father. We all make mistakes sometimes, but if we are trying to do right, the Lord can help us and keep us from doing real harm. We must remember, however, that He cannot help us unless we are always

trying to learn more and more about what is really right from the Word.

Junior

Follow the Junior notes, stressing the geography. Have the class locate Bethel, Hebron, and Mount Moriah. Stress the true meaning of the word *sacrifice*, and explain how it was that Abraham could think that the Lord wanted him to kill Isaac. Make clear to them that what the Lord does want us to give up are those things which stand in the way of our doing right, and that we love the Lord as Abraham did when we put doing right above having our own way.

Where did Abraham come from?

Why did he leave there?

Where did he go?

Who went with him?

Where did his brother Nahor stop?

Who was Abraham's wife?

After his separation from Lot at Bethel, Abram went farther south and settled in Hebron. There he was regarded as a great man. The Lord blessed him and changed his name to *Abraham*. In the Hebrew language every letter is important. The letter represented by our *h* is one of the letters in the name *Jehovah*. Adding it to Abram's name meant that he was especially devoted to the Lord. The name of Abram's wife, Sarai, was also changed by adding an *h*: she became *Sarah*.

Abraham lacked one thing: a son to inherit all his possessions. Sarah, because she loved Abraham, offered him her Egyptian hand-maid, Hagar, for another wife. In the depraved state of religion at that time, men thought it was permissible to have more than one wife. So by Hagar, Abraham had a son whom he named *Ishmael*. But the Lord told Abraham that it was not right that Ishmael should be his heir, and finally gave him a son by his true wife, Sarah. This son was named *Isaac*. His birth was a miracle, for Abraham was a hundred years old, and Sarah ninety, when Isaac was born. We can imagine how dearly Abraham loved Isaac.

Then a great temptation came to Abraham. The Scripture says, "God did tempt Abraham." This is a good place to learn some-

thing about the Bible which we shall often need to remember. The Lord wrote the Bible by means of men, and used in its letter the things that were in their minds. Sometimes their minds could understand what He meant, and then the truth could be expressed clearly. But often their minds contained false ideas which partially hid the truth, just as a cloud hides the sun and yet lets some of its light shine through. Clouds in the Scriptures represent the letter of the Word. You can see how this is. You know that your parents love you dearly all the time. But when you are bent on doing wrong, and their love has to take the form of checking and even of punishing you, you feel that they do not love you. Abraham had been brought up among idol-worshipers who believed that the gods envied them their dearest possessions and could be made happy by the sacrifice of animals and even of children. Abraham loved the Lord and wanted to serve Him wholly. Thus he was prompted to sacrifice the dearest thing he had, which was Isaac. He thought the prompting came from the Lord. His desire did come from the Lord, but the form it took came from his own mind.

Where did they go for the sacrifice?

This is thought to be the very Mount Moriah in Jerusalem where the Temple was built long afterward.

Who went with them?

What beast of burden did they take?

How long did the journey take?

What happened at the foot of the mountain?

What did they take with them up the mountain?

What did Isaac ask his father?

What did Abraham reply?

The Lord was pleased with Abraham's devotion and with his willingness to sacrifice his dearest possession. He let Abraham prove his sincerity by taking the long, three-day journey, climbing the mountain, and even making all the final preparations and raising the knife. Then He showed Abraham that Isaac was to be spared.

What did He provide for the sacrifice?

Abraham had to be allowed to give expression in his own way to his good desire.

Read Micah 6:6-8 and Psalm 51:16-17, and see what the Lord really wants us to do for Him in the way of sacrifice. The word “sacrifice” comes from two Latin words and means “to make sacred.” The Lord has made the world and everything in it for our use and enjoyment, but He does want us to sacrifice—that is, to “make sacred”—all that He gives us by using our talents and our possessions in service to Him and to our neighbor. The people of Old Testament days were allowed to sacrifice animals and birds and meal and oil because these things represented good affections and thoughts.

Isaac grew up and became the second great “patriarch” or father of the Hebrews. Abraham knew that Isaac should not be allowed to marry one of the women of the land in which they now lived. So he sent his chief servant to Haran to get a wife for Isaac from among his own people.

Where was Haran?

Who had settled there?

We shall study next the beautiful story of the servant’s journey to Haran and of how he was led by the Lord to choose the right woman. He brought back with him Rebekah, the granddaughter of Abraham’s brother Nahor, as a wife for Isaac. Ishmael married an Egyptian woman and settled in the wilderness of Paran, and became the father of the Ishmaelites, about whom we read in the Bible and who are probably the ancestors of the Arabs of our time. But Isaac inherited the Holy Land.

Intermediate

The meaning of Isaac, and the meaning of Abraham’s temptation and the reason for it, should be stressed. The outline of the correspondence of his journey and its conclusion can be given. The thought to leave in the minds of the pupils is that of the true meaning of sacrifice.

The Lord had promised that all the land of Canaan should belong to the descendants of Abraham. Yet Abraham and Sarah were very old and still had no son. Chapter 16 of Genesis tells how Sarah was troubled by this and offered Abraham her handmaid, Hagar, in the hope that Hagar might bear him a son. Abraham had grown up among the corrupt descendants of the Ancient Church and had many false ideas in his mind. One of these was that it was allowable for a man to have more than one wife. This is even today the belief in many of the nations whose religion has come down from that time. Hagar did bear Abraham a son, who was named Ishmael, but the Lord told him that Ishmael should not be his heir; and in their old age Sarah bore Isaac.

Abraham was the beginning of a new church—a church on the natural plane of life. The story of Abraham in general pictures our very early childhood when we look to our parents for everything and know only that it is wrong to disobey them. With Ishmael and Isaac a new period in our lives begins: the period in which we begin to think for ourselves and to reason about right and wrong. At first our reasoning is based only on what Swedenborg calls “appearances”—how things look. If a thing seems pleasant, we judge that it is right. But later we develop a higher kind of reasoning based on what the Lord tells us in the Word. These two are called the “natural” reason and the “spiritual” reason. Ishmael represents the first and Isaac the second. Ishmael mocked Isaac and had to be sent away to live in the wilderness, while Isaac inherited the Holy Land. We have to keep Ishmael in his place and to recognize that it is Isaac through whom the good life must be developed.

Now we come to our lesson for today. When Isaac was still a young boy, it is said that “God did tempt Abraham.” We need to know that the Bible is written for the most part in terms of “appearances” of truth—that is, truth as it seems to our limited human minds. Abraham, like many people, believed that God was directly responsible for everything that came to him, both good and evil. You hear people say, “Why did God send this trial to

me?" But God does not tempt us. The bad things that come to us, and all our temptations, come from evil either in ourselves or in others. Actually the Lord withholds us from many temptations—from every temptation which He sees we are not strong enough to resist. But we grow by doing hard things; so He lets us feel the consequences of our bad feelings and wrong thoughts as far as we are really able to learn from them. This is temptation. You know that if your mother and father did everything for you and never let you do anything for yourself, you would not grow up to be a very strong person in character.

What really happened with Abraham was this: He wanted to serve the Lord wholly; he had in his mind the idea, which came from the religion in which he had been brought up, that sacrifices of animals and even of human beings were pleasing to God; so the desire to show his devotion to the Lord took the form of the thought that he ought to sacrifice his dearest possession, which was Isaac. The Lord permitted this thought to come to his mind and permitted him to go a long way toward carrying it out, because it was useful for Abraham to prove the sincerity of his devotion to the Lord. Their journey took three days, which is a picture of completeness of any state, and the place to which they went was Mount Moriah, which was later to be the site of Solomon's temple within the city of Jerusalem. That is, Abraham's desire to serve the Lord wholly took him finally to a state which was to become the highest state his people would reach. First he "rose up early in the morning" (the morning picturing the beginning of a new state); then he "saddled his ass" (got control of his natural ideas—the meaning of the ass—which otherwise would perhaps have borne him in another direction); then he took the wood (the feeling that he was doing right), and two of his young men (thoughts that he had about the way to do right), and Isaac (his higher reasoning faculty, which was still very young). But when he reached Mount Moriah, he left the ass and the young men behind him, and in addition to Isaac and the wood, he took fire and a knife, which picture love and truth, up to the top with him, and there he built

his altar. When we want to do something good, we often start with very imperfect ideas of how to do it; but if we persevere, gradually our feelings and thoughts become purer, and when we get really to the point of doing the thing, the Lord sometimes shows us suddenly a much better thing to do. Perhaps you have not had such an experience yet, but you will have; and when you do, you will remember how the Lord stopped Abraham just as he had raised the knife to slay his son, and showed him instead the ram which had been caught in the thicket by its horns. To slay Isaac would have been a wrong thing: it would picture destroying our higher rational faculty; that is, ceasing to think and reason about our religion. But the ram pictures a kind of love of truth which is innocent—a reasoning which does not destroy our God-given minds but lifts them up into true service of the Lord. This ram had been caught in a thicket, and Swedenborg tells us that a thicket pictures natural ideas.

Here is an example which will help you to understand what this story means. We have recently read the first eleven chapters of the Bible. Natural ideas about the Bible lead us to question the truth of the stories in those chapters; and if that is all we have, we must either give up our belief in the Bible or refuse to think and reason about it. Our love of truth is “tangled in the thicket,” and we are about to “sacrifice Isaac” in order to prove our devotion to the Lord. But with the help of the new knowledge the Lord has given us of the true meaning of the Bible, we can untangle the ram and lift it up on the altar as an offering to the Lord. The word *sacrifice* means “to make sacred.” All our faculties are given us to use, but to use in the service of the Lord and under his guidance.

Basic Correspondences

the ass = the natural reason

the ram = truth which is strong
because it is innocent

wood = the desire to have our
outward conduct good

a knife = truth

fire = love

Senior

The meaning of Isaac is important for young people as well as the difference between Ishmael and Isaac. Point out to them that fundamentalist sects actually make the sacrifice of Isaac—they give up rational thinking—in order to keep their loyalty to the Lord, and that their devotion is to be praised even while we reject their doctrines.

In the Scriptures, the birth of a son pictures a new development of truth or a new intellectual faculty. Abraham, we have seen, represents the simple state of obedience of our very early childhood. Abraham's first son, Ishmael, was the son of Hagar the Egyptian servant, and represents our first reasoning power which judges according to appearances and does not take spiritual things into consideration. When we are developing this kind of reason, we are very sure that we are right, and we are impatient with those who differ with us. We like to argue with everybody, and we are scornful of the ideas and advice of older people. We may even make ourselves so disagreeable that people avoid us. This lower reasoning power is a necessary and useful faculty, but it cannot live in the Holy Land: it must be separated from the higher, spiritual reason pictured by Isaac.

Isaac was born when Ishmael was fourteen years old, and he was the son of Sarah, born when Sarah was ninety and Abraham was a hundred. Sarah was Abraham's true wife, and represents the affection for spiritual truth. Ishmael was sent away to live in the wilderness of Paran and married a wife from Egypt, land of memory-knowledges. But Isaac grew up to inherit the Holy Land and to become the second of the Hebrew patriarchs.

The story of Abraham's attempt to sacrifice Isaac has troubled many because in the letter we are told that God tempted Abraham, and that He told him to offer Isaac as a burnt offering.

Does God tempt us? We should realize that much of the letter of the Word is written according to what Swedenborg calls "appearances" of truth. The Lord, in writing the Word, used the minds

of men just as they were. Sometimes they could understand His meaning and express it clearly. But often falsities in their minds or evil desires in their hearts clouded the truth or turned it into its opposite. When we are in good states, we can see and understand that the Lord loves us, but when we are bent on going our own way, or when our minds cling to some false idea, even our good impulses, which we know come from the Lord, are turned in our minds to wrong forms of expression. So the letter of the Word took its form according to the states of mind and heart of those through whom the Lord gave it, and sometimes it appears to say opposite things.

Abraham, we remember, was brought up among idolaters who were in the habit of sacrificing animals—and sometimes even their children—in the effort to please and propitiate their gods. So when Abraham was moved to show his complete devotion to the Lord, it seemed to him that he was called upon to sacrifice his dearest possession, his son and heir. This same mistaken idea of sacrifice is not uncommon even among Christians. It appears in the idea that we ought to give up anything we really enjoy, or that anything we like very much is bound to be wrong. The Lord made the world and everything in it for our use and enjoyment, and does not want us to give up anything that is good for us. But He does want us to “sacrifice,” that is, to “make sacred,” all He gives us by using all things rightly in service to Him and to the neighbor.

In its inner meaning, the story has a very clear application for all of us. A son pictures a new development of truth. Isaac, in particular, represents the “spiritual rational,” our higher reasoning power. We like to think of this as our own, and Abraham’s prompting to give up Isaac pictures our recognition that our reasoning power, like every other good thing in us, is not really our own, but the Lord’s in us. Sometimes people, recognizing this, are tempted to give up trying to reason about religion. This is like killing Isaac. But the Lord does not want this. He has given us our reason to use, and wants us to use it freely, but it should be directed by His truth into the paths of service. Our understanding of how to do the

Lord's will has been confused by false ideas and ideals in the world about us; it is like the ram caught in the thicket by the horns. We need to save Isaac alive and sacrifice the ram—that is, to continue to use our reason, but to submit our ideas of what is good and useful to the guidance of the Lord's truth. We have all had the experience of trying to help someone, and finding that we have done more harm than good. Our intention was good, but we lacked the wisdom to carry it out effectively. This is just why we need to develop and use our "spiritual rational" by studying the Word and the teachings of the church, and basing our thoughts and actions on a true knowledge of the Lord and of His purposes.

Adult

There are many good topics for discussion in this lesson: the nature of the higher rational, the false ideas of marriage and of worship which were in Abraham's mind, the Lord's permission of falsity in order to preserve the good intention, the true meaning of sacrifice.

We should have in mind that the first rational we develop in our childhood, represented by Ishmael, is what is called the "natural rational"—that is, it is the reasoning which bases its conclusions on natural knowledges (Hagar the Egyptian servant represents the affection for memory-knowledges), or sense experience, and on the outward appearance of things. It is a necessary step in our development and a necessary faculty all through our lives, since we must live practical lives in a finite world; and Ishmael, although he was banished from the Holy Land, became the father of a great nation.

Isaac represents the higher or spiritual rational, the rational which takes into account the Lord and spiritual things and recognizes that the outward appearance may be the opposite of the truth. Although Abraham was one hundred years old when Isaac was born, he continued to live for another seventy-five years; so Isaac was a long time in coming into his full inheritance. The spiritual rational is slow in developing, and for a long time must

be kept close to childhood innocence and trust. Young people, when they begin to develop the ability to reason about spiritual things, need the protection of their early states of belief and wonder which the Lord has stored up in them as “remains.” And there is a point in the life of every child who is developing in the right direction at which he feels the temptation described in our story for today: the temptation to give up his newly discovered faculty of reasoning about spiritual things, lest it interfere with his childhood faith. In the churches about us in the world, there are many conscientious young people who make just this decision; and some churches encourage it, teaching that there are “mysteries” which we are not meant to understand and must accept “on faith.” Still others “sacrifice Isaac” in an easier and less conscientious way by promoting the idea that “it does not matter what you believe so long as you live well,” discarding all real thought about spiritual things in favor of mere external good works.

The literal sense of this brief story raises some basic questions. It is said that “God did tempt Abraham.” In the New Church we know that God never tempts, that all temptation comes from the hells and is the result of evils in our inheritance or in our environment or resulting from our own sins. We also know that the Lord never permits a temptation to present itself to us except as He sees that we are able to resist it with His help, if we will (see I Cor. 10:13). He constantly withholds all other temptations from us. Read, in this regard, the excerpt from the writings at the end of this chapter.

But we all tend to blame the Lord for all our troubles, tacitly if not openly. With Abraham this tendency was very natural. We have seen that he grew up among the people of the Ancient Church in its last perverted stage. He had many falsities in his mind. One of them was the belief that multiple marriages were permissible; hence his acceptance of Hagar. Another was the thought that God was a jealous God and needed to be propitiated. And another was the idea that it was laudable to sacrifice one’s child, that this was the supreme sacrifice and hence must be especially pleasing to

God. We are told that the Lord never destroys falsities in our minds until we are ready to receive the truth in their place. Read the parable in Matthew 12:43-45. We are also told that He uses the falsities in which we are brought up so far as they can be made serviceable to keeping us in orderly living and capable of advancing into a knowledge of truth. This He did with Abraham. In the case of his temptation to sacrifice Isaac the Lord allowed him to go through with it to the point of the very act in order that he might be confirmed in his intention of putting the Lord first in his life, and could be shown that this intention was the real sacrifice which the Lord desired. The ram represents “the spiritual from the human race,” which is devotion to the Lord developed through conscience. And the ram was found “behind him” and was “caught in a thicket by his horns”; with Abraham this spiritual had been “entangled in natural knowledge” (AC 2831).

Once we have grasped the general meaning of the story, every detail of Abraham’s journey to Mount Moriah—the mount on which later Solomon’s temple was built—becomes full of meaning for us. “Abraham rose up early in the morning and saddled his ass.” Morning pictures the beginning of a new state and the ass pictures our natural reason. Abraham, having conceived a new purpose, acted upon it at once and began by bringing under control that faculty which so often rebels against our higher, spiritual promptings, but which can be made to serve them if our resolution is firm. This idea is further carried out in his taking the two young men, his servants, who picture the rational faculties already developed for service in his daily problems. “And he clave the wood of the burnt offering.” Wood, Swedenborg says (AC 2784), pictures “the good that is in works, and in justice,” and the cleaving of wood pictures placing merit in this good. The placing of merit in one’s own good works—except by the Lord in whom is all merit—is in itself an evil, but it can be made to serve a use when the end sought is the burnt offering, a genuine desire to serve the Lord. But when the mountain was in sight, the two young men and the ass were left behind to wait, and the wood was carried up the

mountain by Isaac. So we, when we are prompted to some new dedication of our lives to the Lord, often start out with very natural thoughts about what our service will be and even with a good deal of self-praise; but if we persevere—the three days' journey pictures a fully developed state—the mountain does come in sight, and we leave our natural selfish thoughts and reasonings behind, and our new spiritual thought bears the credit for our good deeds up the mountain to the Lord. And the whole experience is then crowned by the realization that to consecrate our reasoning powers to the Lord does not mean to give them up, but to find blessing and fulfillment through them (verses 15-18). And after this realization we can safely return to the exercise of our natural reasoning faculty in our daily activities. “So Abraham returned to his young men, and they rose up and went together to Beersheba.” Beersheba signifies “the doctrine of charity and faith which was Divine and to which human rational things were adjoined” (AC 2858).

In AC 2767-2859 Swedenborg gives the interpretation of this whole story in its inmost sense, relating to the Lord's life. He shows us how the Lord admitted temptation through His human rational to the very utmost. In AC 2786 we read: “As regards the state itself, it is . . . the state which the Lord assumed when He underwent temptations, and here that which he assumed when He underwent the most grievous and inmost temptations. His first preparation for that state was that He entered into a state of peace and innocence, and that He prepared the natural man in Himself, as also the rational, so that they should serve the Divine rational, and that He adjoined the merit of righteousness, and in this manner elevated Himself.” And in AC 2795 we read: “The Lord could not be tempted at all when He was in the Divine Itself, for the Divine is infinitely above all temptation; but He could be tempted as to His human. This is the reason why when He was to undergo the most grievous and inmost temptations, He adjoined to Himself the prior human, that is, the rational and the natural of it, as described in verse 3; and why He afterwards separated Himself

from these.” An interesting statement is found in AC 2816: “It is according to the internal sense, that the Lord’s Divine led His Human into the most grievous temptations.” We may think of this when we pray “Lead us not into temptation.” The Lord had power to overcome every temptation and so “led” Himself into them. The form of our prayer suggests that we recognize that we have no power of ourselves, and would flee temptation as far as the Lord sees it to be possible. AC 2819 is a wonderful summary of the whole doctrine concerning temptation.

From the Writings of Swedenborg

Arcana Coelestia, n. 2768: “Its being said that ‘God did tempt,’ is according to the sense of the letter, in which temptations and many other things are attributed to God; but it is according to the internal sense that God tempts no one; but in the time of temptations is continually liberating from them, as far as possible, or as far as the liberation does no harm, and is continually looking to the good into which He is leading him who is in the temptations; for God never takes part in temptations in any other manner; and though it is predicated of Him that He permits, still it is not according to the idea which man has of permission, namely, that by permitting He concurs. Man cannot comprehend it in any other manner than that he who permits is also willing; but it is the evil within the man which causes, and even leads into the temptation; and no cause of this is in God—as the cause is not in the king or in the judge, when a man does evil and suffers punishment therefor. For he who separates himself from the laws of Divine order, all of which are the laws of good and thence of truth, casts himself into the laws that are opposite to Divine order, which are those of evil and falsity, and thence of punishments and torments.”

Suggested Questions on the Lesson

- P. Who was Abram’s wife? *Sarai*
- P. What was the name of their only son? *Isaac*
- J. How old were Abraham and Sarah when Isaac was born? *a hundred, ninety*
- J. What was Abraham tempted to do? *sacrifice Isaac*
- J. Why did he think he ought to sacrifice Isaac? *thought God wanted him to give up his dearest possession*
- I. Why did the Lord let him think this? *to test his faith*

- J. Where was Abraham told to go for the sacrifice? *Mount Moriah*
- J. What was later built on Mount Moriah? *Temple*
- J. How long was the journey? *three days*
- J. Who went with Abraham and Isaac? *two young men*
- J. What did they take with them? *ass, wood, fire, knife*
- P. Who went up the mountain? *Isaac, Abraham*
- J. What did Isaac ask? *where is lamb?*
- J. What did Abraham answer? *God will provide*
- P. When did the Lord stop Abraham? *as he raised knife*
- P. How did He stop him? *angel*
- P. What did Abraham find to sacrifice instead of Isaac? *ram*
- I. Does temptation really come from the Lord? *no*
- I. Why does the Lord permit us to be tempted? *to strengthen our character*
- S. What does Isaac represent? *spiritual rational*
- S. How are people today tempted to sacrifice Isaac? *stop reasoning about religion*
- S. What is meant by the substitution of a ram for Isaac in the sacrifice?
continue to reason, but submit our ideas of what is good and useful to the guidance of the Lord's truth

ISAAC AND REBEKAH

Genesis 24

All the classes should be very familiar with the names *Ishmael* and *Isaac* as the two sons of Abraham, should know who their mothers were, and why Isaac instead of Ishmael was Abraham's heir.

Doctrinal Points

The higher and the lower rational faculties.

The doctrine of marriage.

The necessity of the union of goodness and truth to produce anything living.

Notes for Parents

For Sarah and Abraham the Lord performed a miracle, for Abraham was a hundred years old and Sarah over ninety when Isaac was born. The name *Isaac* means "laughter" and we read that Sarah said "God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me." Ishmael was fourteen when Isaac was born, and because he mocked at the baby, he and his mother were sent away to live in the wilderness, where Ishmael became the father of a numerous people, mentioned several times in the Bible as the Ishmaelites. Sarah and Abraham both lived to see Isaac grow up, for Sarah lived to be a hundred and twenty-seven, and Abraham was a hundred and seventy-five when he died.

It was after Sarah's death that Abraham sent his servant on the long journey to Haran to get a wife for Isaac from among the descendants of his own brother Nahor. The story of Rebekah at the well is a well-known one. It may seem to us today a strange way of choosing a wife, but it had in it all the elements which really make for a happy marriage. The principal one was trust in

the Lord. Abraham was obeying the Lord in not allowing his son to marry a woman of different religious standards from his own. The servant asked the Lord's guidance in the discovery of the right maiden. Rebekah's family and Rebekah herself accepted what they believed to be the Lord's will, and Isaac received the wife so chosen without question. There would be fewer broken homes today if parents brought up their children to think of marriage as a holy state to be prepared for and entered into under the Lord's guidance and with the desire and intention to serve Him. Parents today do not choose mates for their children, but they can do much to prepare them to make wise choices for themselves.

Primary

This is a long chapter and is difficult to cut to a suitable reading for younger children. Interrupt the reading at each break in the continuity and tell briefly the part of the story which has been omitted. Parents reading with the family at home are urged to read the whole chapter aloud, but not all at once.

Abraham loved his son Ishmael, but the Lord told him that he was to have another son who would be the child of his true wife Sarah. So when Ishmael was fourteen years old, Sarah had a son. He was named Isaac, which means "laughter."

After Isaac grew up and his mother Sarah had died, Abraham sent his servant to Haran, where Abraham's brother Nahor had settled, to get a wife for Isaac from among his own relatives. The servant took ten camels with him on the journey, as well as presents to give to his master's future wife and her family.

Where did the servant stop near the city of Haran?

What did he ask of the Lord?

What maiden did the Lord show him was to be Isaac's wife?

Who was Rebekah?

Her parents and her brother Laban welcomed Abraham's servant.

They felt that the Lord had chosen Rebekah for Isaac and so they were willing to let her go.

Rebekah was willing also.

Where was Isaac when he first saw Rebekah?

Was he satisfied with the wife the servant had brought him?

Junior

In connection with this lesson fix in the children's minds the origin of the "city of Nahor" or Haran. Show it to them on a map and trace Abraham's original journey, pointing out Ur, Haran, Shechem, and Bethel where he first built altars, and Hebron where he settled. Have them look up the Bible references in their notes. A chart of the family of Abraham will be included with the lesson on Jacob's wives and sons.

The Lord had wrought a miracle for Sarah and had given her a son when she was over ninety years old. This son was Isaac, whose name means "laughter." He was so named because of Sarah's great joy when he was born. Read Genesis 21:6. Sarah lived to be a hundred and twenty-seven. Then she died, and Abraham bought as a burying place for her the cave of Machpelah, which became the family burying place and is mentioned several times later in the Bible.

Isaac now needed a wife. Most of the other people in the land at that time were Canaanites and worshiped idols. Abraham wanted his son to have a wife who worshiped Jehovah as he did because he knew that religion was the most important thing in a person's life and that a difference of religion would be likely to lead to differences of opinion and unhappiness and also might cause Isaac to forsake the Lord. So he sent his servant back to his own relatives to find a wife for Isaac.

What did Abraham's servant take with him?

Where was he to go?

Who was Nahor?

The "city of Nahor" was named Haran after another brother of Abraham. Read Genesis 11:27-32. When Abraham came from Ur of Chaldea to the Holy Land, his father and his brother Nahor and his family, as well as Lot, Haran's son, had started with him, but Nahor had stopped and settled at Haran before they reached the Holy Land.

Where did Abraham's servant stop when he came near Haran?

How did he try to make sure he would pick out the right maiden?

Did the Lord answer his prayer?

Who came out to draw water?

In those days people did not have running water in their houses. Water was very scarce, and often there was just one well for a whole city. Every family had to send someone to the well to draw water and carry it home, and water for the animals had to be drawn up from the well, too, and poured into troughs so that they could drink. The animals were led out to drink from the troughs. Read Genesis 29:2-3.

What did Rebekah do?

How did the servant know she was the right maiden?

Who was Rebekah's grandfather? Who was her brother?

We want to remember the name *Laban* because we shall learn more about him in the future.

How was Abraham's servant received by his master's relatives?

Why were they willing to let Rebekah go with him?

You see they, too, believed in the Lord and wanted to be led by Him.

What presents did the servant give Rebekah?

Was Rebekah willing to go with him?

Who went with her from her home?

If you would like to know the name of Rebekah's nurse, read Genesis 16:13-14. *Beer* is the Hebrew word for well. Remember this when you see other names in the Bible which begin with these four letters.

What did Isaac and Rebekah take for their home?

Intermediate

This is a difficult lesson for the Intermediates, but it is good to introduce them to the idea not only of what true marriage is but of the necessity of the union of goodness and truth in order to produce anything living and permanent. The teacher should study the lesson carefully and try to be prepared with illustrative examples which will come within the experience of his particular class.

Sons represent truths and daughters affections. But in a marriage the husband represents a certain good and the wife represents the affection for the kind of truth which goes with that good. You will understand this better when you are older, but perhaps an example will help now. Suppose you make up your mind to grow up to be good. You will first have to learn how—that means to learn truths. But suppose you care only to learn the kind of truths which will make you appear good to other people and do not care to learn from the Lord what is good in His sight. Then your goodness will be only external or natural goodness. It will not be true spiritual goodness at all. Abraham, you remember, obeyed the Lord. His true wife Sarah pictures affection for truth from the Lord, while the Egyptian servant Hagar pictures affection for external or natural truth. We all begin to do right from this natural affection. That is, we like to be praised and to avoid punishment. So our first reasoning is based on the thought of what will profit us most. This is Ishmael. But when we are older, we begin to see that this is not enough; we see that we ought to please the Lord, whatever people may think of us. Then our reasoning begins to be based on truth from the Lord. This is Isaac, the son who was finally born to Sarah. And after he was born, Hagar and Ishmael were sent away and Isaac was the one who grew up at home and later took his father's place as head of the family.

Let us think back to the beginning of Abraham's story and see if we remember it—where he came from, why he left his birthplace, who left with him, where they first stopped, and who stayed there. Now again we hear of Haran, the city of Nahor. When it was time for Isaac to marry, Abraham did not want him to take a wife from among the Canaanites. The Canaanites were idolaters. Abraham wanted his son to have a wife who would worship Jehovah as he did. He felt sure that among his brother Nahor's family a good wife for Isaac could be found. You see that the new kind of affection which belonged with the spiritual reasoning which Isaac represents had to spring from the same childlike obedience to the Lord in which Abraham had always been.

Abraham sent his servant to Haran to find a wife for Isaac. This was not a servant in the sense in which we use the word. He was rather a steward, the man who had charge of all Abraham's household and possessions. Abraham's wealth is shown by the fact that the servant traveled with ten camels and took very valuable presents for the bride and her family. All our external abilities and knowledges are useful when they are made to serve our spiritual development. Abraham's servant represents the kind of understanding of external things which performs this use, and camels represent external knowledges. We have to "use our heads" in doing good as in everything else. Perhaps you remember that John the Baptist, who came to call people to repentance, wore raiment of camel's hair.

Abraham's servant did not, however, depend entirely on his own judgment. When he stopped at the well outside of Haran, he asked a sign of the Lord. Rebekah came to the well in fulfillment of the sign. She was the granddaughter of Abraham's brother Nahor. Remember that her brother was named Laban, for we shall hear more of him later. Rebekah and her family had the same feeling toward the Lord that Abraham had. They were sure that it was the Lord who had chosen Rebekah for Isaac, and so were willing that she should go.

This is a beautiful story of the making of a happy marriage. When people are to live together all their lives, it is very important that they should be suited to each other, not merely in external ways, but also in the things of the heart and mind; for if they are not, they will be unhappy and cannot make the right kind of home. We should pray the Lord to help us choose wisely in this most important choice of our whole lives. We should also try to find someone who has the same standards of right and wrong that we have. This means that it is very important that husband and wife have the same religious belief.

You remember that water corresponds to truth. In the story, the well from which the water was drawn represents the letter of the Word. Rebekah's willingness to draw water from the well not only

for Abraham's servant but for his camels also pictures willingness to go to the Word for truth to guide our external conduct as well as our religious thought. It was because Abraham and Isaac trusted the Lord that they sent the servant to Haran for Isaac's wife; it was because Rebekah's parents and her brother trusted the Lord that they were willing to let her go; and it was because Rebekah trusted the Lord that she was willing to leave her home and take the long journey to a strange land to marry a man she had never seen. Read the last verse of the chapter. It is a beautiful picture of the beginning of a new home upon the foundation of the memory of a happy childhood home.

Basic Correspondences

| | |
|-----------|--|
| sons | = truths |
| daughters | = goods |
| a husband | = good |
| a wife | = affection for truth |
| a servant | = useful understanding of external things |
| camels | = general external knowledges |
| a well | = the letter of the Word |

Senior

Stress the fact that as we grow up our states change and that each new state needs new truth from the Lord to direct it. We never become wise in and from ourselves. The nature of marriage as a representative of the union of divine love and wisdom in the Lord should be mentioned, and the need of looking to the Lord for guidance in choosing a mate as well as the need for being sure that the desire of both is to serve the Lord in and through their marriage.

Isaac—Sarah's son, who was to inherit all of Abraham's possessions and become the head of the family when his father died—represents a kind of reasoning power based on belief in the truth revealed by the Lord in the Word instead of on worldly ideas of what is true. Sarah and Abraham were both very old when Isaac was born. This pictures the fact that by the time our "spiritual

rational” begins to develop, our childhood states of simple trust and obedience are passing away. Our lesson for today—Isaac’s marriage—takes place after Sarah’s death.

When Abraham was first called by the Lord to leave Ur of Chaldea and go to the land of Canaan, he did not start alone. In addition to Sarah, his brother Nahor and his family went with him, as well as their father Terah and Lot, the son of another brother, Haran, who had died. Lot, you remember, went all the way to Canaan with Abraham, but Nahor and his family went only part way. They settled in Mesopotamia—which means “between the rivers” (the Tigris and the Euphrates)—and the place where they settled was named Haran for Lot’s father. It is also called in the Bible the “city of Nahor.” There Terah died.

After Sarah’s death Abraham determined to find a wife for his son Isaac in the family of his brother Nahor. In our chapter for today he sends his servant—really his steward—on the long journey to Haran. Abraham’s home, you remember, was in Hebron, in the southern part of the Holy Land. The ancient Jews were always forbidden to take wives from the people of any land in which they were. But we know that this command has a deeper meaning. A true marriage represents the union of good and truth—the man, before marriage, representing the understanding, and the woman, the affections. When a good understanding is united to evil desires, great wrongs result. We sometimes read in the newspapers of a “mastermind” in a gang of criminals. Isaac, the spiritual rational, must be united to the affection for doing right in the Lord’s sight—not to any merely worldly ambition. A person can be truly rational only when he has both true thoughts and good desires. The family of Nahor represents a state of simple goodness, such as many Gentiles have.

Wells play an important part in the story of Isaac. Water, as we know, represents truth. The well from which this water of truth is drawn is the letter of the Word. We remember the story of the Lord at the well in Samaria and the living water He promised. Rebekah’s willingness to draw water for the man and his camels

pictures the fact that a true spiritual affection wishes to be guided by the Word in all the affairs of life, even worldly affairs, for the camels represent enjoyment of knowing about the natural world. Abraham, Isaac, Abraham's servant, Rebekah, and all her family were governed by trust in the Lord and willingness to obey Him.

This is a beautiful story of how a happy marriage should be formed—not that parents should choose their children's mates, but that the Lord's guidance should be sought and followed. In the first place, people should have the same religious beliefs in order to live happily together, for these are the deepest things in their lives and determine their standards of right and wrong. And both partners in the marriage should wish above all things to do the Lord's will. Then they will agree in their aims for their own lives and for their children, and their home will be founded on unselfish love of the Lord and the neighbor, which is the source of all happiness in this world as well as in the spiritual world.

Adult

Discuss the different types of affection for truth and the need of the proper affection if the life is to bear spiritual fruit. The mere "search for truth" is not necessarily good. Another fruitful topic for discussion is the duty to bring up our children from the beginning with a spiritual idea of marriage. This is the most important thing parents can do in directing their children's choice. Note that in the story it was not the servant or the parents who chose Isaac's mate, but the Lord, and everyone concerned recognized the Lord's part in the matter.

The story of the birth of Isaac pictures the beginning of the development of the higher rational faculty in us, the faculty which looks deeper for its basis than mere external appearances of truth, and depends instead upon the truth revealed by the Lord in His Word. When Isaac was born, Abraham was a hundred years old, Sarah over ninety, and Ishmael fourteen. We recall that Ishmael, because he mocked at the baby Isaac, was sent away with his mother into the wilderness, where he married an Egyptian wife and became the father of a numerous people. Then follows the

story of Abraham's temptation to offer Isaac as a burnt sacrifice to the Lord, and of how at the last moment the Lord checked the sacrifice and provided a ram in place of Isaac. We will doubtless remember that here again we have a case of the language of appearance. The Lord of course did not command Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, but He does command each of us to be willing to do His will at whatever apparent sacrifices of our own desires or possessions. Chapter 23 tells of the death of Sarah at the age of a hundred and twenty-seven, and of her burial in a cave in a field in Machpelah, which Abraham bought for the purpose from Ephron the Hittite. This, too, has its inner meaning, but the literal fact is also important to remember because the cave of Machpelah is mentioned several times later in the Bible story, and because it should be noted that Sarah died before Isaac's marriage.

As little children we live, as it were, on the celestial plane, being ruled by our affections and surrounded as to our souls by influences from the celestial heavens. This is the Abraham stage. But as we develop in body and mind, this state gradually passes and a new one succeeds. We come to be ruled by our rational faculty, to look to it as the head of our house, so to speak. This is the Isaac stage. It is an entirely new state, with new interests and new affections. When it is fully developed, it can no longer cling to the former childlike states of affection and thought. We say that a little child can be led by love, but an older child must be reasoned with. Both the little child and the older child when in their best states love the truth, but they love it in a different way. Each has a type of affection for truth which is appropriate to his state. So when Isaac is developed to maturity, Sarah dies and a wife must be found for him to take the place his mother has held in his life. The way in which this wife is sought and found pictures in every detail the way in which true rationality is established in the life of every one of us who develops as he should under the Lord's guidance.

Abraham in the story pictures the Lord at work in our hearts. His eldest servant, who was over all his household, stands for the natural mind, which governs our daily life—if it is a true servant—

in the interests of the Lord and according to His will. This servant is told to seek a wife for Isaac, but not to seek her among the degenerate inhabitants of Canaan. We recall the beginning of the story of Noah in Genesis 6, where it is said that the sons of God married the daughters of men, and a race of giants ensued who eventually destroyed each other. That pictured the uniting of truths from the Lord with selfish natural affections, using what we know of the Lord to excuse and support our selfish desires. Now we are again warned against falling into the same evil. Our new rational mind must not be “married” to selfish and worldly desires—we must not use our new faculty to excuse our faults and to support us in selfish living and thinking. Instead, it must have a wife from its own people, an affection for learning about the Lord and about how to serve Him.

This can be illustrated by the right and the wrong way to study the Bible. If, when we read the Bible, we are constantly looking for statements which we like because they make us feel that we are good—and perhaps that people who disagree with us are wrong—and that the Lord will forgive us whatever we do, and pass over all the condemnations and commands which point out our evils, we are “marrying” our rational understanding of the Word to our selfish affections—the “daughters of the Canaanites.” But when we read the Bible to find out where we are wrong in the Lord’s sight and to find help to correct our faults, then we are “seeking a wife for Isaac among Abraham’s kindred.” It is our natural mind, the same part of us which gathers knowledge of everyday affairs and keeps it in order, which goes out to find this true wife. It makes use of all that we have learned from childhood about the Lord and His will—the ten camels (AC 3048)—and it goes back to our first understanding of doctrine which is represented by Haran. There the servant found Rebekah by the well of water, and he recognized her as his master’s bride because she willingly drew water not only for him but also for his camels. The well, of course, is the letter of the Word, and the water is truth from the Word. Only a genuine affection for divine truth will draw from the Word

refreshment for the mind and for all the knowledges of the Lord which are laid up in it. Selfish affections would gladly let the knowledge of the Lord in the mind die. We may bring this lesson home to ourselves in this way: When we attend church and Sunday school, do we love to hear the Bible explained and try to apply its lessons to our own character and its problems? Or, when the minister begins to touch upon some wrong thought or feeling which we recognize as our own, do we close our ears and try not to listen, or try to think of someone else to whom the lesson applies?

But there is still another part of the story. When Rebekah was found, she had to be brought to Isaac. Isaac was on no account to go back to Haran. Haran was not in the Holy Land at all; it was merely one stage of the journey to the Holy Land, the time when one begins dimly to see that he must obey the Lord and try to get to heaven. After we have developed our rational faculty, the Lord does not want us to go back to this state. Some people interpret the Lord's statement that we must become as little children (Matthew 18:3) to mean that we should go back to the blind faith of a little child and merely obey the Lord's teaching without expecting to understand it. This is not what the Lord means. He gives us our brains to use in matters of religion above everything else. He wants us to study and understand His teaching, to become His "friends" (John 15:15). What we are to seek to retain—or to regain—from our childhood is not our ignorance but our humility, gentleness, and trust: our "innocence." We are, as Swedenborg says, to cultivate the "innocence of wisdom" in place of the "innocence of ignorance." So Rebekah must be brought to Isaac. Our affection for the Lord's truth must be raised to the rational plane of our lives and united to our rational faculty. Then Isaac is "comforted after his mother's death." When we have grown out of the state of simple, blind acceptance of divine truth, we are sometimes sad and bewildered. We can no longer accept some things which we have heretofore taken for granted, because our unaided reason cannot explain them, and yet we miss our belief in

them and seem lost without it. This story teaches us that nothing will really satisfy us until we can restore our belief by seeing its rational basis. A great many people who as little children have believed in the Lord and the Bible lose their faith when their reason develops because they have not found the rational explanation of the Word which the New Church has to give. Many of them long for their early states of belief and trust and never feel “at home” again. They move about from one church to another, looking for a doctrine which they can accept. The story of the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah has a challenge for the New Church.

From the Writings of Swedenborg

Arcana Coelestia, n. 3212: “*And Isaac was comforted after his mother.* That this signifies a new state, is evident from the signification of ‘receiving comfort,’ as being a new state; for a state of consolation is new; and that it succeeded to the foregoing is signified by ‘after his mother.’ . . . When man is being regenerated, he is then becoming altogether another, and is being made new; therefore also when he has been regenerated, he is called ‘born again,’ and ‘created anew.’ Then, although he has a similar face and a similar speech, yet his mind is not similar; his mind, when he is regenerate, is open toward heaven, and there dwells therein love to the Lord and charity toward his neighbor, together with faith. It is the mind that makes a man another, and a new man. This change of state cannot be perceived in the body of man, but in his spirit, the body being merely the covering of his spirit; and when it is put off, then his spirit appears, and this (provided he has been regenerated) in altogether another form, for it then has the form of love and charity in beauty inexpressible.”

Suggested Questions on the Lesson

- J. Who was the “father of the Jews”? *Abraham*
- J. Where did he come from? *Ur*
- J. Why did he go to the Holy Land? *God called him*
- J. Where did he settle there? *Hebron*
- P. Who was Abraham’s wife? *Sarah*
- P. Who was Hagar? *her maid*
- P. Who was Abraham’s first son? *Ishmael*
- J. Whose son was Isaac? *Sarah’s*

- J. Why were Hagar and Ishmael sent away? *mocking attitude*
- J. Why did Abraham not want Isaac to marry a Canaanite? *idolaters*
- P. Whom did Abraham send to find a wife for Isaac? *servant*
- P. Where did he send him? *Haran*
- J. Who had settled there? *Abraham's brother*
- P. Where did Abraham's servant stop? *at a well*
- J. What sign did he ask of the Lord? *woman who offered to draw water*
- P. Who fulfilled the sign? *Rebekah*
- J. Who was Rebekah? *Nahor's granddaughter*
- P. Why did her parents let her go with Abraham's servant? *believed it was God's will*
- J. Where did Isaac meet her? *in field*
- P. Was Isaac satisfied with Rebekah? *yes*
- S. To what do Ishmael and Isaac correspond? *first and second rational*
- I. What is represented by the well? *the Word*

ISAAC AND ABIMELECH

Genesis 26:1-33

We have already studied the best-known stories about Isaac. For the two youngest classes the teacher should be prepared to retell very briefly the story of the birth of Isaac and of his marriage to Rebekah, and should then tell today's story as an example of his dealings with the people of the land. With the older classes, also, the life of Isaac should be reviewed briefly as an introduction.

Doctrinal Points

The Abraham story teaches the way in which the Lord developed as a child, and this is continued in the stories of Isaac and Jacob.

Nothing in the Word is accidental or unnecessary.

We should not try to force our doctrines on those who do not want them.

True rationality is based on the desire to learn and obey the truths of the Word.

Notes for Parents

The son born to Abraham and Sarah was Isaac, and we remember that Ishmael, who was fourteen years old when Isaac was born, mocked at the baby and as a consequence was sent away with his mother Hagar into the wilderness. This may at first seem to us a harsh punishment for a thoughtless act, but we can understand it if we realize the lesson it is given to teach us. We all have an "Ishmael" in us in our natural disposition to judge according to appearances and to discount the deep spiritual causes and principles. Our teenagers do this when they are so sure that they know better than their parents. We can see the folly of it in them, but do we always realize that it is exactly the same folly in us which makes us imagine that we know better than the Lord what is good for us?

Isaac, who was to be Abraham's heir, represents our maturer judgment, which develops late and grows up slowly under the Lord's guidance, and is steady and obedient. Our story today is a picture of how this higher judgment can direct our lives wisely even after the simple trust and obedience of childhood, represented by Abraham, is gone.

If you will read the Lord's words to the woman of Samaria in John 4:5-14, you will see that the Lord's truth in the Bible is the well to which we must go for spiritual cleansing and refreshment, the only water with which our thirst can be permanently satisfied. The stories of the Bible which we learned in early childhood are the wells dug by Abraham. We, like the Philistines, often fill these wells up with earth when, as we grow older, we let worldly ideas and desires discourage and destroy our belief in the Bible. Isaac, our more mature judgment, has to redig these wells. As he did this, the Lord could prosper him until even the king of the Philistines, who had at first tried to drive him out of the country, decided that it was to his interest to make peace with him. The people to whom we go for advice and help in our times of doubt and need are not those whose lives are controlled by selfish and worldly ambition, but those whose judgments are based on the deep and sure foundation of the Lord's precepts.

Primary

Teach the children the name *Isaac* and what it means. Tell the story of Isaac and then read the story for the day, explaining the importance of the wells and emphasizing the name *Beersheba*.

Where was Abraham's first home?

What did the Lord tell him to do?

Where did Abraham finally settle in the land of Canaan?

What was the one thing Abraham and Sarah wanted which they did not have?

Who came to Abraham with a message from the Lord?

What was the message?

Less than a year later Abraham and Sarah did have a son.

They named him Isaac, which means "laughter."

Abraham and Sarah were old when Isaac was born.

After Isaac grew up, his father sent one of his trusted servants on a long journey to the place called Haran where Abraham's brother Nahor had settled, to bring back a wife for Isaac from among his own relatives, because the people of Canaan did not worship the Lord, and Abraham wanted his son to have a wife who would not lead him away from the true worship. The servant brought back Rebekah, the granddaughter of Nahor, and Isaac loved her very much. Isaac and Rebekah had twin sons, Esau and Jacob. We shall hear more about them in our next lesson.

After Abraham died, Isaac became the head of the family, and the people of Canaan soon had to recognize that he was a great man just as his father had been.

Into whose country did he go in a time of famine?

Abimelech, king of the Philistines, was afraid of him and asked him to leave.

What did Isaac do in order to get water for his flocks and cattle?

Who had dug the wells in the first place?

What had the Philistines done to them?

Over how many wells did the herdmen of the land quarrel with Isaac's herdmen?

What did Isaac call the third well?

Rehoboth means "room."

You see Isaac chose to let the Philistines have the first two wells rather than quarrel over them.

Then Abimelech came and asked Isaac to make peace with him, and they made a treaty and swore not to do each other any harm.

You see Isaac did not let his herdmen keep on quarreling with the herdmen of the land. He went on until he found a well which the others did not want. Then Abimelech realized that Isaac was not his enemy, and came and asked Isaac to make peace with him. You know that if you keep on quarreling with another child, someone always gets hurt in the end, and everyone is unhappy. But if one of you refuses to go on quarreling and just walks away and does something else, the one who is left is likely to want to make up. So when a quarrel begins, try to remember that it is always the one who has the most sense who stops first.

Junior

The general story of Isaac up to the beginning of our lesson should be reviewed briefly. If the children ask why Isaac lied about his wife, call their attention to the two similar stories about Abraham (Genesis 12:10-20; 20: 1-11) and tell them that the explanation is in the spiritual sense, which they will study when they are older. The story of the wells is the important part of the lesson for the Juniors, and an attempt should be made to fix Beersheba in their minds.

Abraham had been recognized by all the people of the land as a great man. He had made agreements with the kings among whom he lived and had found plenty of pasture and water for his flocks and herds. Isaac was now head of the family, but the people of the land did not know him as they had known Abraham and they thought that they might safely take advantage of him. You remember that when Abraham first came into the land there was a famine and he had to go down into Egypt for a time. Now there is another famine, but the Lord tells Isaac not to go to Egypt.

Where did Isaac go?

What was the king of the Philistines called?

What did Isaac tell the people about Rebekah?

How did Abimelech find out that she was Isaac's wife?

Did Isaac prosper in the Philistine country?

What had happened to the wells which Abraham had dug there?

Why did Abimelech want to send Isaac away?

Why could Isaac not use the first two wells which his servants dug?

What happened when they found the third?

What agreement did Isaac and Abimelech make?

What did Isaac call the place where it was made?

Now read Genesis 21:22-32. It is thought that the word *Abimelech*, which means "father of a king," was not the name of one person but of a whole line of kings of the Philistines. Abraham had made an agreement with the Abimelech of his day just as Isaac did now. *Shebah* or *Sheba* means "oath" and *Beer* means "well"; so *Beersheba* means "the well of the oath." Look on a map and find the Philistine country along the shore of the Mediterranean Sea. We shall hear a great deal about the Philistines. Now find

Beersheba. We may think of it as the southernmost city of the Holy Land. The northernmost city was Dan. So the expression “from Dan to Beersheba,” which we find several times in the Bible, means the whole length of the land. Isaac’s agreement with Abimelech at Beersheba established him with the people of the land as a great man, just as his father had been.

Intermediate

The teacher should review very briefly the story of Isaac from his birth to the time of our lesson. The principal emphasis of this lesson should be placed on the meaning of Isaac in our lives, on why Isaac prospered in the Philistine country more than the Philistines themselves, and on the meaning of the wells and what happened to them. The teacher should be familiar with the interpretation of the incident concerning Rebekah as found in the Senior and Adult notes, and should be prepared to touch upon it if the young people are curious to understand more than is given in their own notes.

Abraham represents our spiritual state in infancy and early childhood. It is a beautiful state, and yet we know that we all expect and want little children to grow up. If they are to take their true places in the world, they must learn to think and act for themselves. The period of learning to think and reason is pictured in the Word by the stories of Abraham’s sons, Ishmael and Isaac.

Ishmael, you remember, was not Sarah’s son. His mother was Sarah’s Egyptian bondwoman Hagar. There is a great deal in the Bible about the land of Egypt. Egypt, because of the river Nile, did not depend on rainfall for its fertility, and so there was always grain in Egypt even when other countries were suffering from drought and famine. Egypt represents the plane of memory-knowledge. We can store our minds with facts even when we are not able to understand and use them. Ishmael, born of an Egyptian mother, represents the beginning of our thinking and reasoning power, when we judge by what we see and hear in the natural world without understanding the causes that are within and above what we see.

But after a while we begin to find that things are not always

just what they seem to be. Our senses sometimes deceive us. Our plans do not turn out as we expected. There are spiritual laws which must be learned and obeyed. When we see this, Isaac is born. In our lesson for today there is a famine in the land of Canaan, just as there had been in the time of Abraham; but the Lord tells Isaac not to go down into Egypt as his father had done. Our higher reason must not depend on the kind of knowledge which concerns this world only. We must learn doctrine concerning the Lord and spiritual life. This kind of knowledge is represented by the land of the Philistines.

Now notice in our story the difference between the Philistines and Isaac. Isaac prospered so greatly in the Philistine country that the Philistines envied him and wanted him to leave their land. The Philistines picture the kind of people who like to know what the Bible teaches and to talk and reason about it but do not try to live according to its teachings. Isaac pictures those who try to learn and understand the same things, but for the sake of living as the Lord wants them to live. So Isaac prospered and became rich in the Philistine country.

Another thing in our lesson which shows the difference between the Philistines and Abraham and Isaac is the statement that the Philistines filled up with earth the wells which Abraham's servants had dug. Water, you know, represents truth. In the Word, a well represents the truth as we find it in the Bible. The wells which Abraham and Isaac dug picture the Bible when it is studied as the Word of the Lord for the sake of life. To fill these wells up with earth is to stop the truth from appearing in the Word by preferring our own opinions to the Lord's guidance. And you notice that the Philistines claimed two of the wells as their own. When people think that the Word was made up by men instead of inspired by the Lord, they cannot find its truth. All they see is their own ideas. We all have this tendency, which comes from our natural self-love. You know that when you start to argue with someone, you seldom really listen to what he is saying: you think only about making him agree with you.

Isaac's apparent deceit in telling Abimelech that Rebekah was his sister is something you will understand better when you are older. But you should know that this is the third time such a thing has happened in the Bible story. Abraham earlier told Abimelech that Sarah was his sister, and still earlier in Egypt he told Pharaoh the same thing. We find these two stories in Genesis 20:2-7 and 12:11-20. Swedenborg points out that the fact that this incident is repeated three times in the Word shows that it has a very deep and important meaning. You will see that this is an illustration of what we were saying just now—that things are not always what they seem.

This is also the second time that an agreement has been made at Beersheba. Read Genesis 21:22-31. *Beer* means "well," and *Sheba* means "oath," and so *Beersheba* means "the well of the oath." It was the southernmost city in the Holy Land.

Those who think that the Word is the product of men sometimes argue that these repetitions are mistakes—something put in by the scribes who copied the Scriptures. This is one of the ways in which the well of truth is stopped up with earth. The Lord makes no mistakes.

Basic Correspondences

Egypt = the plane of memory-knowledge
the land of the Philistines = the knowledge of doctrinal things

Senior

The development from Abraham through Ishmael to Isaac should be explained clearly as a preparation for understanding the meaning of Isaac's dealings with the Philistines. The important lesson is the difference between an intellectual interest in the Word and going to the Word and studying it to find out how to live.

Our true spiritual progress comes through Isaac, our spiritual rational faculty. If we are developing properly, Abraham gives all that he has to Isaac and dies, as we are told in Genesis 25:5-9, and Ishmael and Isaac bury him. It is after this that Isaac and

Rebekah have their twin sons, Esau and Jacob.

Then comes our story for today. There is a famine in the land, just as there had been when Abraham first came there. Abram had gone down into Egypt, and we remember that this pictured our need in early childhood for acquiring all kinds of natural knowledges. But Isaac is told by the Lord not to go to Egypt, and instead he goes to the land of the Philistines. This is because natural knowledges are not the basis of spiritual reasoning. The land of the Philistines represents knowledges of doctrine.

We find that Abraham had in his time made a treaty with Abimelech, king of the Philistines, and had dug wells in the Philistine country; but after the death of Abraham the Philistines had stopped these wells and filled them with earth. The Philistines themselves represent those who like to learn doctrine but make no attempt to live according to it. When we are little children in the Abraham state, we learn—among other natural knowledges—stories from the Word and the lessons drawn from them by our elders. These are Abraham's wells. But often, as we begin to assert our own wills, these wells are stopped up with the earth of our own worldly and selfish ideals. We rebel against going to Sunday school and church. We stop saying our prayers. We think we know enough to take care of ourselves without the Lord.

When Isaac develops in us, we have to go down again into the Philistine country and redig the wells. Some of them we cannot reclaim because the Philistine hold on them is too strong, but eventually, if we persist, we find one we can develop, and then Isaac can renew the oath made between his father and Abimelech. *Beersheba* means “the well of the oath.” In the Word, a well is frequently used as a symbol of the Bible, because we draw truth from the Bible just as one draws water from a well. If we are to become regenerate, we must keep on searching until we find a doctrine which enables us to understand the Bible and to see the Lord's truth in it.

One part of our chapter often puzzles people. Isaac in the beginning deceives Abimelech by saying that Rebekah is his sister. Abra-

ham had said the same to Pharaoh about Sarah and repeated it later to Abimelech (Genesis 12:11-20; 20:2-7). Critics of the Bible have sometimes thought that these repetitions were mistakes of the scribes who copied the Scriptures, but this is a case of the Philistines' filling a well with earth. Swedenborg says: "As the same thing occurred three times, and is three times repeated in the Word, it is evident that there is in it an arcanum of the greatest moment, which can never be known to any one except from the internal sense" (AC 3386). In the internal sense a sister pictures rational truth, but a wife pictures truth united to good. People in the Philistine state are interested in learning rational truth; but because they have no desire to apply rational truth to their own conduct, they would destroy the same truth if it were presented to them as something they ought to do. This meaning is not so hard to understand as you might think. We all enjoy learning new things, but do we always welcome good advice?

Adult

We should be able to take it for granted that the adults know the general story of Isaac, and so the teacher may concentrate on the specific lesson, which is an important one often overlooked.

All adults who have brought up children or who have observed the development of any child from infancy through the early "teens" should be able to draw upon their experience for help in understanding our lesson for today and its background. The keynote of the lesson is to be found in the wells. Throughout the Bible a well is the symbol of the Word. We dig wells when we go to the Word for truth. Without the Word our lives are barren.

Abraham had dug wells in the Philistine country. In early childhood we learn the stories of the Word and are given instruction from them. But as we develop out of the innocent childhood states, as we learn more about the world and its standards and begin to reason from appearances—the Ishmael state—the Philistines stop up these wells of truth and fill them with earth. The

Philistines lived in the Holy Land along the coast. Their part of the country pictures knowledge of doctrine, but the Philistines themselves represent “the memory-knowledge of knowledges,” the knowledge of spiritual truths held in the memory but not used in life. We all have the Philistines in us, for we all know more truth than we are willing to use. Whenever we know what we ought to do but reason ourselves out of doing it because it is not convenient, the Philistines in us are stopping up Abraham’s wells and filling them with earth.

In AC 2083 Swedenborg shows us very clearly the nature of the progression from Abraham through Jacob in the Lord’s own experience, which is our pattern: “Abraham, as said in various places before, represents the Lord’s internal man, but Isaac His rational man, and Jacob His natural man. The Lord’s internal man was Jehovah Himself. His rational man, because conceived of the influx of His internal man into the affection of memory-knowledges in the external man, was from the Divine thus conjoined with the Human. Hence the first rational, represented by Ishmael, was human; but it was made Divine by the Lord, and then it is represented by Isaac.” So in our lives our first reasoning, although a faculty given us by the Lord, is exercised on the basis of natural knowledges and must later be corrected as we learn by experience that appearances are often deceiving and that spiritual causes and principles are the only true basis of rational thought. Wise parents recognize the “difficult” years in their children as merely a necessary step in their growing up, and draw a breath of relief when they see the first signs of maturer judgment.

It is interesting to note that Sarah dies some time before Abraham. Sarah, Abraham’s true wife, represents the genuine affection for truths received in the simplicity of childhood. The child outgrows this affection when he begins to want to do his own thinking, but the good intention of childhood persists, joining itself to a different type of affection for truth—comparatively obscure—which is represented by Keturah, whom Abraham married after Sarah’s death. Modern psychiatry, which delves into the inner

experiences of the childhood of an individual, might well study the six sons of Abraham and Keturah and their descendants. They appear from time to time throughout the Old Testament story, usually as enemies of the descendants of Isaac, but we note in Genesis 25:5 that “Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac.” All our spiritual progress depends upon the development of the true rational whose judgments are based without equivocation upon the truths of the Word.

Abraham and Isaac both swore a covenant of peace with Abimelech, king of the Philistines, who represents “the doctrine of faith that looks to rational things.” The truly spiritual man has no quarrel with interest in doctrine and reasonings about it. It was the Lord who sent Isaac down into the Philistine country in time of famine—to knowledges of doctrine, not to the mere natural knowledges represented by Egypt—and prospered him there. Isaac was even led to repeat the ruse twice practiced by Abraham (Genesis 12:11-20; 20:2-7) and to represent Rebekah at first as his sister. The difference between Rebekah as a sister and Rebekah as a wife is the difference between the affection for spiritual truth as an intellectual exercise and affection for the same truth for the purpose of directing the life. Swedenborg points out that with those who do not wish to change their ways of life, spiritual truth will be rejected if it is presented first as an exhortation to good, whereas in its merely intellectual aspects they may find it interesting and pleasing, and after it is accepted intellectually it may gradually affect the life. We should remember this in our missionary efforts.

Beersheba—“the well of the oath”—became Isaac’s home. It is the southernmost city of the Holy Land, and we recall that the north and south direction is the measure of the extent of enlightenment, the north representing ignorance and the south enlightenment; so it is clear that Isaac’s settling in Beersheba, digging a well and building an altar there after his covenant with Abimelech, gives us the true pattern of spiritual enlightenment which is the necessary basis for a good life, both external and internal.

From the Writings of Swedenborg

Arcana Coelestia, n. 3464: “As regards the doctrinal things that are from the literal sense of the Word, the case is this: When a man is in them, and at the same time in a life according to them, he has a correspondence in himself; for the angels who are with him are in interior truths, while he is in exterior ones, and thus through the doctrinal things he has communication with heaven, but according to the good of his life. As, for example, when in the Holy Supper he thinks in simplicity of the Lord from the words then used—‘This is My body, and this is My blood’—the angels with him are in the idea of love to the Lord and charity toward the neighbor; for love to the Lord corresponds to the Lord’s body, and to bread; and charity toward the neighbor corresponds to the blood, and the wine . . . and because there is such a correspondence, there flows an affection out of heaven through the angels into that holy state in which the man then is, which affection he receives in accordance with the good of his life. For the angels dwell with everyone in his life’s affection, thus in the affection of the doctrinal things according to which he lives; but in no case if his life disagrees therewith; for if the life disagrees, as for instance if he is in the affection of gaining honors and riches by means of doctrinal things, then the angels retire, and infernals dwell in this affection, who either infuse into him confirmations of the doctrinal things for the sake of self and the world, thus a persuasive faith—which is such that it is regardless whether a thing is true or false provided it captivates the minds of others—or else they take away all faith, and then the doctrine of his lips is only a sound excited and modified by the fire of these loves.”

Suggested Questions on the Lesson

- P. Who was the son of Abraham and Sarah? *Isaac*
P. Who was Isaac’s wife? *Rebekah*
P. What place did she come from? *Haran*
J. What children did Isaac and Rebekah have? *Esau and Jacob*
J. In time of famine where did the Lord forbid Isaac to go? *Egypt*
J. Where did Isaac go instead? *Philistia*
J. What was the king of the Philistines called? *Abimelech*
P. Did he welcome Isaac? *yes, but later feared him*
P. Who had previously dug wells in the Philistine country? *Abraham*
P. What had the Philistines done to these wells? *filled them in*
P. How many wells did they prevent Isaac from opening? *two*
P. Did Isaac quarrel with them? *no*
J. What agreement did Abimelech finally make with Isaac? *oath of peace*

- J. What did they name the place where the agreement was made? *Beersheba*
- J. What does *Beersheba* mean? *well of oath*
- I. What does Isaac represent? *our ability to reason spiritually*
- I. What does a well represent? *the Word*
- S. What do the Philistines picture? *desire to know truth, but no desire to live it*
- S. What is pictured by their filling up Abraham's wells with earth? *preferring one's own opinion to the Lord's guidance*

JACOB AND ESAU

Genesis 25:19-34; 27

Again we have a story about two brothers, but this time they are twins with the same mother as well as the same father. The teacher should fill in a little of the background by telling how Abraham sent his servant up to Haran, where his brother Nahor had settled, to bring back a wife for Isaac from his own people. Sarah had already died, and after Isaac married Rebekah, Abraham died also.

Doctrinal Points

The Lord is merciful to us, and uses even our selfishness to teach us spiritual lessons.

The people in the Bible are not meant to be examples for us to imitate. Only the Lord's life is our example.

Notes for Parents

Rebekah, Isaac's wife, came from Haran. When Abraham and his family took the long journey from their home in Ur of Chaldea to the land of Canaan, his brother Nahor started the journey with him but stopped part way at Haran, and decided to settle there. Rebekah was Nahor's granddaughter. The Jews were many times commanded not to intermarry with the people among whom they happened to live. In this way their line was kept pure. The deeper reason for the prohibition was, of course, that they might not be drawn away into other religions.

Isaac and Rebekah had no children for twenty years, and then the twins Esau and Jacob were born. They were not identical twins. Esau was red and hairy—his other name *Edom* means “red”—while Jacob was a “smooth” man. And Esau was a “cunning hunter, a man of the field,” while Jacob stayed at home tending

the flocks and herds. Esau was his father's favorite, and Jacob was his mother's.

We have seen in past lessons that the people in the Bible stories were far from perfect. This is clearly illustrated in our two stories for today. Jacob in the first place drove a shrewd bargain with his brother, but Esau's fault was even greater, in being willing to sacrifice his proper future in order to satisfy his immediate physical hunger. Esau, as the firstborn, was entitled to the birthright, the right to be his father's heir. He was also entitled to the better blessing from his father, and here both Jacob and Rebekah obviously did wrong. But when the deceit was successfully carried out, Esau was so angry that he determined to kill his brother. There was not much to choose between Esau and Jacob.

In the Bible we often find stories about pairs of brothers: Cain and Abel, Joseph's two sons Ephraim and Manasseh, and in the New Testament Peter and Andrew and James and John. In our progress through life everything we "bring forth" has a twofold character, including both intention and thought, will and understanding. We know that Abraham represents our innocent little childhood; and Isaac, the development of our reasoning faculty. Esau and Jacob follow. They represent the period when young people are beginning their independent lives in the world, taking jobs or going away to college, standing on their own feet for the first time apart from their parents. Esau, the firstborn, is the natural will at this time, and Jacob is the understanding. Both are faulty. The point of our Bible story is that although the will is primary—we never do anything which is not prompted by a desire of some kind—it is always necessary for us to set our understanding before our will, to think before we act, even when our thoughts are very imperfect, and to control our impulses until we have learned to be really wise and to prefer to do the right things.

Primary

The lesson can be centered on the first story about the selling of the birth-

right. Be sure to explain what a birthright was. The later story can be read at the end, if there is time. Try to teach the children the names Esau and Jacob, but keep in their minds especially the series of names *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*. They should be able to see that both Esau and Jacob did wrong, and that they both suffered as a result.

You remember that when Abraham started out from his home in Ur to go to the land of Canaan, his brother Nahor went with him but did not go all the way. He stopped about halfway, at a place called Haran, and settled there.

After Isaac grew up, Abraham did not want him to marry any of the Canaanite women; so he sent his most trusted servant back to Haran to find a wife for Isaac in his own brother's family. The servant brought back Nahor's granddaughter Rebekah, and Isaac was very happy to marry her.

Isaac and Rebekah had no children for twenty years. But finally they had twins, whom they named Esau and Jacob.

Which was the firstborn?

Were the twins alike?

What did Esau like to do?

What did Esau ask Jacob to give him?

What bargain did Jacob make with him?

Esau was very foolish to sell his birthright just to satisfy his hunger, and Jacob did wrong to take advantage of his brother in this way. And later he did something still worse.

Which of the twins was Isaac's favorite?

Which was Rebekah's favorite?

When Isaac was old, what did he ask Esau to do?

Rebekah helped Jacob to deceive his father by pretending to be Esau.

When Esau came back with his venison, his father was very much upset, but he told him he could not take back the blessing he had given Jacob. He gave Esau a different blessing—really a better one (see Genesis 27:39-40)—but Esau was still so angry that he said he was going to kill Jacob. So Rebekah persuaded Isaac to send Jacob away to Haran, her former home, for a long visit.

Junior

Have the children trace again on a map the journey of Abram from Ur to Canaan, find Haran, and remind them of Nahor's settling there. This will introduce Rebekah, as Nahor's granddaughter. There are several lessons suggested in the Junior notes which children of this age can easily understand. Stress especially the fact that when we do wrong, we always suffer for it sooner or later, even though at the time we may seem to "get away with it."

Whom did Isaac marry?

Where did she come from?

Isaac and Rebekah lived together for twenty years before they had children. Then they had twin sons.

What were their names?

Which was the firstborn?

Were they identical twins?

Esau means "hairy," and *Edom*, the other name by which Esau is called, means "red." You want to remember that Esau was the father of the Edomites, who appear several times in the Bible story, usually as enemies of the Israelites.

Verses 29 to 34 of chapter 25 tell how both Esau and Jacob did wrong. In the King James Version there are some unfamiliar words in the story. *Pottage* is something cooked in a pot, like soup or stew. *Sod* is an old past tense of the verb *seethe* and means "boiled." The *birthright* was the right of the oldest son to become head of the family after his father's death. *Lentiles* are any kind of bean or pea; there are several varieties, one of which is red.

Jacob did wrong in taking advantage of his brother's hunger and weakness to drive a sharp bargain, and Esau did wrong in giving up a valuable privilege to satisfy his appetite. Whenever we do something wrong in order to get something we happen to want very much at the moment, we are "selling our birthright for a mess of pottage"; this is a common expression taken from this story. What do you think our "birthright" really is? Read Matthew 25:31-34. We are different from animals in that we are capable of learning about the Lord and obeying Him, and thus of coming to love Him and be "inheritors" of His kingdom in heaven. We can think about

His will and judge whether the things we want to do are good or bad in His sight. Animals cannot think about God or about right and wrong. They are governed by their instincts and appetites. So whenever we let ourselves be governed by our natural desires, we are putting ourselves on the level of animals and “selling our birthright.”

Which son was the favorite of Isaac?

Which was Rebekah’s favorite?

When Isaac was very old and almost blind and knew it was nearly time for him to die, he wanted to give Esau his blessing—the special blessing which was the right of the firstborn. This was customary among the Jews. The Bible records several instances of it. The father’s final blessing was very precious to the son.

What did Isaac ask Esau to do for him?

Why did Rebekah want Jacob to deceive his father?

How did she help him do it?

Isaac was doubtful. He said, “The voice is Jacob’s voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau.” Still, he gave him the blessing. When Jacob was gone and Esau came in with his venison and Isaac knew that he had been deceived, he said he could not take back the blessing.

Does it seem strange that Jacob should have been permitted to get his blessing by deceit? Jacob did not go unpunished for his wrongdoing. He had to flee from his brother’s anger and spend many long years far from home, and finally he had to bow down before his brother and ask his forgiveness. The Lord used the people in the Bible just as they were, to teach lessons which you will understand when you are a little older. He made even their wrongdoing serve a use. We must study the stories carefully to find the lessons and not think that because someone was blessed by the Lord, everything he did was right. We know that we often do wrong things, and yet think of all the blessings the Lord gives us!

Read carefully the blessing Isaac gave Jacob and the blessing he

gave Esau. We shall see that both these blessings were fulfilled. Esau's plan to kill his brother shows something of his character, just as his willingness to sell his birthright does.

Rebekah's plan to save Jacob was also used by the Lord. It started a whole train of circumstances which we shall study in our later lessons. Everything we do, every decision we make, changes the course of our lives. We should try hard, therefore, to learn to make wise and right decisions.

Where was Haran?

Who lived there?

Intermediate

In this lesson the general correspondence of Jacob and Esau is taken up first because it completes the Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob series. The young people should have these patriarchs and their general meaning very clearly in mind before they go on. The reason for Jacob's taking precedence over Esau can be related to the correspondence of Isaac. That is, we need to know truth and to reason from spiritual principles. This is a good opportunity to be sure that the young people understand that the New Church does not teach that all Bible characters are examples to be imitated. The Intermediates are old enough to understand how this can be, and to recognize it without losing any of their reverence for the Word.

Abraham died and was gathered to his people. The childhood state of simple obedience in our lives passes away finally and is replaced by the rule of the rational, which is Isaac. As we grow out of our young childhood, our minds develop and we begin to think for ourselves and finally to act independently. Isaac represents the thinking and Jacob and Esau the acting period. Our independent lives are developing and progressing, but at the same time they are coming down from the high plane of innocence and trust which characterized our infancy to the level of the outside world. Here our life is clearly divided between our desires and our knowledge—Esau and Jacob. The Lord wants both to be good, to be led by Him, but by nature we are selfish and lacking in wisdom. Both Esau and Jacob were faulty. And our desires and our knowl-

edge conflict, just as there was trouble between Esau and Jacob.

Esau, Isaac's firstborn son, pictures the love or desire side and Jacob the truth or thought side of our activity in the world. Desire comes first. If we had no desires, we should neither think nor act. But in order to do what we want we must first learn how. So actually Jacob has to take the first place for a time. *Jacob* means "supplanter." He supplants his older brother.

The character of Jacob in the Bible has puzzled some people; they have assumed that anyone the Lord prospered must have been a thoroughly good person and meant for us to copy. But this is not so. The people in the Bible had good and bad qualities, just as we have, and we are to learn from their stories, even in the letter, what not to do as well as what to do, and about the Lord's tender and merciful dealing with men even when they make serious mistakes. Jacob took a mean advantage of his brother, but Esau also did wrong in despising his birthright—the cherished right of the firstborn to follow his father as head of the family—and giving it away to satisfy his hunger. It may seem to us very unlikely that he would really do this. Yet we do the same sort of thing constantly. We are always giving up something important which we might have at some future time for the sake of some unimportant thing we happen to want right now. Our birthright is the right to know and love the Lord—that is what makes us men instead of animals—to be "sons of God" and to "inherit the kingdom of heaven." Whenever we sacrifice our Christian ideals for the sake of some worldly satisfaction which we want at the moment, we are selling our birthright for a mess of pottage. Jacob could not have cheated Esau if Esau had not yielded to temptation. We sometimes feel, as Esau did, that we shall "die" if we do not get what we want, but the Lord will always give us strength to resist temptation if we really try.

In the second part of our lesson Jacob pretends to be Esau. We often pretend to be the kind of people we wish we were. The Lord knows our real motives. But He does not take away his blessing, since it is better for us to do right from selfish motives

than not to do right at all, and this is one of the ways in which we form good habits and gradually come to love doing what is right. Esau, too, was a mixture of good and bad. He wanted to be blessed and was willing to obey his father and to take a great deal of trouble to procure the blessing. But he was also ready to kill his brother because of his disappointment. When we do not get what we want, don't we sometimes want to hurt somebody? Esau and Jacob in their youth were both thoroughly selfish just as we are in the beginning.

It was a long time before Jacob and Esau were reconciled, and both had to go through years of hard work and discipline first. It takes all our lives in this world to bring our desires and our thinking together in the service of the Lord.

Basic Correspondences

Esau = good on the natural plane of life

Jacob = truth on the natural plane of life

Senior

Call the attention of the Seniors to the collateral lines which develop from the characters who are dropped by the way: the Moabites and Ammonites from Lot, the Ishmaelites from Ishmael, and now the Edomites from Esau. These tribes represent thoughts and feelings which we develop at various stages and which remain in our background and come up to trouble us later. We are tracing one thread—the Lord's influence in our lives—but there are other “side lines” branching off here and there from the true line, all of which must eventually be brought into order and under the control of the Lord. This will help to relate the Sunday school lessons to the young people's school and home and recreational activities, and will help to show them the primary importance of religious instruction.

The obvious lesson of the literal story of our first chapter is summed up in the common expression “selling one's birthright for a mess of pottage”; for everyone can see that Esau made a foolish trade, and we know, if we really look at ourselves honestly, that we are all frequently tempted to grasp at some present outward satisfaction at the sacrifice of a future great and more interior good.

But the deeper lessons of the chapter are hidden. We need first to realize that with the birth of Esau and Jacob, we reach the third and final stage in our development from infancy to manhood. We all like to look back upon our early childhood, and we recognize the beauty of its innocent, trusting spirit; but the time comes when our thinking must be made actual in deeds. The rational stage of our development—the Isaac stage—must end, and we must begin to seek an independent place in the external life of the world. Esau and Jacob represent this external, “practical” plane of life. And because it is in the carrying out of our purposes that we must finally be specific, it is here that the separation between will and thought, desire and knowledge, becomes evident.

So now instead of a single son we have twins. Esau pictures the will and Jacob the intellect: twin brothers yet often in conflict. The will is the firstborn because there must be motive before there can be any thought. But because the human will is by birth selfish, the intellect must for a time take first place. The selfishness and shortsightedness of our natural affections and impulses are pictured in Esau’s willingness to give up his whole future to satisfy his present physical hunger.

In our second story Isaac is old and his eyes are dim. When we pass from the thinking stage of our teens to active, independent life, we are likely to become so absorbed in the external affairs of every day that we do not see clearly for a time. We are easily deceived by appearances. Our wills are not yet unselfish. The wild game which Esau brought for his father represents our own ideas of goodness with which we like to be satisfied. Jacob is permitted to substitute two kids of the goats, which represent genuine goodness, though of a natural kind. So our minds help us, although at this stage it is necessary that the truth be made to seem desirable: Jacob puts on Esau’s clothing and puts the skins of the goats on his hands and on the back of his neck to make himself appear like Esau.

This does not mean that Jacob did right. The Lord permitted the deception to teach us that a selfish will must not be allowed

to lead us. We must learn the truth and follow it even though we at first imagine that the truth came out of our own minds, and praise ourselves for thinking of it. This is what is represented by Isaac's words, "The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau."

In the literal story Jacob paid a heavy penalty. He, the more home-loving of the two brothers, had to start off alone and serve many years in a strange land before he was allowed to return and enjoy his inheritance. Haran, to which he went, represents a state of simple obedience. After we have developed our faculties and begun our independent life in the world, we have to go through a long period of doing right just because we know we ought to, before the Lord can develop in us the real love of truth and goodness which enables us to enter into our true spiritual home.

Adult

There is plenty of discussion material here, especially in the thought that "natural good"—which is Esau—is never pure or trustworthy, and that our real spiritual progress is dependent upon Jacob, our interest in truth.

Swedenborg says: "There are in every man an internal man, a rational man that is intermediate, and an external, which is properly called the natural man. With the Lord these were represented by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" (AC 1893). The Abraham stage with us is our infancy, when the internal man is open to the heavens and is filled by the Lord with "remains"—innocent, trustful, happy states which can later be used in our regeneration. Then we develop into the rational or Isaac stage, and finally are ready to carry out in everyday life the knowledges and affections which we have developed in the previous stages. The rest of our life, if we regenerate, is spent in developing and then in bringing into order this natural or external plane and in gradually bringing it to act as the servant of the inner planes. So, although Abraham and Isaac come first, and in one sense are higher than Jacob, their descendants are called the seed of Jacob or the children of Israel

(Israel being the name later given to Jacob by the Lord), and their history occupies the rest of the Old Testament. Our story today deals with Jacob and his elder twin Esau, and of how Jacob instead of Esau came to be head of the family. We have spoken before of the two divisions of our lives, symbolized by the two rooms in the ark—the will and the understanding. The natural plane of our lives has these two divisions, and they are pictured by Esau and Jacob, Esau good in the natural plane, and Jacob truth in the same plane. They are twins because the will and the understanding, good and truth, go together as equals in us from the beginning.

Esau is actually the elder because all power is from the will, even the power to think, and influx from the Lord or from the hells primarily affects our wills. Throughout most of our life, however, Jacob supplants Esau, because we have to learn what is right before we can do it: our understanding appears to take first place. The Lord permits this change, this inversion of the true order, to meet the changed conditions caused by man's turning to self and perverting his will. That is, because by inheritance our will is selfish, we cannot safely be guided by it but must be taught what is right. Jacob instead of Esau must be head of our house. But we note that Esau eventually is to break off the yoke of his brother. This means that when we are regenerated, when we have practiced doing as truth teaches until the Lord has been able to give us a new will, then we may again be ruled by our will and do as we please freely.

The literal story of Esau and Jacob has proved a stumbling block to those who believe that all those in the letter of the Word whom the Lord favors must be exemplary characters. Here is a man who cheated, lied, and stole, and yet was allowed to keep the fruits of his deception and to become the ancestor of the Lord's chosen people. How can we "get around" this obvious fact? In the New Church we do not have to get around it. The Bible characters, with the exception of our Lord, are not in themselves exemplary. Many of them are evil men, doing evil deeds. But the Lord can make use even of their evil deeds to teach us the ins and outs of

our own souls and the nature of the humanity which He assumed and glorified. He makes use of evil to show how His providence foresees and provides for all our states and tries to lead us back to Him, however far we may have departed. In the inmost sense, which relates to the life of the Lord, the Word is all true and beautiful. In the inner sense, which relates to our own states, we see the Lord's love and truth acting upon our degenerate human nature in the effort to save us. In the letter we see this struggle acted out upon the stage of real life by the Hebrew nation, the nation chosen to portray it. Thus even in the letter, if we keep the whole face of it in mind when studying any given story, we can see good and evil, truth and falsity at work and trace their effects. We must not expect the letter to portray ideal conditions.

The objection to the story of Jacob and Esau is based on the desire to have all evil punished immediately and obviously. This is not the Lord's desire; it is a very earthly one. The Lord desires to show us our evils and to turn us from them, never to punish. Evil punishes itself, often not immediately or obviously, but surely in the end. The results of Jacob's evils can easily be traced in his fear of Esau not only immediately after his deed but even twenty years later when he returned and sought reconciliation with his brother. Furthermore, Esau himself is far from exemplary. He is willing to sell his birthright—his proper future—to satisfy his immediate physical hunger. Here is a lesson which all can see and understand. How often we put present pleasure above future good! How often for the sake of some trivial thing which we want now we do what we know is injuring our character and our prospects, and even what we know will bring us pain and sorrow later! We know that our eternal happiness depends upon our keeping the commandments, yet we continually allow carelessness, laziness, cowardice, and selfishness to lead us to break them. We know that our spiritual progress depends upon our learning about the Lord and doing His will, yet we let ourselves become absorbed in worldly pursuits and pleasures and neglect our regular reading of the Word and the writings and our worship of the Lord. We know

that we are higher than animals just because we have spiritual possibilities which they do not have, yet we choose to live on the level of earthly satisfactions like animals. We think Esau was very foolish, but we do as he did every day.

We have seen that Esau pictures good, and Jacob truth, in the natural plane of our minds. We should all agree that the really important thing is to be good. Esau is the elder twin and the rightful head of the family. Why then does the Lord permit Jacob to supplant Esau? Why do we have to try to keep on learning truth, studying the Word and trying to understand it more and more deeply? If we do what we think is right, is not this all that can be expected of us? Many people today answer this question in the affirmative. Yet have we not often done what we thought was right and found out afterward that it was just the wrong thing? This is our key to the true answer. There is indeed some good in everyone. The Lord has seen to that. But there is also in each of us by our natural inheritance a great deal of evil, and we cannot distinguish between good and evil without truth from the Lord. If we think of ourselves as naturally good and as competent to judge right and wrong without instruction from the Lord, we shall judge and act from evil impulses quite as often as from good ones, and presently we shall believe that whatever we think is true and whatever we want is good, and then we shall be unable to see any fault in ourselves or to improve ourselves in any way. No matter how well we are brought up, we never come to the point in this life when we can safely act from impulse without thought, and our standards are never perfect. Our wills are never wholly pure. We must keep on learning more and more of the Lord's truth and apply it to deeper and deeper states in ourselves. For all our time on earth, Jacob must be the head of our house and Esau must serve him. Not until we get to heaven, where our wills are wholly satisfied to serve the Lord, will Esau be able to take his rightful place.

From the Writings of Swedenborg

Divine Providence, n. 234: “There are no laws of permission by themselves or apart from the laws of the Divine providence, but the two are the same; therefore God is said to permit, which does not mean that He wills, but that on account of the end, which is salvation, He cannot avert. Whatever is done for the sake of the end, which is salvation, is according to the laws of the Divine providence. For the Divine providence . . . is constantly moving in a way diverse from and contrary to man’s will, continually intent upon its end; and in consequence, at every movement of its operation or at every step of its progress, where it observes man to be swerving from that end, it guides, bends, and directs him according to its laws, by leading him away from evil and leading him to good. That this cannot be done without the permission of evil will be seen in what follows. Moreover, nothing can be permitted without a reason, and the reason can be found only in some law of the Divine providence, which law teaches why it is permitted.”

Suggested Questions on the Lesson

- P. Whom did Isaac marry? *Rebekah*
- P. Where did she come from? *Haran*
- P. What two sons did Isaac and Rebekah have? *Esau and Jacob*
- P. Which was the firstborn? *Esau*
- P. How were they different? *Esau hairy and red; Jacob smooth*
- P. What did Esau sell to Jacob? *birthright*
- P. What did he get for it? “*mess of pottage*”
- P. Which son was Isaac’s favorite? *Esau*
- P. Which was Rebekah’s favorite? *Jacob*
- J. When Isaac was old, how did Rebekah help Jacob to deceive him?
prepared meat, put goat’s hair on Jacob
- P. What did Isaac give Jacob that Esau should have had? *blessing of firstborn*
- P. How did Esau feel about it? *wanted to kill Jacob*
- I. What do Esau and Jacob represent? *natural will, natural understanding*
- S. Why did the Lord permit Jacob to supplant Esau? *to show that we must not be led by selfish will*

JACOB'S DREAM

Genesis 28

We have three easy points of connection between this story and those which have preceded it, points which help us to review. And we must review regularly if we are to present the Bible as a continued story and not just as a number of separate stories. The three points are: first, Jacob's relation to Isaac and to Abraham; second, the place Haran; and third, the place Bethel.

Doctrinal Points

The Lord is always present with us and watching over us.

The Word is the connecting link between man and the Lord.

We find the basis of our faith in the truths of the letter of the Word.

Anointing with oil is the symbol of confirming truth by loving it.

Notes for Parents

This beautiful story is familiar to us all. We can picture the young man Jacob starting out on a long journey all by himself with no certainty as to where he would get food or how he would prosper, and also with the knowledge of the wrong he had done his brother and of his brother's anger. He could not have been in a very happy state of mind. We all have times when we are very much like Jacob. We too do wrong and carry burdens on our conscience, and we too often have to start out on new undertakings with very little assurance as to how things will turn out for us.

Have you ever thought how many stories there are in the Bible which concern sleep? Swedenborg tells us that the reason why we need so much sleep is that when we are asleep our minds are taken off the things of this world and of our own success and desires, and the Lord can draw closer to us and renew our souls. Our souls

need sleep even more than our bodies do. Little children need a great deal of sleep because it is in infancy and early childhood that the Lord stores up in them states of trust and innocence which will help them all their lives.

So Jacob had a wonderful dream which gave him hope and courage and led him to promise to serve the Lord all his life. Jacob's dream is a picture of something we may have in our own lives which will give us courage and strength to face all our problems and troubles if only we will take advantage of it. The Bible is our "Jacob's ladder." Its foot is on the earth; that is, it is written in terms of everyday life, which we can understand. But its top is in heaven, and the Lord is there at the top. The ascending angels are our thoughts going up to Him as we read it and the angels that are descending on it are His truths which He speaks to us through it.

Primary

Teach the children the three names in the series Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We can try also to teach them Haran and Bethel, which should be somewhat familiar from earlier stories. There will be no trouble in interesting them in the story of the dream, and they will probably be able to repeat it. Emphasize the fact that the Holy Land was the real home of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, so that Jacob hated to leave it and was looking forward to coming back. It will also be a good thing to have them learn the names of the wives of Abraham and Isaac. Particularly connect Jacob's setting up of the stones after his dream with Abraham's building an altar at the same place. Tell them that *Bethel* means "house of God."

Isaac grew up to become a great man, as his father had been. His wife's name was Rebekah, and she was the granddaughter of Abraham's brother Nahor, who had settled in a place called Haran.

Isaac and Rebekah had twin sons, Jacob and Esau. You know that most twins look very much alike. But Jacob and Esau were very different in looks and also in character, and they didn't get along well together. So when they grew old enough, Isaac and Rebekah thought it would be a good thing to separate them for

a while.

They sent Jacob to Haran to visit his uncle Laban. They hoped, too, that he would find a wife there. Abraham and Isaac had both been told by the Lord that they and their family ought not to marry any of the women who lived about them in the land of Canaan, because these women worshiped idols instead of the Lord.

The journey to Haran was a long journey for young Jacob to take alone, and he was not very sure that he would be safe on the way and would be able to find enough to eat. And then, too, Jacob loved his own home and wanted most of all to be sure he would return to it.

What was one of the places where Jacob stopped for the night?

What did he use for a pillow?

What did he see in his dream?

What did the Lord tell him?

How did Jacob feel when he woke?

What did he call the place?

Bethel means “house of God.”

What did Jacob do with the stones he had used for his pillow?

Do you remember someone else who had built an altar at Bethel?

What did Jacob promise the Lord?

The dream gave him courage for the long journey, because it showed him that the Lord was near him all the time and watching over him. The Lord is near us all the time, too, watching over us and taking care of us.

And we, too, have a Jacob’s ladder which connects us with Him.

Do you know what it is?

It is the Word.

When we study the Word, our thoughts go up to the Lord and the Lord’s thoughts come down to us, just like the angels ascending and descending on the ladder.

Do you know that the word *angel* means “messenger”?

Junior

The meaning of the “ladder” can easily be taught to children of this age, and they will find it a new and striking way of thinking of the Bible. The

correspondence of stones and of oil can also be given. Have them locate Beer-sheba, Bethel, and Haran on a map. By now they should be able to recall the past events connected with Haran and Bethel. Be sure they know the meaning of the word "angel." Have them look up the last book in the Old Testament and tell them the meaning of its name.

Isaac and Rebekah had twin sons, Esau and Jacob. Jacob was the one through whom the Hebrew nation was to be carried on; so Isaac sent him also to Haran to find a wife. He traveled all alone, and we find that when he started, he was not even sure that he would be able to find food and clothing.

How did the Lord encourage him?

Where was he when he had this wonderful dream?

Who had built an altar there a long time before?

What story have we had about something that happened at Bethel?

Bethel means "house of God."

Why do you think Jacob named it that?

Can you tell the story of Jacob's dream? The Hebrew word translated "ladder" means a "way of steps." Jacob was lying on the earth with his head on a stone.

Who was at the top of the ladder?

Who were going up and down on it?

The word translated "angel" means "messenger."

Do you know that there really is a "way of steps" between us and the Lord? We are on the earth living every day, working and playing and going to school. And we think of the Lord as in heaven. But every time we read the Bible our thoughts go up toward the Lord and His thoughts come down to us. The Bible is our "Jacob's ladder." Stones on which things are built represent truths. The stones at the foot of Jacob's ladder are the truths we learn in the Bible. Our thoughts are the "angels" or messengers going up, and the Lord's thoughts are the angels coming down.

How did Jacob feel about his dream?

What did he do to mark the place?

What did he pour on the stone?

The people of Jacob's time knew from tradition—that is, from

things which had been passed down from father to son for many centuries—that there was something holy about olive oil, and that to pour it on anything meant to make the thing holy. This was called “anointing.” People in the beginning knew that oil meant love and that all true love comes from the Lord. When we do anything for someone, if we put love into the doing, the Lord is in it through us, and the service is holy. We want to remember what anointing means and why, because we shall have many cases of it in our study of the Bible. Do you know the twenty-third Psalm? Look it up and read verse 5.

What did the Lord promise Jacob?

What did Jacob promise the Lord?

Both these promises were kept.

Intermediate

The spiritual meaning of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob should be taught at this point, as well as the general meaning of Jacob's journey and the particular correspondences of the dream. Stress Jacob's need of this encouragement, and our need of the Word to strengthen us for our daily living.

Isaac and Rebekah had twin sons, Esau and Jacob. Esau was the firstborn, but it was Jacob through whom Abraham's line was to descend. Esau and Jacob were not identical twins, and they did not get along well together. Jacob had to be sent away to escape the anger of Esau, whom he had tricked. Jacob's journey grew out of this incident, but it was also planned that he, like his father, should take a wife in Haran.

The journey was a long one for a young man to take alone, and there were no hotels along the way as there would be today. Jacob slept outdoors wherever he happened to be when night fell. From his words near the end of our chapter, we know that when he lay down to sleep at Bethel he was not feeling very confident about the future. But the dream showed him that the Lord was watching over him, and gave him new courage.

Bethel was one of the places where Abraham built an altar when

he first came into the land, and it was also the place where Abram and Lot decided to separate and from which they looked over the land so that Lot might choose the part he preferred. It is called Bethel throughout the Bible story, but apparently the name was actually given it first by Jacob. *Bethel* means “house of God.” The stones which Jacob took for his pillow picture truths, the foundation truths of the Word on which we may rest with confidence. And in the morning Jacob set up these stones for a pillar to mark the place where the Lord had encouraged him and given him a promise and where he also had made a promise to the Lord. Both these promises were kept.

The ladder is the most striking part of the story. The Hebrew word translated “ladder” means a “way”—the translators evidently assumed that a way from earth to heaven must be a ladder, especially since the angels were said to be ascending and descending on it. And the word translated “angel” means “messenger.” Can you think what is the “way” by which our angels or messengers go up to the Lord and His angels come down to us? It is the Word. The angels are our thoughts and the Lord’s thoughts. The foot of the way is on the earth. That is, the Word is written in human language and in terms of things we can understand. But the Lord is at the top. Jacob’s lying down to sleep on stones of the place is a picture of our trusting in what we have learned of the Lord even when we feel alone and afraid. But after his dream, Jacob set the same stones up for a pillar of remembrance and poured oil on them. When we really see how the Word connects us with the Lord, we go forward without fear and we love to think of the truth He has given us. Oil corresponds to love. The custom of “anointing” or pouring oil upon something to signify that it was holy had come down from the times of the Ancient Church, when men knew correspondences. We shall find many instances of it in the Word, and even in our own day it is a part of the ceremony carried out in the coronation of kings and queens.

In the dream the Lord made a promise to Jacob, and Jacob—after he woke and set up the pillar—made a solemn vow to the

Lord. This exchange of promises is a “covenant.” The Lord’s promise is made to all of us just as much as to Jacob, and if we make Jacob’s vow and keep it, the Lord will fulfill His promise to us as surely as He did to Jacob. Sometimes people wonder why the Lord should have prospered Jacob, who was obviously such a faulty person. But the story should encourage us very much, for it shows that if we study the Word and try to live according to its precepts, then we too—who are full of faults—can eventually reach our heavenly home, and that the Lord is always close to us trying to show us the true way.

Basic Correspondences

stone = truth
oil = love

Senior

The deeper meaning of Jacob in relation to Abraham and Isaac is especially useful for young people of this age, as well as the need of going back to Haran to renew our childlike good intentions, but with a view always to becoming more and more serviceable to the Lord—coming back to the Holy Land.

This is one of the most striking and best-loved stories in the Bible. The picture is so clear that it has inspired artists: Jacob lying on the ground with his head on the stone, the shining ladder or “way” stretching up to heaven, the bright forms of angels ascending and descending on it, and a suggestion of the Lord’s figure in the radiance at the top.

In the inner meaning the vision is still more beautiful. We know that stones represent truths. Truth is sometimes hard, yet we can always depend upon it. When we are in doubt or fear and are entering upon a new course which may bring us into difficulties and dangers, we can have confidence in the truths which we have learned from the Word, knowing that if we keep the Commandments with a desire to serve the Lord, we shall be given strength to meet whatever comes. In the series Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Abraham represents the time when we are very little children,

trusting wholly in our parents and knowing no law except obedience to them; Isaac represents the time when our reasoning faculty is developing and we are trying to decide what is right and wrong according to what we can learn from the Word with the help of our parents and teachers; and Jacob represents the time when we are beginning our independent lives, not perhaps entirely grown up yet, but no longer directly under our parents' control and guidance. So this journey of Jacob in its inner meaning comes very close to the experience of young people just leaving home for college or just beginning to earn their living. At this time we look forward eagerly to the future and yet we are a little anxious, a little fearful of our own powers, and in the back of our minds is the wish for assurance that someone is taking care of us still. We need Jacob's dream to encourage and sustain us.

What is our "way" from earth to heaven? It is the Word of God, which connects earth with heaven and man with God. Its foot is on the earth, the letter of the Word, written in human language about the earth and the people on it. At the top of the way is the Lord: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." What are the angels? We remember that the word "angel" means "messenger." Every time we open the Word with a sincere desire to learn of the Lord, our "angels" begin to come down to us. And it was during the dream that the Lord spoke to Jacob and promised him that he should return to his land in time and that the land would be his. As we read the Word, its promises speak to us clearly, telling us that if we are faithful heaven will be ours, whatever our experiences in life may be.

When Jacob woke in the morning, his first reaction was awe. He realized that the Lord was not far away and unheeding, but present with him and watching over him. He promised to serve the Lord, and he set up the hard stones on which he had been lying as a pillar of remembrance and a witness of the covenant between himself and the Lord. In the same way, when we have once had a vision of what is in the Word, the truths of the letter stand in our minds as assurances, proved by experience. And we,

like Jacob, “pour oil upon them”; that is, we love them and think of them as holy, and begin to yield willing service instead of obedience prompted by self-interest, in hope of reward or fear of punishment. Jacob’s promise to give the Lord a tenth of all he received represents acknowledgment that *all* we have is from the Lord and should be used in His service. This is the meaning of the “tithe,” which has played a prominent part in church finances even to this day.

We should learn to remember, whenever we seem to be alone and facing difficulties and perhaps dangers, that the Lord is really close to us, and that we can see Him if we go to His Word, lift our thoughts to Him, and try to learn what He has to say to us. Jesus, as He was about to leave His disciples, said: “Remember! I will be with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:20)

Adult

After the general meaning of the story, possible points of special interest may be the reason for going to Haran for wives, the reason why Isaac himself was not allowed to go there while Jacob was, and the meaning of “angel.”

We recall that when Isaac grew up, Abraham sent his servant to Haran to find a wife from among his own kindred, and that the servant brought back Rebekah, the granddaughter of Abraham’s brother Nahor. Isaac and Rebekah had twin sons, Esau and Jacob. They represent the will and the understanding on the natural plane. Swedenborg says (AC 1893): “There are in every man an internal man, a rational man that is intermediate, and an external, which is properly called the natural man. With the Lord these were represented by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.” The Abraham stage with us is our infancy, when the internal man is open to the heavens and is filled by the Lord with “remains”—innocent, trustful, happy states which can later be used in our regeneration. Then we develop into the rational, or Isaac, stage; and finally we are ready to carry out in everyday life the knowledges and affections which we have developed in the previous stages. The rest of our lives is spent, if

we regenerate, in bringing into order first this natural or external plane and then successively the rational and the internal plane. So, although Abraham and Isaac come first and in one sense are higher than Jacob, their descendants are called the seed of Jacob or the children of Israel (Israel being Jacob's later name) and their history occupies the rest of the Old Testament. Esau was the firstborn, and we readily recall the story of how Jacob cheated him first of his birthright and then of his blessing. Esau was the firstborn of the twins because Esau represents the will; Jacob, the understanding; and the will actually comes first. All power is from the will, even the power to think. But throughout most of our lives Jacob supplants Esau because we have to learn what is right before we can do it. It is only late in life that Esau begins to break off the yoke of his brother—that is, when by long practice in doing the truth we finally come to love what is good. Esau and his descendants (the Edomites) play only a small part in the Bible narrative. This is because that narrative is concerned with our life in this world, when for the most part we must be under the guidance of truth.

After Jacob had stolen Esau's blessing, Esau threatened to kill him, and his mother Rebekah persuaded Isaac to send him to Haran to find a wife from the family of her brother Laban. We recall that Haran was the place where Abraham and his family stopped for a time on their journey from Ur to Canaan, that Abraham's brother Nahor settled there, and that Abraham's father, Terah, died there. Terah represents the old, idolatrous state; and Haran, the first stage of our progress toward a really good life, before we have reached any real understanding of the truth. That is, Haran represents good and truth of a very external kind, or goodness in an obscure state. Yet this simple goodness is the beginning of all our spiritual progress, and we must constantly be going back and renewing in ourselves this fundamental desire to "be good." Abraham was told by the Lord on no account to allow Isaac himself to go back to Haran; yet Jacob was sent there and spent twenty years there. The reason for this is found in the differ-

ence in correspondence between Isaac and Jacob. Isaac represents the true rational, which must remain in the Holy Land of spiritual thinking and lift external and natural knowledges up to itself, as Rebekah was brought out of Haran to the Holy Land to Isaac. Jacob, on the other hand, represents the Lord's working on the natural plane of our lives; so he necessarily must spend a great deal of time in Haran and must unite himself to affections on that plane. We live on the natural plane of thought most of the time. In that plane we try to do right, to distinguish between right and wrong, to form good habits, and gradually to bring that plane up to the level set by the Lord's own example when He lived in the flesh. This is Jacob living in Haran, marrying there, having children, and accumulating flocks and herds—but always with the knowledge that eventually he was to take them all back with him to the Holy Land.

Jacob knew he was to come back to the Holy Land because the Lord told him so in the dream which is the subject of our lesson for today, and at the same time the Lord promised him that land for his inheritance. This dream was given him at Bethel. Bethel, the site of the second altar which Abraham built after he entered the Holy Land, pictures a heavenly state in which there is knowledge of celestial things. Jacob's tarrying here is a picture of spiritual preparation for daily life. It was toward evening—the end of the former state—and he took some of the stones of the place for his pillows and lay down to sleep; that is, he rested upon fundamental heavenly truths, and his consciousness of worldly things was for a time suspended. Then he saw the vision of the ladder or “way” reaching from earth to heaven, with the Lord at the top and the angels ascending and descending upon it; and the Lord spoke to him, promising him protection and favor.

Jacob's dream is always a beautiful and appealing picture, and it is all the more beautiful when we see its deeper meaning. What is the “way” which connects earth with heaven and the Lord? It is the Word. Its letter is made up of things of earth and is read and learned by us while we are upon this earth. But within and

above the letter are meanings, higher and higher—first about the history of man as a race, then about the development of each one's soul, then about the angels and their life—and highest of all about the Lord's own life and work. From the letter our thoughts can ascend gradually to some knowledge of the Lord Himself; and once we have gained this knowledge, the Lord's spirit and teaching can reach down to us and instruct us even in the little things of life on earth. Perhaps we recall that *angel* means "messenger." In the Old Testament the same word is used of earthly and of heavenly messengers, and *Malachi*, the name of the last book of the Old Testament, means "my messenger." The same is true of the Greek word used in the New Testament. Literally, John the Baptist sent "angels" to the Lord to ask if He really was the Messiah. Can we not see our thoughts—like messengers from our minds—climbing up by means of the Word to the Lord, and his thoughts—like messengers—coming down to us through it? We are at the bottom; the Lord is at the top. And if we listen to the Word, we can hear the voice of the Lord telling us that the Holy Land of heavenly life is meant for us, and that He is with us and will keep us wherever we go. But in order to have this vision, we must be in a state in which we rest on the foundation truths of our faith and put our concern for ourselves and the world to sleep.

Jacob needed this vision to keep him from becoming absorbed in the life of Haran. We need it to keep us mindful that heaven is our real home, and to keep us from becoming absorbed in the duties, cares, and pleasures of everyday life in the world. And when Jacob awoke, realizing that he had been granted a vision of the Lord, he set up the stone upon which he had rested as a pillar and poured oil upon it and vowed to serve the Lord and to give Him a tenth of all he should possess. This is a picture of what our reaction should be to the realization that the Word is our means of connection with the Lord. In our lives we should set up the simple, fundamental truths—the Commandments—as our testimony that we are to serve the Lord, and we should put love into the keeping of them, as Jacob poured oil on the pillar. And we should

promise to obey the Lord, to worship Him, and to make everything that we have holy, recognizing that it comes from Him, by using it as He would have us use it; this is pictured by the giving of tithes.

From the Writings of Swedenborg

Doctrine of the Holy Scripture, n. 78: "It is through the Word that the Lord is present with a man and is conjoined with him, for the Lord is the Word, and as it were with the man in it. The Lord is also Divine truth itself, as likewise is the Word. From this it is evident that the Lord is present with a man and is at the same time conjoined with him, according to his understanding of the Word, for according to this the man has truth and the derivative faith, and also love and the derivative life. The Lord is indeed present with a man through the reading of the Word, but He is conjoined with him through the understanding of truth from the Word, and according thereto; and in proportion as the Lord has been conjoined with a man, in the same proportion the church is in him. The church is within man; the church that is outside of him is the church with a number of men who have the church within them. This is meant by the Lord's words to the Pharisees who asked when the kingdom of God would come: 'The kingdom of God is within you.' (Luke 17:21) Here the 'kingdom of God' means the Lord, and from Him, the church."

Suggested Questions on the Lesson

- P. Who were the twin sons of Isaac and Rebekah? *Esau and Jacob*
- J. Why was Jacob sent away from home? *to find wife, flee brother*
- P. Where was he to go? *Haran*
- P. What was one of the places at which he stopped at night? *Bethel*
- J. Where have we heard of Bethel before? *Abram stories*
- P. What did Jacob use for a pillow? *stones*
- P. What did he see in his dream? *ladder*
- P. Who was at the top of the ladder? *the Lord*
- P. Who were going up and down? *angels*
- J. What does *angel* mean? *messenger*
- J. What did the Lord tell Jacob? *land to be his*
- J. What did Jacob do when he woke? *made pillar*
- J. Why was the place called Bethel? *see verses 16-19*

- J. What did the dream do for Jacob? *encouraged him*
- J. What is our Jacob's ladder? *the Word*
- I. What are the angels ascending and descending upon it? *thoughts*
- I. What were the stones which Jacob took for his pillow? *foundation of truths*
- S. Why did he afterward set them up for a pillar? *exalt basic truths as rules of life*

JACOB'S WIVES AND SONS

Genesis 29; 35:23-26

The early part of the story of Jacob and Esau and the incident at Haran should be reviewed very briefly. Then ask the pupils about the story of Jacob's dream, and go on from there to the lesson for today.

Doctrinal Points

The three planes of life: will, thought, and act, with their technical names: celestial, spiritual, and natural.

The order of development of these planes.

The natural plane has an internal and an external.

No act is genuinely good unless the motive within it is unselfish love for the Lord and the neighbor.

Notes for Parents

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are called the “patriarchs.” The Jews looked to them as the fathers of their race. They were also regularly called in the Bible the “children of Israel.” Israel is another name for Jacob. The story of how Jacob came by this name is found in Genesis 32:24-28.

You will remember that Jacob had to be sent away to visit his uncle Laban at Haran because he had taken away from his twin brother Esau—who was the firstborn—both the birthright and the blessing which Esau should have had, and Esau had threatened to kill him. Does it seem strange that the Lord should have allowed one who would do such things to become his father's heir and head of the family? If it does, we should think whether our lives have always been such that we deserve the blessings which the Lord has given us. There is only one perfect character in the Bible and that is the Lord Jesus. All the others are men and women like ourselves, with faults as well as virtues. The Psalmist writes: “If

thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?"

And yet Jacob's sins were not without consequences to him. He was the home-loving one of the twins, and he had to leave his home and spend twenty years serving his uncle Laban in Haran. He carried his fear of Esau all that time, as we learn from the story of his return in Genesis 32 and 33. If we repent, the Lord forgives our sins, but no sin is ever without consequences.

The story of Jacob's meeting and loving Rachel, of his long service for her, of his being given Leah first, and of the birth of his twelve sons is a true story, but it is also a parable. It teaches us how a young person, as he starts out in life, catches a glimpse of an ideal and begins to work eagerly for its achievement, and then finds the way unexpectedly long and hard, beset by difficulties and disappointments. Yet if he is faithful and patient, he will finally reach his goal. We should remember this lesson as we try to help our children choose their life work, and we should also remember that they will find lasting happiness in their work only if they undertake it with the motive of service to the Lord and the neighbor in their hearts. Work done for self never brings happiness or spiritual growth.

Primary

As you talk about the lesson, repeat the names *Jacob*, *Leah*, and *Rachel* as often as possible so that the children will become familiar with them. They should also hear about Jacob's long stay in Haran and the fact that he had twelve sons. Mention Joseph as the last son born in Haran, and the fact that Benjamin was not born until after they returned to the Holy Land.

Isaac and Rebekah had twin sons, Jacob and Esau. Even though they were twins, they were not at all alike, and as they grew up they did not get along well together. Once Esau even threatened to kill Jacob. So Isaac and Rebekah sent Jacob away on a visit to Rebekah's old home in Haran.

Do you remember the story of the dream Jacob had on the way?

When he came to Haran, where did he stop first?

Who came out to water her father's flock?

How did Laban receive Jacob?

What other daughter did Laban have?

What did Jacob ask of Laban?

When the seven years were over, Laban deceived Jacob and gave him Leah instead of Rachel.

So Jacob served another seven years for Rachel.

After that he served another six years, and took his pay in sheep and cattle.

How many years does that make altogether?

Leah bore Jacob six sons.

She also gave Jacob her handmaid Zilpah, who bore him two sons.

Rachel's handmaid Bilhah bore him two sons.

Eleven sons were born to him in Haran and a twelfth after he got back to the Holy Land. Only the last two were the children of Rachel, the wife whom Jacob loved best.

These last two were Joseph and Benjamin. Joseph was the last one born in Haran. Benjamin was born near Bethlehem. Do you know who else was born at Bethlehem a long time afterward? It was the Lord, when He came into the world to show us how we ought to live.

Junior

Get as much of the review as possible from the children themselves. Then cover rapidly the whole story of Jacob's sojourn in Haran, of his wives and sons, and of his return to the Holy Land. Have the children look up Genesis 32:24-28 so that they will learn that Jacob and Israel are the same person. It is important to fix this fact in their minds. They should also be told of Benjamin's birth and Rachel's death near Bethlehem, and about the cave of Machpelah where the three patriarchs and their wives were buried. Two simple lessons should be stressed: Jacob's tendency to think of himself in everything he did, and its long-lasting results; and the fact that we have to work long and patiently to attain anything that is really worthwhile, and that our work should always be done from the desire to be useful to the Lord and the neighbor.

Our lesson today takes us to Haran again. You will remember that Isaac and Rebekah had twin sons, Esau and Jacob; that Esau, who was the firstborn and so should have been his father's heir, sold his birthright to Jacob; and that afterward Jacob, with his

mother's help, deceived his father and stole Esau's blessing, and so had to be sent away to escape Esau's wrath. You will remember, too, about the dream Jacob had at Bethel on his way to Haran, and about the promise he made to serve the Lord if the Lord would prosper him and bring him safely home again.

We find now that Rebekah's brother Laban has become the head of the family in Haran.

Where did Jacob stop first when he came to Haran?
What did he find at the well?
What did the shepherds tell him?
Who came to the well with Laban's flock?
How did Laban receive Jacob?
What other daughter did Laban have?
Which one did Jacob love?
How many years did he first serve for her?
At the end of the seven years how did Laban deceive him?
What excuse did Laban give?
How much longer did Jacob have to serve for Rachel?

Things do not always turn out just as we expect. Jacob had to learn this. He had made a bargain with the Lord and he had made one with Laban. When we do our work just for what we expect to get out of it for ourselves, we are often disappointed in the result. We need to learn to work for the love of being useful to others and to the Lord. Then our enjoyment in our work is a constant and lasting thing.

The people of this period had no feeling that it was wrong to have more than one wife at a time. So Jacob had two wives and two "concubines"—servants who also bore him children. He had in all twelve sons. You need not learn all their names at once, but you should read the list over often and become familiar with the names, for they appear constantly in the Bible story from this point on, since they became the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel.

Israel is another name for Jacob. *El* is one of the Hebrew words for God. *Israel* means "one who prevails with God." In the Bible story, Jacob is sometimes called *Jacob* and sometimes *Israel*, and

when you are older, you will learn why this is so; for nothing in the Word is ever accidental. All through their history in the Bible the Jews are commonly called the “children of Israel.”

Of Jacob's twelve sons six were the children of Leah: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun; and Leah also had a daughter, whose name was Dinah. Two of Jacob's sons, Dan and Naphtali, were the children of Rachel's handmaid Bilhah; and two, Gad and Asher, were the children of Leah's handmaid Zilpah. The two youngest sons, Joseph and Benjamin, were Rachel's children. Joseph was the last one born in Haran. After serving Laban fourteen years for Leah and Rachel, Jacob served him six years more for wages, which he received in sheep and cattle, and then he returned to the Holy Land. Benjamin was born in the Holy Land not far from Bethlehem. The story of his birth is found in Genesis 35:16-20.

The few verses from chapter 35 which we have as part of our lesson give the full list of Jacob's twelve sons. It is good to remember where you may find them. Padan-aram (Genesis 35:26) is a name for the plain in which Haran is situated. This part of the country was afterward Syria, and Aram is another name for Syria. It is also called Mesopotamia, a word which means “between the rivers,” because it lies in the triangle between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.

Jacob stayed with Laban at Haran for twenty years altogether, and yet when he returned home he was still very much afraid that Esau would try to kill him. When we have done harm to someone, one of our punishments is that we have to live with a sense of fear. But Esau, who was the one wronged, had long since forgiven Jacob and welcomed him with open arms. Jacob got back to Hebron in time to see his father Isaac again before he died. We are not told in the Bible just when Rebekah died, but in connection with the story of Jacob's own death in Genesis 49:28-33, we learn that Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Leah were all buried in the cave of Machpelah, which Abraham had bought from the Hittites for a family burial place when Sarah died. Rachel died

when Benjamin was born, and was buried near Bethlehem.

Intermediate

The important lessons for this age group are the general meaning of the patriarchs as the three planes of our lives, and that these planes develop in order; then that nothing is really accomplished until will and thought are expressed in act; that the plane of conduct has its internal as well as its external; and finally that the external of the natural must be brought into order before any genuine spiritual affections and thoughts can be produced.

Jacob is the third of the men who are called "patriarchs"; Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In our lesson about Hagar and Ishmael we spoke of the three planes of our lives: will, thought, and act. Everything we do involves all three. We must have some desire before we even think of doing a thing; then we must think about how to do it; and finally we must actually do it, or our desire and thought come to nothing. Again and again in the Bible we find groups of three which picture these three planes in one order or another. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob represent them in the order of their development. Abraham pictures our infancy and little childhood when we are governed by our desires, Isaac our later childhood and early youth when our minds are being developed and trained, and Jacob our later youth when we are beginning to take up active duties in the world. More technical names for these three planes are *celestial*, *spiritual*, and *natural*. So in the development of a good life—the subject of the Bible in its internal sense—we have to pass through these three stages: we first have to want to be good, then we have to learn what is good, and finally we have to do what we have learned to be right. The story of Jacob is the story of the development of this outward or *natural* plane of goodness.

Jacob was by no means a model character. Like most of us, at the start he had his own interests in view and was willing to serve himself by getting the better of someone else. And even when his wonderful vision of the ladder induced him to decide to serve the Lord, he had his own safety and success in mind. We are all inclined

to be selfish to begin with, and the Lord uses our very selfishness as a means of inducing us to lead orderly lives.

The same lesson is repeated in another form in our chapter for today. Jacob did reach Haran safely and stopped outside the city at the same well where Abraham's servant had found Rebekah. The well, you remember, pictures the letter of the Word. When we are trying to live good lives, our first stopping place must always be the Word, for that is where the water of truth from the Lord is found. As our chapter tells us, all the flocks must gather at this well to drink. The sheep represent innocent and trustful affections.

In the Bible husbands represent goods and wives the affection for the kind of truth which belongs with the particular good pictured by their husbands. Isaac had to have a wife from Haran, but Ishmael's wife—like his mother—was from Egypt. Our story has a very interesting meaning which you will probably not find too difficult to understand. Jacob meets Rachel at the well and loves her at sight. He is willing to serve seven years for her, "and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her." But when the seven years are over, he is given her sister Leah first and has to serve seven more years for Rachel.*

Leah and Rachel both picture affection for truth, but for truth of different kinds. Leah, the older, represents "the affection of external truth" and Rachel "the affection of internal truth." Have you ever had beautiful thoughts about growing up to be a wonderfully fine person whom everyone would love? This is Rachel. Perhaps for a whole day you tried to be that kind of person and you were very happy and the day went like the wind. But somehow your beautiful ideal slipped away from you, and you began to find doing right much less beautiful and desirable because it involved so much everyday, plodding study and work. That is Leah, the "tender" (weak) eyed. Before we can attain the constant joy in serving the Lord, we have to form the habit of doing what is right even when we can't see clearly what it all leads to.

*although she was given to him after one week (see Genesis 29:27-28).

And this brings us to the sons of Jacob. In the Bible the birth of children pictures the producing of truth and good. As Jacob represents genuine goodness in the natural or outward plane of life, his twelve sons represent all the different goods and truths which can be produced in our souls by a good outward life, lived from the desire to serve the Lord. The sons of Leah are born first—faith and love and good deeds and good will of an external kind. Next are the sons of the two handmaids—lesser truths and goods which serve the higher ones. Last of all are born the sons of Rachel—true interior love and understanding, which are the means of our salvation and regeneration or rebirth as spiritual instead of merely worldly people. It is a long process, but that is just what our life in the world is for.

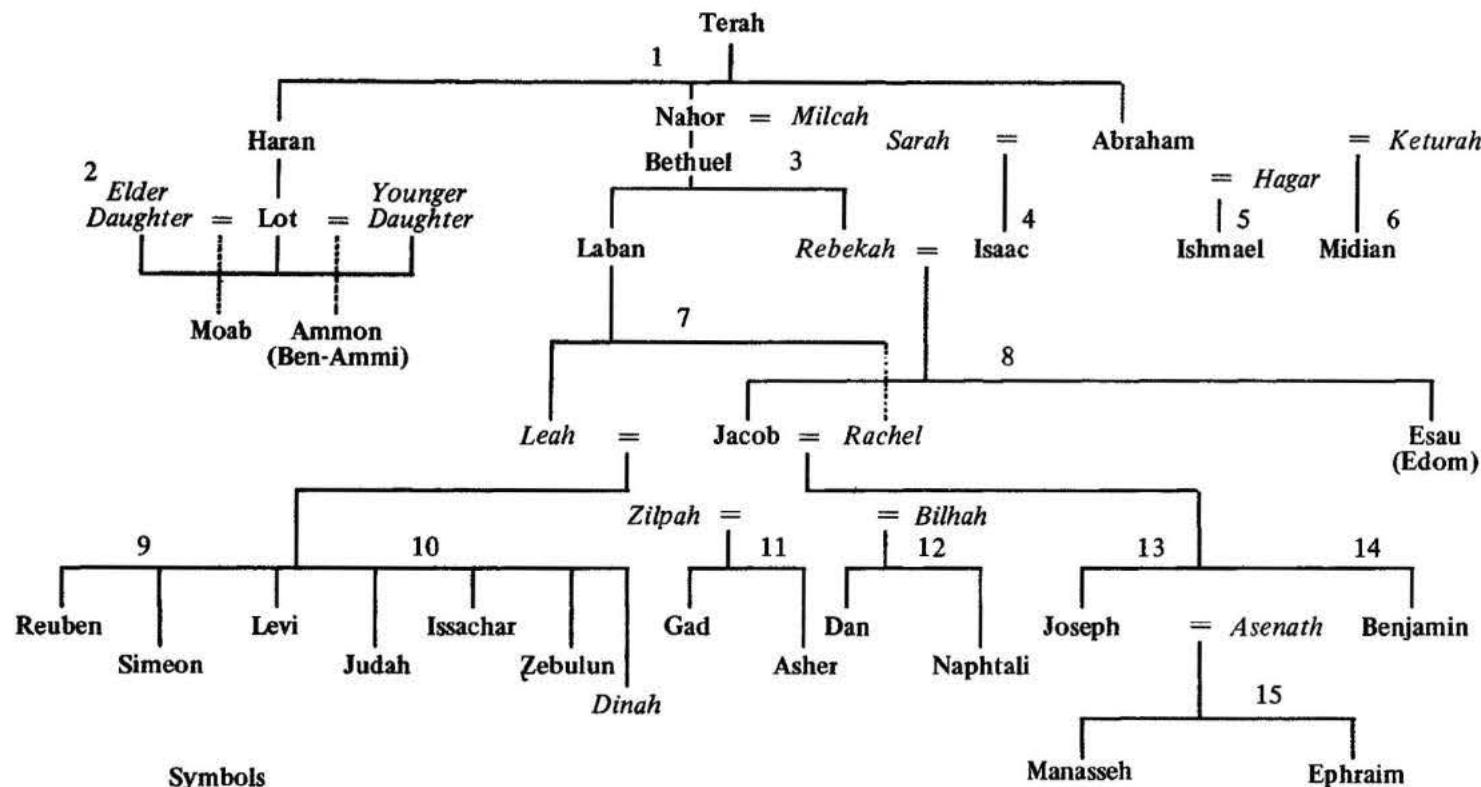
Study carefully the chart which shows the sons of Jacob with their mothers, and remember where it is for reference, because the twelve sons are the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel. Israel is another later name for Jacob (read Genesis 32:24-28). The names and correspondence of the twelve sons play a constant part in the Bible story, the last mention of them being in Revelation 21:12, where we find them written on the gates of the New Jerusalem. We cannot take them up individually now, but we shall study some of them in connection with later lessons. The order in which they are born is the order in which they develop in our lives if we are progressing spiritually, and when we are discouraged with our progress it may help us to remember that the highest goods and truths were the very last to be born. We shall have more to say about Joseph in our next lesson. He was the last one born in Haran. Benjamin was born after they returned to the Holy Land.

Basic Correspondences

Abraham = goodness on the celestial
or will plane

Isaac = goodness on the spiritual
or thought plane

Jacob = goodness on the natural
or act plane



Bible References for Relationships

- | | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|------------------|
| 1 Gen. 11:27-29 | 6 Gen. 25:1-2 | 11 Gen. 30:10-13 |
| 2 Gen. 19:36-38 | 7 Gen. 29:4-6, 16 | 12 Gen. 30:5-8 |
| 3 Gen. 22:20-23 | 8 Gen. 25:24-26 | 13 Gen. 30:22-24 |
| 4 Gen. 21:1-3 | 9 Gen. 29:32-35 | 14 Gen. 35:18 |
| 5 Gen. 16:15 | 10 Gen. 30:10-13 | 15 Gen. 41:50-52 |

Leah = the affection of external truth

Rachel = the affection of internal truth

the twelve sons = all things of truth and good which
can be developed in our lives

Senior

The three planes of life and the order of their development should be stressed and then the fact that after these are developed, the natural plane must be brought into order before regeneration can proceed to higher planes. The difference between seeing an ideal and achieving it is an important point. But most important for this age is the point that our occupations should be chosen and pursued from the motive of service to the Lord and the neighbor rather than from the motive of self-advancement.

Each new development in our lives—both in our general progress and in every particular achievement—follows the same pattern. There must first be a desire in our will. We never do anything without some motive, good or bad. Then the desire must take form in our thought, and the means to accomplish it must be worked out by our reasoning powers. Finally, the desire and the thought must find expression in action if they are to accomplish anything. These three stages, with reference to our spiritual development and progress, are pictured by the three patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Jacob represents the outward or *natural* plane of achievement. We ought to “want to be good.” We ought to learn from the Word what is right and to think about how we should live in order to fulfill the Lord’s purposes for us. But the desire and thought get us nowhere spiritually except as we actually do from day to day what we have found is right. And we all know from experience that it is not always an easy matter to carry out in our outward conduct our highest intentions and thoughts. Making the outward life heavenly is a long, slow process.

Jacob, as you may remember, was not an exemplary character. He deceived his father and stole his brother’s blessing and left home under a cloud, in fear of Esau’s vengeance, a fear which stayed with him through his whole twenty-year sojourn in Haran.

The promise he made to serve the Lord, following the wonderful dream which he had at Bethel near the beginning of his journey, was given on condition that the Lord would make his journey successful and bring him safely home again. And in our lesson today we find that his service to his uncle Laban is a series of bargains. It is his own interest which he obviously has first in mind.

This is a characteristic of the external life of every one of us before we are regenerated. We are born with tendencies to selfishness, and in our first contacts with the world our efforts are centered on our external comfort and success. What happens to us in this world seems to us the essential thing.

And yet the Lord sees to it that we all have glimpses of something higher. The innocent, trustful states of our infancy and the instruction from the Word—direct or indirect—which we receive as children, are stored up by Him in our subconscious mind as the “remains” through which He can speak to us and help us. These stay with us as Jacob’s vision must have stayed with him, always holding up an ideal which is higher than mere worldly success.

This fact is brought out by the story of Leah and Rachel, the two daughters of Laban whom Jacob married. We remember that daughters picture affections. Leah, the elder daughter, pictures the affection for truth on the external plane of life. She is the elder because this affection in us develops first, even when we know that there is a higher one. We saw this fact in our study of Ishmael and Isaac. This first affection does not see very far. Leah was “tender” (weak) eyed. Rachel, who was beautiful and well favored, is the affection for interior truth.

When Jacob stops at the well outside of Haran—which we remember pictures the Word in its letter—it is Rachel who comes with her father’s sheep, and with whom Jacob immediately falls in love. When, with the intention of serving the Lord, we read the Word, our innocent “remains,” like the sheep, are brought to our minds by the Lord and with them a delight in learning spiritual truth, which we immediately accept as our ideal. But Jacob, we remember, is goodness on the natural plane. He agrees to work

seven years for Rachel; the years pass quickly, but then he finds that Leah is given him instead of Rachel, and he has to work seven years more for Rachel. Isn't this just like our own experience? We catch sight of a vision of a noble life and set out to attain it, but when we think we deserve to have achieved our goal, we find it still ahead of us.

Now comes the further lesson. Rachel was at first barren, and it was Leah who bore Jacob's first four sons and two more later. And each of the two handmaids also bore him two sons before Rachel was able to have a child. We have already seen that the birth of children pictures the bringing forth of truths and goods. Rachel, the affection for interior truths, must be our ideal from the beginning, but for a long time it is the affection of external truth and affections for the lesser knowledges that serve our progress in understanding which are productive in our lives. An example may help: Suppose a boy, through his early associations in home and church, catches a vision of the ministry as the work to which he really wants to give his life. He starts out eagerly to work toward that goal, but presently he finds that he must learn a great many other things before he can even begin his theological studies, and even after he becomes a minister, much of his work seems to be of an external and routine character, and it is only after years of patient service that he sees that he is beginning to accomplish the spiritual uses to which he looked forward in the beginning. In the choice of any life work, the ideal of service to the Lord and the neighbor should always be present from the start, but the achievement of the ideal is the work of a lifetime.

The twelve sons of Jacob represent "all truths and goods in the complex." *Complex* is from a Latin word meaning to "braid together." We sometimes speak of our modern life as being complex. But we seldom stop to think how truly complex, how interwoven, are all our thoughts and affections, how different each person's mind is from every other, and how our own minds vary from hour to hour in respect to what motive and what thoughts are uppermost and governing all the others. The twelve sons of

Jacob are mentioned again and again in the Bible, and Swedenborg tells us that the order in which they are mentioned in any given place is very important in the interpretation of the events being narrated. We cannot take them up individually in any one lesson, but one or another of them will come up from time to time as we go on with our course.

As we should expect, Rachel's two sons, Joseph and Benjamin, who were the last to be born, represent spiritual good and truth. We shall follow this thought further when we study about Joseph. Joseph was the last one born in Haran. Benjamin was born near Bethlehem after Jacob and his family returned to the Holy Land.

Adult

Interesting discussion topics are: (1) the change in Jacob's correspondence as his story progresses; (2) the necessity of developing an orderly outward life as a basis for any higher development; (3) the difference between seeking such a life for the sake of self and seeking it from the motive of love to the Lord and the neighbor; (4) the difference between recognizing an ideal and achieving it; (5) the general correspondence of the twelve sons of Jacob.

It should not confuse us to find the correspondence of Jacob apparently changing, for it is the story of the beginning of our achievement of the good external life and of its gradual development from apparent to genuine good—that is, from a life which is good in the eyes of our neighbors to one which is good in the sight of the Lord.

With reference to Abraham and Isaac, Jacob represents the time in our lives when we are beginning to direct our own affairs independently of our parents. If we have been developing in an orderly way, the simple, trustful states of our infancy have passed into our subconscious, and we have also judged and put behind us the boastful, self-confident state represented by Ishmael. Isaac, the genuine rational, is head of our house. But Isaac is growing old. This does not mean that we no longer have to think and reason, but that the faculty is adequately developed and the time has

come when our primary business is its application to the outward conduct of life.

For the successful pursuit of our new activities we must acquire new truth but—as in the case of Isaac's marriage—this truth must not be sought for mere selfish and worldly purposes. Jacob's wife, like Isaac's, must be found in Haran. She must be an affection of truth springing from the same primary source, our original determination to serve the Lord. This is an important point to keep in mind in helping our children to begin their independent lives rightly. Whatever occupation they may choose, it should be chosen and pursued from a desire to serve the Lord and the neighbor rather than merely to find a secure and remunerative place in this world. In the historical interpretation, the representative church of the Jews had to be established in the line of Terah, who, we remember, signified the third and last Ancient Church.

There are differences between the story of Isaac's marriage and the story of Jacob's which are interesting. Isaac, we recall, was not under any circumstances to go to Haran himself. In the formative years when your higher rational is being developed, it must never be allowed to leave the Holy Land, the spiritual plane. Rebekah had to be brought to Isaac. But Jacob is driven to leave the Holy Land for a time in the search for his true wife. When we come to work out our religion on the plane of outward conduct, we must necessarily be concerned with external as well as with internal truths. Another difference is in the fact that Rebekah came to the well with her pitcher on her shoulder to draw water to be carried home. The emphasis here is on the acquisition of truth from the Word—the well—for later use. Rachel, on the other hand, came to the well bringing her father's flock, of which she was the shepherdess. As the family of Nahor, who left Ur with Terah and Abram but went no farther than Haran, picture simple, uninstructed goodness and obedience, so the flock of Laban, Rachel's father, pictures those who wish to be “led and taught” (AC 3795). Rachel, therefore, represents a desire for truth for immediate, specific uses.

Swedenborg thus summarizes the meaning of the contents of

chapter 29, one of our chapters, in AC 3758 and 3759: “In the internal sense of this chapter by ‘Jacob’ is described the Lord’s natural—how the good of truth therein was conjoined with kindred good from a Divine origin, which good is ‘Laban’; at first through the affection of internal truth, which is ‘Rachel.’” And in AC 3793 he says: “Jacob therefore now puts on the representation of the natural, and Rachel the representation of truth; but as all conjunction of truth with good is wrought by means of affection, it is the affection of truth to be coupled with good that is represented by Rachel. Moreover in the natural, as in the rational, there is an interior and an exterior; Rachel representing the affection of interior truth, and Leah the affection of exterior truth.”

The whole story of Jacob’s marriages and of the birth of his sons is actually one of the orderly development of the good external life—which must have an internal in order to be good. Rachel is the ideal, glimpsed at first and then labored for long and patiently with inevitable delays and disappointments on the way.

In AC 6335 occurs one of the simplest statements of the correspondence of the twelve sons as “all truths and goods in one complex.” Another helpful definition of them is found in AC 6448: “By them are described all states of the church as to goods and truths, thus as to the spiritual life of every one within the church.” Individually their correspondence, like that of everything in the Word, changes slightly with the order and context in which they are mentioned. A very full statement of this variation in order of the twelve is found in AC 3862 and a briefer one in AC 6335. The general correspondence of the individual sons is briefly as follows:

Reuben: faith.

Simeon: faith in the will.

Levi: charity.

Judah: the celestial church, or the Lord as to the Divine celestial.

Zebulun: the cohabitation of good and truth.

Issachar: recompense from works.

Dan: those who are in the good of life from truth, but not yet

from good.

Gad: works from truth and not yet from good.

Asher: the blessedness of the affections.

Naphtali: temptation and the state after temptation.

Joseph: the spiritual church, the Lord as to the Divine spiritual.

Benjamin: the truth of the good of the spiritual church.

Joseph was the last one born in Haran. Benjamin was born near Bethlehem after the return to the Holy Land, and Rachel died and was buried there. It is interesting also to find that it was Leah and not Rachel who was buried with Jacob in the cave of Machpelah along with Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah. Rachel was Jacob's inspiring ideal, but Leah was apparently his true mate.

From the Writings of Swedenborg

Arcana Coelestia, n. 3819: "Leah is called the 'elder' because external truth is first learned, and Rachel is called the 'younger' because internal truth is learned afterwards, or what is the same, man is first affected with external truths, and afterwards with internal ones; for external truths are the planes of internal ones, being generals into which singulars are insinuated; for without a general idea of a thing man comprehends nothing that is singular. This is the reason why in the literal sense of the Word there are general, but in the internal sense singular truths."

Suggested Questions on the Lesson

- J. How did Jacob take Esau's place? *bought birthright, stole blessing*
- J. Why did Jacob have to leave home? *Esau's threat*
- P. Where did he go? *Haran*
- J. With whom did he take up employment? *Laban*
- P. What two daughters did Laban have? *Leah and Rachel*
- P. Which one did Jacob love? *Rachel*
- J. Which one was given him first? *Leah*
- P. How long did Jacob stay in Haran? *twenty years*
- P. How many sons did he have? *twelve*
- J. Which ones were Rachel's children? *Joseph and Benjamin*
- P. Which was the last one born in Haran? *Joseph*
- P. Where was Benjamin born? *near Bethlehem*

- S. What do Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob represent? *will, thought, act*
- I. What does the well at Haran represent? *the Word*
- S. What do Leah and Rachel represent? *exterior affection for truth, interior affection for truth*
- S. What do the twelve sons of Jacob represent? *all aspects of good and truth*

JACOB'S RETURN

Genesis 35

This lesson requires more preparation on the part of the teacher than some. The teacher should be sufficiently familiar with the whole story of Jacob (Genesis 25:19 through Genesis 34) so that he can review it rather fully. He should also think out carefully the particular points in the lesson for the day which he thinks can be presented most interestingly and usefully to his class.

Doctrinal Points

The Lord uses even our selfishness at first to lead us to good.

Nothing in the Word is accidental or unimportant.

Everything comes to us first through our minds.

Nevertheless, our will is the primary cause of our thoughts as well as of our acts.

Notes for Parents

One of the best-known stories in the Bible is the story of how the lone young traveler Jacob slept one night in the open at Bethel and was given a wonderful dream of a ladder set up on earth whose top reached to heaven, and of the Lord at the top and angels ascending and descending upon the ladder. And in the morning Jacob vowed that if the Lord would prosper him and bring him safely home again, he would always serve Him.

Jacob's desire then was only to be spared to come home. Yet when he reached Haran, he immediately fell in love with his uncle's daughter Rachel and forgot all about going home. He stayed in Haran for twenty years. He became rich through serving his uncle, and by his two wives, Rachel and her sister Leah, and their handmaids, Bilhah and Zilpah, he had eleven sons and one daughter. This story is a picture of something which happens in the lives of many young people. They are brought up in good homes, taken to

Sunday school and church, and given the religious principles they need to guide them through life. Perhaps they join the church. They mean to be faithful. But when they finish high school, they leave home for college or for some occupation. They fall in love and marry and take on the responsibility of providing for a growing family, and their minds and lives are so occupied with what seem the necessities of life in the world that they forget their early ideals.

But men have deeper and higher needs which the world cannot meet. Sooner or later the man or woman who has been rightly brought up remembers that this world is not his final home, and, like the prodigal son in the parable, says: "I will arise and go to my father." Our chapter today tells of Jacob's return, of his putting away the false ambitions and worldly satisfactions he has been striving for, and coming back to Bethel to fulfill his vow. Then he is ready to be reunited to Isaac and to inherit the land promised him by the Lord. In this story the Lord is telling each one of us that if we will only realize how unsatisfying the things of the world are and return home to Him, we shall be among those who hear Him say: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

Primary

The younger children will not profit by so complete a review of Jacob's life as the older ones. In the introduction, dwell on Jacob's dream more than on the rest of the story, as the children may have some recollection of it, and it connects naturally with the return to Bethel.

Jacob was his mother Rebekah's favorite.

Once she saved him from Esau's anger by persuading Isaac to send him on a long visit to her brother Laban in Haran.

Jacob was welcomed by his uncle Laban and was so satisfied in Haran that he stayed there for twenty years. In those days people had forgotten that it is wrong for a man to have more than one wife at a time. Jacob married two of Laban's daughters, Leah and Rachel, and he had two other wives, who were the servants of

Leah and Rachel—you may remember how Abraham had a son by Hagar, Sarah's Egyptian handmaid.

Eleven sons and a daughter were born to Jacob in Haran.

The eleventh son was Joseph.

After Joseph's birth Jacob decided to go home with his family.

He stopped at Bethel, where he had had a wonderful dream on his way to Haran.

What did the Lord promise him there?

What son was born to him near Bethlehem?

Who died there?

Joseph and Benjamin were Rachel's only children.

Where did Jacob find his father?

How old was Isaac when he died?

Esau and Jacob had become friends again.

Try to remember that the Lord gave Jacob a new name—*Israel*. That is how the descendants of Jacob came to be called “the children of Israel.”

Junior

In this class review by questions and comments the whole factual story of Jacob, as this is the age at which children should become thoroughly familiar with the whole Bible story. Be sure the children look up the Bible references in their notes and go over the names of the twelve sons of Jacob. Point out on your own Bible map the four cities named in the chapter.

In Haran Jacob was welcomed by his uncle Laban and decided to stay and work for him. He married two of Laban's daughters, Leah and Rachel. The people of those times had forgotten that it is wrong for a man to have more than one wife. Leah bore Jacob six sons and a daughter. He had four more sons by Bilhah and Zilpah, the handmaids of Rachel and Leah. Finally Rachel had a son, Joseph. Then Jacob decided to go back to his home in the land of Canaan, after having lived in Haran for twenty years. He was still afraid of Esau, but he found that Esau had long since forgiven him and welcomed him gladly.

Do you remember the story of the wonderful dream which Jacob had when he first left home—the dream of the ladder reach-

ing from earth to heaven, with the Lord at the top and angels ascending and descending upon it? Read in Genesis 28:16-22 about Jacob's vow. *Bethel* means "house of God." Now in our chapter for today we learn how Jacob kept his vow.

Where did the Lord tell Jacob to go?

How did Jacob prepare his family for worship?

Who died at Bethel?

What other name did the Lord give Jacob?

What promise did the Lord make to him?

Who died near Bethlehem?

Who was born there?

Who else was born at Bethlehem hundreds of years later?

Benjamin was the twelfth and last of Jacob's sons. You will find the names of all twelve in verses 23 to 26 of our chapter. You want to read them and become familiar with them, because these twelve sons became the heads of the "twelve tribes of Israel" about whom we shall hear a great deal as we go on. You want also to remember that Joseph and Benjamin were the last two of the twelve, and that they were the only children of Rachel, who was Jacob's favorite wife.

Where did Jacob find his father Isaac living?

Who buried Isaac when he died?

Isaac was buried in the cave of Machpelah, which Abraham had bought for a family burying place when Sarah died. After Isaac's death Jacob became head of the family. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are called the three *patriarchs*.

Intermediate

This class can be given the general correspondence of the Jacob period and something of the application of the particular incidents in his history. The important lesson for them in the chapter for the day is that mere worldly success never satisfies the mind and heart and that when we realize this, we must recognize and put away the thoughts and habits into which we have fallen as a result of putting worldly ambitions first.

In the Bible story Abraham represents our spiritual state in our

infancy and very early childhood, and Isaac represents our state when we are old enough to have learned our need of recognizing the Lord's laws and have begun to form our judgments of right and wrong according to them. If we are developing properly, we should reach the Isaac stage before we are through high school.

But we know that after high school there is a time when we have to think a great deal about how we are to get along in the world. We leave home and go to college or into some occupation and, although we are not yet really grown up, we are pretty much "on our own." This period is called the development of the natural plane of life and is described in the stories about Jacob.

Jacob married the two daughters of Laban, Leah and Rachel, who represent affections for exterior and interior truths, and was also given their two handmaids. By these four women he had one daughter and twelve sons, only the last two of whom—Joseph and Benjamin—were the children of Rachel, Jacob's first love. He also became rich in flocks and herds. Jacob's sons picture the various faculties which we develop in this period of beginning our independent lives; and the flocks and herds, the abilities and knowledges which come to us.

Then suddenly after twenty years Jacob decided to go home. The young man or woman who is inwardly good cannot be satisfied just to enjoy his own success in the world. He knows that he must take his possessions and abilities home to his Father's house—back to the service of the Lord.

The first thing that happens in this homecoming—on the very border of the land—is Jacob's reunion with Esau. Jacob, remembering the wrong he had done Esau, was afraid, but Esau welcomed him gladly. This pictures the time when we realize that our good intentions and our understanding of the truth are really in harmony and can work together. Then comes our chapter for this lesson. You remember that when Jacob left home, he slept one night at Bethel and had the wonderful dream of the ladder reaching to heaven, and that in the morning he vowed that, if the Lord would prosper him and bring him safely home again, he would

worship and serve Him. So now that he has been prospered and brought back, he goes first to Bethel, builds an altar there, and worships the Lord.

Two things come into the story before the altar can be built. The first is easy to understand. All Jacob's people must put away "the strange gods that were in their hand and all their earrings which were in their ears" and these were hidden "under the oak which was by Shechem." In the first part of the Jacob period we develop a good many worldly ideas and ambitions; these are the "strange gods." And we listen to many worldly and selfish promptings and do wrong things because of them; these are the "golden earrings." We must recognize these as unworthy and put them away before our worship of the Lord can be pure.

The second incident seems a strange one: "Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died, and she was buried beneath Bethel under an oak." Why should Rebekah's nurse, who came long ago with Rebekah from Haran (Genesis 24:59), appear suddenly in the middle of this story of Jacob? From the literal sense we find no explanation, but in the spiritual sense this incident has a wonderful meaning. Rebekah's nurse represents hereditary evil. We are all born with selfish inclinations, but the Lord uses this natural selfishness of ours to induce us to form good habits. A child is led to behave rightly mostly by fear of punishment and hope of reward, and in the Isaac stage these same selfish motives also lead him to learn what the Lord would have him be and do. So our affection for doctrinal truth, which is Rebekah, is nursed by our hereditary selfishness. But when, as adults, we decide to bring our worldly achievements back into the service of the Lord, this selfish motive is put away forever.

Then finally Jacob is ready to be united to his father Isaac in Hebron and to inherit his father's place as head of the family. Isaac dies, and his sons Esau and Jacob bury him. This does not mean that we stop using our spiritual rational which Isaac represents, but that it has now become so much a part of our everyday thought—so natural to us—that it no longer stands out as a

separate function in our minds. It is in us just as Abraham—our early trust and obedience—is in us.

Basic Correspondences

Esau = natural good intentions

Jacob = natural understanding of truth

strange gods = worldly ambitions

Rebekah = affection for doctrinal truth

Rebekah's nurse = hereditary evil

golden earrings = promptings of selfishness
which we have obeyed

Senior

The Seniors are themselves in the beginning of the Jacob state, and the spiritual lessons involved in our chapter are especially important for them. Many of them think now that they will never be led away from serving the Lord. Call their attention to the fact that Jacob's desire when he left home was only to return as soon as possible, but that he became so involved in his activities and accomplishments in Haran that it was twenty years before he actually made the effort to go back to the Holy Land.

In the writings Swedenborg explains the stories of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph for the most part in the celestial sense in which they tell us of the inner life of the Lord as He was developing from infancy to adulthood; but he tells us that our own individual development is analogous, and so they apply to us also. The Lord took on from Mary all the natural human heredity just as we have it, and dealt with its temptations one after another as they came to Him. So the Lord is our pattern.

After the period of Ishmael and Isaac comes the period of Jacob and Esau. Jacob and Esau represent the natural plane of our lives in its relation to the Lord—Jacob as to truth and Esau as to good—especially that period in our lives when we are just beginning to take our places in the world as independent individuals.

In our early childhood, represented by Abraham, we experience and store up in our subconscious the states of innocence and trust. In our early youth, represented by Ishmael and Isaac, we acquire

knowledges and develop the power of reasoning, first in a very external and superficial way and later more deeply, with a truer perception of values. When we begin to grow up and to “live our own lives,” we are at first necessarily very much concerned with establishing ourselves in the world. We turn our back on the Holy Land, so to speak, and devote ourselves to the practical problems of everyday life. This is Jacob’s sojourn in Haran.

But Haran is not our home. Always in the back of our minds is the vision with which we started, and sooner or later we become dissatisfied with our bondage to the “practical” life, and turn our faces homeward. Like Jacob, we travel slowly, checked at first by the pull of old ideas and somewhat hindered by our flocks and herds, the very riches we have worked so hard to acquire in Haran. Finally we reach the borders of our homeland. But before we actually enter it, Jacob must be reconciled with Esau. Heavenly life consists in the union of both will and understanding in the Lord’s service. Then follows our chapter for today.

We remember that when Jacob, fleeing from Esau, was granted his first encouraging vision at Bethel—the dream of the ladder—he promised that if the Lord would take care of him and bring him safely back to his home, he would serve Him. Now the Lord’s part of the covenant is fulfilled. Jacob has been prospered and has come back with great wealth to settle peacefully in his own country. So he returns to Bethel and builds an altar there, requiring all his household to give up their idols and be clean and change their garments. This is a picture of the effort we should make, if we are trying to live a heavenly life, to reform all our worldly ways of feeling, thinking, and acting so that there shall be no divided allegiance to turn us astray. The people did give Jacob their idols and also the “earrings which were in their ears.” This seems a strange addition, unless we know that the ear pictures obedience and the earrings the delight of obedience, so that what is pictured is the willingness to stop listening to and acting upon the dictates of self-will. Jacob buried all these things under the oak at Shechem before he went on to Bethel. Swedenborg tells us that to bury

something under an oak pictures rejection of it forever. Jacob's stop at Shechem represents his coming to a state of peace, and we cannot come into this state so long as our minds are divided in their allegiance. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

After Jacob reached Bethel and built his altar there, it is written that Rebekah's nurse Deborah died and was buried at Bethel under an oak. This seems a completely irrelevant incident. In the letter we find no suggestion of a reason why Rebekah's nurse should suddenly appear in the story of Jacob. But her death and burial just at this point picture the rejection of the hereditary evils in which we have grown up. Deborah, you remember, was sent with Rebekah from Haran when Abraham's servant took Rebekah away to become Isaac's wife. It is part of the Lord's providence that our evils are never separated from us suddenly or violently but are allowed to go on until we see and reject them ourselves. The same lesson is taught in the Gospels in the parable of the tares among the wheat.

Benjamin is born at Bethlehem because he represents the highest type of good which can be exercised on the natural plane of our lives. This cannot be produced until we get back to the Holy Land, although Joseph—the truth which leads to this good—can be seen before we have attained our goal. Rachel's death, like Sarah's, pictures the end of one stage of our development, the affection proper to that stage subsiding into the background of our experience as we go on to new interests.

The death of Isaac is the final act in the drama of our development from infancy into a full adult state. From Genesis 49:31 we learn that Isaac and Rebekah were both buried in the cave of Machpelah, and that Jacob and Leah were both buried there also. This suggests that, although Rachel was Jacob's first love and his ideal, Leah—the affection for external truth—was actually his proper wife. The death of Isaac does not mean that at this stage we have given up our spiritual reasoning, but that this faculty has become a part of our everyday life. Jacob has come into the qualities possessed by his fathers, Abraham and Isaac. A truly good

external life has within it both the innocence and trust which are Abraham and the rational understanding of spiritual values which is Isaac.

Adult

Most of the Adult class will be more familiar with the other stories about Jacob than with chapter 35; so the teacher should begin immediately with the current lesson, only touching in passing on the earlier part of Jacob's life. Call attention especially to the burying of the idols and earrings at Shechem, the burial of Deborah at Bethel, and the burial of Rachel at Bethlehem. These three burials, followed by the burial of Isaac and by Jacob's final entry into his birthright, form excellent discussion material, especially in relation to the popular tendency to make external good works the first thing of religion.

The story of Jacob is a very important one for our thought about our everyday life, for Jacob and Esau represent the natural plane of life—Jacob this plane as to truth and Esau the same plane as to good. There is much emphasis in churches today upon external good works, and we all know that these should be done. But if good works are genuinely good they must be an outgrowth of love to the Lord in the heart and an understanding of His nature and will in the mind—not a substitute for these inner qualities of religion. Those who love the Lord and the neighbor and think about their own shortcomings and the Lord's mercy do their external good works as a matter of course and do not talk about them.

Jacob and Esau were at first rivals and even enemies. Our natural good impulses are eager to express themselves and impatient of instruction, and our natural understanding of the truth is pleased with itself and not too scrupulous in its methods of advancing itself. Esau was a "hairy" man and Jacob a "smooth" man. Hair represents the part of the life which is most external. Jacob's long sojourn in Haran was necessary to teach him the true value of his home and the necessity of reconciliation with his brother. So a young person goes out self-confidently to make his place in the world, and it may take him a long time to realize that life is more than material success, and that he needs to go back and reclaim

the good states and the spiritual principles of his childhood period of instruction.

In interpreting the story of Jacob, Swedenborg deals primarily with its celestial sense, in which it is a description of the Lord's progress toward the glorification of the natural degree. But he is careful to point out that the order of glorification with the Lord was the same as the order of regeneration with man. We recall that Jacob's name was changed to Israel after he wrestled with the angel (Genesis 32:28), and this change is repeated in our chapter for today. In the celestial sense this change marks the completion of another step in the Lord's glorification. Jacob represents the Lord's natural as to its external; Israel, His internal natural. This is why both names are used frequently in the rest of the Bible story, sometimes even in the same verse, Jacob coming to stand for the church of that day as a mere representative of a church, while Israel stands for the true internal which the ancient Hebrew rites represented. The names are not interchangeable and are never used in the letter of the Word without clear purpose.

The sons born to Jacob in Haran picture the faculties developed by each of us as he "finds himself" in the life of the world—Joseph being the final faculty of receiving and understanding genuine spiritual truth. It is after Joseph's birth that Jacob decides to return to Canaan. But Benjamin, who represents the good proper to genuine truth, is not born until after Jacob has returned, become reconciled to Esau, and performed his worship at Bethel.

Four very familiar places are mentioned in our chapter: Shechem, Bethel, Bethlehem, and Hebron.

The strange gods and the earrings which the people surrendered to Jacob were buried "under the oak which was by Shechem." The strange gods and the earrings represent falsities held in the mind and falsities made actual in life, and to bury under an oak is to put away forever. This was accomplished at Shechem because Shechem, Abram's first stop in the Holy Land, represents "the first of light, which is interior truth." Before we can worship the Lord truly we must be willing to put away every false idea and

bad habit which we find to conflict with His wisdom and love.

Then Jacob advances to Bethel. Jacob in his return is following the same course which Abraham followed when he came into the Holy Land from Ur so many years before, stopping first at Shechem, then at Bethel, and finally at Hebron, and building altars as he went. This pictures of course an advance, little by little, into holy states of innocence and trust. Abraham's journey was a child-like following of the Lord. Jacob's is a more mature, though more worldly or natural obedience. Abraham was being led into these states out of ignorance and idolatry. Jacob is coming back to them after a long period of wandering, caused by his own transgression. The Lord tells us: "Except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." When Jacob comes back to Bethel, the "house of God," the Lord appears to him again and renews the promises He had made to Abraham and to Isaac.

The death of Rebekah's nurse Deborah at Bethel tells of the passing of former affections when new ones are developed. Deborah is the hereditary evil from the mother. Hereditary evil lies back of all our acts in childhood. We do things largely for the sake of self. Though children are directed by their parents and led by the Lord through angel associates, yet hereditary evil is within everything they do. But it does not become actual because they do not act from their own free will. This is the innocence of infancy. The difference between the innocence of infancy and the innocence of wisdom is that in the former "the innocence of infancy is without, and hereditary evil within," whereas in the latter, "the innocence of wisdom is within and evil both actual and hereditary without." (AC 4563) The natural, purified of its falsities and evils, has come into a new state. Bethel—"house of God"—signifies this new state of the natural, for the house in which truth dwells is good. The altar Jacob built at Bethel is the worship of the Lord by the natural mind.

Our lesson marks the first appearance of Bethlehem in the Bible story. The birth of Benjamin and Rachel's death are the first incidents we connect with it. Bethlehem is near the border of the two

lots later assigned to the tribes of Benjamin and Judah. As the birthplace of Benjamin, and later of David, and still later of the Lord, it marks the beginning of great changes. The death of Rachel near Bethlehem in the celestial sense pictures the expulsion by the Lord of whatever was hereditary and human in the affection for interior truth. In the human affection from the mother is the glory of self and the world. Good is done for the sake of self. The Lord felt this temptation and put it away, and we should recognize this evil in ourselves and try to overcome it with His help.

Isaac died at Hebron and was buried by his sons Esau and Jacob in the cave of Machpelah. (See Genesis 49:29-32.) Jacob became head of his family. It is helpful to fix in our minds the fact that of the three patriarchs Abraham pictures the celestial, Isaac the spiritual, and Jacob the natural plane of life, the planes through which we pass from infancy through youth to maturity. When we first consider ourselves "grown up," we are in the Jacob stage, when natural and worldly things are most interesting and absorb our time and thought. We branch out into many fields of interest, as Jacob's twelve sons headed families and eventually divided the land. Still we have in us our inheritance from our infant and childhood states and we have in us the deeper affections, represented by Joseph and Benjamin, to link us to spiritual and celestial things. Our early states are in us and affect all we do. So the places that are mentioned in the early chapters of Genesis recur again and again throughout the Bible story.

From the Writings of Swedenborg

Arcana Coelestia, n. 4563: "It is known that man derives evil from both his parents, and that this evil is called hereditary evil. He is therefore born into it, but still it does not manifest itself until the man becomes an adult and acts from his understanding and the derivative will, and meanwhile it lies hidden, especially during infancy. And as of the Lord's mercy no one is blamed for what is hereditary, but for what is actual [nn. 966, 2308], and what is hereditary cannot become actual until the man acts from his own understanding and his own will, therefore infants are led by the Lord by means of infants

and angels from Him, and hence they appear in a state of innocence while hereditary evil still lurks in everything they do. This hereditary evil yields them nourishment, or is as a nurse, until the time when they judge for themselves; and then if they are being regenerated they are brought by the Lord into a state of new infancy, and at last into heavenly wisdom; thus into genuine infancy, that is, into innocence; for genuine infancy or innocence dwells in wisdom. The difference is, that the innocence of infancy is without, and hereditary evil within; whereas the innocence of wisdom is within, and evil both actual and hereditary is without.”

Suggested Questions on the Lesson

- P. Why did Jacob leave home and go to Haran? *afraid of brother*
- P. How long did he stay there? *twenty years*
- P. What two wives did he marry? *Leah, Rachel*
- P. How many sons were born to him in Haran? *eleven*
- P. Who was the youngest of these? *Joseph*
- P. Where was his twelfth son born? *near Bethlehem*
- P. What was his name? *Benjamin*
- J. Why did Jacob go to Bethel when he returned from Haran?
to worship God
- J. Before he reached Bethel at what place did he stop? *Shechem*
- J. What did he make the people do at Shechem? *give up gods, earrings*
- J. Who was buried at Bethel? *Deborah*
- P. What did Jacob do at Bethel? *built stone altar*
- J. What did the Lord promise him there? *to father great nation*
- J. Where did Jacob find Isaac? *Hebron (Mamre)*
- J. Where did Jacob and Esau bury Isaac? *cave of Machpelah*
- I. What does Rebekah's nurse represent? *hereditary selfishness*
- S. Why is her death and burial mentioned at this point in the story of Jacob?
when we return voluntarily to spiritual living we must get rid of selfish motivation

JOSEPH AND HIS BROTHERS

Genesis 37

The teacher should refresh his memory on the story of Jacob's experiences in Haran. It will be better to emphasize the length of time—twenty years—in Haran and the sons born there than to retell the story of Leah and Rachel, which cannot be explained briefly. Mention the Lord's promise to Jacob at Bethel and Jacob's longing to return to the Holy Land.

Doctrinal Points

The Word in its inmost sense treats of the life of the Lord Himself. Our regeneration is a succession of cycles of temptation, struggle, and victory.

Notes for Parents

The story of Joseph is one of the best-known stories in the Bible, and people have always recognized that there are several similarities between it and the story of the Lord's life on earth, for both Joseph and the Lord were carried into Egypt, both were betrayed by those who should have loved them, both were sold for a few pieces of silver, both were always faithful and always forgiving, and both were saviors of their people.

Joseph was Jacob's eleventh son, the first child born to Rachel, Jacob's favorite wife, and the last one born in Haran, where Jacob had been sent to escape the wrath of his brother Esau. Rachel's second child, Benjamin, was born after Jacob had brought his family back to Canaan and been reconciled to Esau. Rachel died when Benjamin was born, and was buried near Bethlehem.

Joseph was different from his older brothers. As the later story shows, they were concerned only with worldly success, but Joseph cared about the things of the spirit and was unselfish. They called

him “this dreamer.” Often today people who think about the heavenly life are scoffed at by the worldly as dreamers or idealists. But it is the people with ideals who have been the really great men and women of history.

One of the reasons why Joseph’s brothers hated him was that he was his father’s favorite. Another was that his dreams indicated that he would be greater than they. In the series of patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—Jacob pictures our state when we are beginning our independent life in the world. His twelve sons stand for all the faculties which we develop that enable us to act as individuals: the ten older sons our practical, worldly abilities, and the two youngest the higher spiritual impulses and thoughts which are our inheritance from our Heavenly Father.

For a long time these higher things in us are put aside, as we busy ourselves with making our way in the world. We sometimes even imagine that they have been killed, as Jacob thought Joseph had been, but the Lord preserves them deep within us, until the experiences of life bring us to a sense of need which only spiritual truth and good can satisfy. Joseph by the abilities he received from the Lord rose out of prison to the place of ruler of Egypt. Later his brothers came to him there for help in time of need.

Primary

The children should be reminded of the number of sons Jacob had altogether and the name of Joseph, whom Jacob loved best. The gift of the coat and the jealousy of the brothers will be easy for them to understand. Later in the story tell them that it was the Lord who put it into Reuben’s heart to save Joseph from death, and that the Lord was preparing Joseph to become a great man and to save his whole family. The moral lesson of the way in which envy of another person grows until it wants to do him real harm is a good one for young children, and not too far from their experience with brothers and sisters and playmates.

Jacob stayed in Haran for twenty years, working for his uncle Laban. He married two of Laban’s daughters, Leah and Rachel, and became very rich in herds and flocks. Eleven sons were born

to him in Haran and another after he came back to the land of Canaan, twelve in all. When he came back, he was still very much afraid of Esau, but he found that Esau, who had also become very rich, had long since forgiven him and was happy to see him again.

Someday you will want to learn the names of Jacob's twelve sons. These were their names, in the order of their birth: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, and Benjamin. They also had a sister named Dinah. Perhaps you can remember that the oldest was Reuben and the two youngest Joseph and Benjamin. These two youngest sons were the children of Rachel, who was Jacob's favorite wife. That was one reason why Jacob loved them best, and he especially loved Joseph.

What did Jacob make for Joseph?

Why did the older brothers hate Joseph?

His dreams showed that he was to be greater than they.

What did the brothers decide to do?

Who persuaded them not to kill Joseph?

What did they finally do with him?

Who was Ishmael, the father of the Ishmaelites?

Where did they take Joseph?

To whom was he sold?

The brothers thought they would never see Joseph again, but the Lord took care of him in Egypt and he became a great man there, and several years later he was able to save his whole family from starving to death. Joseph always obeyed the Lord, and he came to realize that the Lord had permitted the hardships of his boyhood for a good purpose.

Junior

Shechem, the place of Abraham's first altar, appears again here and should be located on a map and impressed on the minds of the class. It is an important place throughout the Bible story. It may also be helpful to turn to Genesis 35, verses 23 to 26, and read the names of the twelve sons of Jacob as a preparation for later lessons. The children will note that Reuben, who persuaded his brothers not to kill Joseph, was Jacob's eldest son. They should learn his name and that of Benjamin the youngest in addition to Joseph. Tell them also

that in those days the Lord often taught people through dreams, and that Joseph's two dreams have an inner meaning which they will study when they are older. Stress the Lord's providence in saving Joseph and tell them that we often find, as we grow older, that experiences which at the time we thought very hard were really blessings in disguise.

Jacob lived in Haran for twenty years and became rich there. He married the two daughters of his uncle Laban, Leah and Rachel, and had eleven sons and a daughter before he left Haran. The oldest was Reuben and the youngest, Joseph. Then he brought his family back to the land of Canaan, was reconciled to Esau and reunited with his father Isaac. His twelfth son, Benjamin, was born near Bethlehem. Jacob loved Joseph and Benjamin best of his sons because they were the children of Rachel, his favorite wife, who died when Benjamin was born.

At the time of our story for today, Joseph was seventeen.
What did Jacob make for him?

Jacob's preference for Joseph was one reason why his brothers hated him, and there were two other reasons.

What do we learn in verse 2?
What two dreams did Joseph have?
What did both dreams mean?
Where did Jacob send Joseph?
What do you remember about Shechem?
Where did Joseph find his brothers?
Dothan is a little plain not far north of Shechem.
What did the brothers say when they saw Joseph coming?

Does it seem strange that they should have been willing to kill their brother? Aren't we all likely to dislike people who are so different from ourselves that we cannot understand them? Read Matthew 5:21-22 and I John 3:15. Every willful murder has its beginning in feelings of jealousy, anger, and hatred in the heart. If we realized how dangerous such feelings are, we should all try harder to put them out of our hearts when they first appear there.

Which brother persuaded the others not to kill Joseph?
What did the others finally do with him?
Whose son was Ishmael, the father of the Ishmaelites?

Ishmael had become a wanderer and a dweller in the wilderness. His descendants became merchantmen, carrying goods in caravans from one part of the world to another.

How much did the Ishmaelites pay for Joseph?

What did they do with him?

To whom was he finally sold?

How did Joseph's brothers conceal their crime?

Intermediate

Sketch for the class the whole story of Joseph in its simplest outlines, using the facts of today's lesson followed by those mentioned in the last paragraph of the notes for Adults. Most of the young people will be somewhat familiar with this story. Then take up the twelve sons of Jacob and their general meaning, the meaning of Joseph, and the importance of this quality to our ultimate salvation. The attitude of the older brothers toward Joseph can easily be illustrated from the young people's own experience. Most of them have at one time or another rebelled against going to Sunday school and church, and doubtless all know other young people—and older ones, too—who scoff at religion and stifle their own impulses to be good in any deep sense—that is, to do more than keep within the law.

When Jacob was sent away from home to Haran to save him from the wrath of Esau, he stayed away for twenty years. During that time, which he spent serving his uncle Laban, he married two daughters of Laban, Leah and Rachel, and had seven sons by them. He had four more sons by Bilhah and Zilpah, the handmaids of his two wives, and after he returned to Canaan, Rachel bore him a twelfth son, Benjamin. In those days people had forgotten that multiple marriages were wrong.

Jacob pictures the natural plane of our life. The Israelitish church, which was really a mere representative of a church, was to be developed among his descendants. Our outward acts, if they are not hypocritical, are pictures of the things hidden in our hearts and minds, even though we may never think of anything but outward acts and of what their results are likely to be for our life in this world. Jacob's twelve sons picture all our proper affections and thoughts through which this plane of outward conduct is

developed and regulated. The earlier sons are the more external affections which develop first; the sons of the handmaids are those which serve our growth in a lower way; and the last two sons—born of Rachel, who was the wife Jacob loved best—represent the deep spiritual affections and thoughts which develop last. They are all good and useful and have their proper place in our lives.

But our more external and natural ideas and desires should be recognized as subordinate to the higher ones. When we first grow up, our ideas of religion are chiefly concerned with external conduct, but deep within us we have feelings which we cannot express and are sometimes ashamed to acknowledge, thinking our friends might laugh at them. It is these deep religious “remains” which will eventually save us from becoming entirely worldly and selfish. They are pictured by Joseph and Benjamin: Joseph, the affection for spiritual things; and Benjamin, the understanding of them or the desire to learn about them.

If we remember this, the story of Joseph becomes a wonderful parable. In our chapter today Joseph is pictured as different from his brothers and hated by them because of this difference. He is a dreamer. He has visions which tell him that he is to be greater than his brothers and even than his father and mother. His older brothers want to kill him. Is not this true of our interest in spiritual things when we are coming to maturity? We know it is really the most important thing in our lives, which gives us dreams and ideals for the future. Yet our external reasonings make fun of those dreams and ideals and do their best to stifle them. And they do succeed for a time in putting our Joseph away in Egypt—the land of mere memory-knowledge—and forgetting about him, pretending he is dead. How many young people stop going to church and Sunday school and try to forget the deeper aspects of religion as soon as they get out from under their parents’ control!

But Joseph is not dead. He is preserved by the Lord in Egypt to be the savior of his whole family later in time of need. That is, the Lord preserves our early religious feelings and thoughts deep in our memories where we shall find them again when great need—

the famine—arises in our lives.

We should also realize that the Old Testament in its inmost sense is a story of the life of the Lord Himself. Joseph is one of the Bible figures who most clearly picture the Lord. The Lord was different from others, a dreamer who knew that in the end all would bow down before Him. He went down into Egypt. He was sold for a few pieces of silver. His garments were taken from Him and used to prove His death. But He was not dead. We must keep this thought about the inmost meaning of the Word in our minds throughout our study of the Bible.

Basic Correspondences

the twelve sons of Jacob = all the necessary thoughts
and affections we develop

Joseph = the affections for spiritual things

Benjamin = the affection for learning about
spiritual things

Jacob's Sons

In the order of their birth: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali,
Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, Benjamin

Jacob's Wives and Their Children

| | |
|---|-------------------------|
| Rachel | Leah |
| Joseph | Reuben |
| Benjamin | Simeon |
| | Levi |
| | Judah |
| | Issachar |
| | Zebulun |
| Bilhah, Rachel's handmaid | Zilpah, Leah's handmaid |
| Dan | Gad |
| Naphtali | Asher |
| Leah also bore Jacob a daughter, Dinah. | |

Senior

The most important thought to bring out for the Seniors is the necessity of

recognizing that there are relative values in life, and that one of the objectives of our thinking should be to learn to put first things first. Read them Matthew 6:24-34. Joseph and Benjamin represent our desire for “the kingdom of God and his righteousness” and our thought about it, the other sons our desires and thoughts concerning all other needful things. It is natural that these other desires should develop first, while we are learning the necessary worldly knowledge and finding our places in the workaday world. But the Lord in our earliest years has given us a “Joseph,” and He preserves this quality deep within us until we feel our spiritual need and can be led to find it again. Show the young people that when they pretend to be sophisticated and are ashamed of being thought religious, they are “selling Joseph into bondage in Egypt.”

In studying the internal meaning of the Word, one is sometimes puzzled by the apparently endless repetition of the cycle of temptation, transgression, repentance, restoration, and peace. Today we have Jacob reconciled to Esau and once more peacefully settled in Hebron; yet the very next incident is the jealousy among his sons and the selling of Joseph, his favorite, into slavery in Egypt. And the cycle starts all over again.

But is not this exactly our experience throughout life? We recognize an evil in ourselves; with the Lord’s help we fight and overcome it; we experience the peace of victory—only to discover a new and deeper temptation waiting to attack. You will sometimes hear older people say, “I seem to myself to grow worse instead of better as the years go on.” This is really just as it should be. As one grows in physical strength, harder and harder tasks are entrusted to him; as he grows in spiritual strength, deeper and deeper inner evils are revealed for him to overcome. We cannot overcome all our evils at once. But as we put one behind us, the Lord can show us another, so that our whole life may be a forward progress step by step up the heavenly way.

Jacob represents the natural plane of our life, especially the period when we are finding our independent place in the world and adjusting ourselves to the demands of earning a living and establishing a new home and family in society. Jacob’s settlement in the Holy Land with the new name of Israel (Genesis 32:38) represents our determination that our life and our home shall be

godly and not merely worldly.

Still our desire to do right may have many motives within it, and these motives—represented by the twelve sons of Jacob—are not always harmonious. Joseph and Benjamin, our love for and understanding of spiritual things, we recognize as our highest and most mature qualities. “Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age.” But our lower interests are opposed to what is spiritual in us even to the point of trying to destroy it.

Joseph had dreams and visions. Our spiritual nature centers about internal rather than worldly values, and the worldly part of us makes fun of anything which cannot be perceived through the physical senses. If we think of Joseph as the deep-seated religious impulse which every one of us has from the Lord, we can see in our own experience and in that of our acquaintances how worldly desires seek first to destroy it, then to bury it, and finally dispose of it by relegating it to the realm of childhood experience, part of our necessary knowledge but no longer essential to our life. You will even hear people say, “It is a good thing for children to go to Sunday school; it helps them to form good habits; but of course they will outgrow a lot of the things they are taught.” This is Joseph sold into Egypt for twenty pieces of silver.

But it was fortunate for the worldly brothers that Joseph was not really dead. As we all know, the time came when their very life depended on him. As the Lord preserved Joseph and endowed him with abilities which brought him into a place of authority in Egypt, so He preserves the “remains” of our early spiritual states deep within us against the time when the worldly principles which we have adopted prove to be wholly inadequate in the face of some bereavement or failure or other deep loss.

Swedenborg in the *Arcana Coelestia* develops the meaning of this story of Joseph principally in its inmost sense, in which it treats of the Lord Himself. The quotation at the end of this lesson gives us the key to this sense in the meaning of Joseph.

Adult

Even with this class it may be necessary to review briefly the story of Jacob's sojourn in Haran and return to the Holy Land. Then speak of the correspondence of the twelve sons and of the meaning of Joseph's being sold into Egypt. Finally ask for comments and questions from the class, and let these determine the further discussion.

As Jacob represents the attempt to work out the Lord's teachings on the plane of daily life, his twelve sons represent all the good affections which are developed in the course of this task. We know that our lives are complex. We are constantly reading of psychologists' efforts to analyze our mental and volitional processes. Here in the story of Jacob's twelve sons we can, with the help of Swedenborg, find a complete outline of psychology given us by the Lord Himself. We can distinguish between higher and lower affections in our external life. We know, for instance, that love for friends is a higher affection than love for food, although the latter is a necessary and good affection. We are able to see that affection for the Lord and for heavenly knowledge is the highest of all our affections. The sons of Jacob may be grouped according to their importance, the two sons of Rachel being these highest affections, the sons of Leah the more external affections which lead up to them, and the sons of the handmaids the most external affections which minister to the others. All twelve sons except Benjamin were born in Haran, but Benjamin was born in Canaan.

Our lesson introduces the story of Joseph, one of the most-loved stories in the Bible. Joseph was Jacob's eleventh son—his first by Rachel, the wife he loved best—and consequently he was Jacob's favorite. Jacob made him a coat of many colors.* Colors picture the variety of ways in which spiritual truth is made attractive to different people by the Lord. But this singling out of Joseph

*The Anchor Bible renders this "ornamental tunic" noting that "the traditional 'coat of many colors' and the variant 'coat with sleeves' are sheer guesses from the context." Swedenborg renders it "tunic of various colors [*tunicam variorum colorum*] and the editor of the Standard edition notes that "the 'tunic' was the undergarment."

aroused the jealousy of his brothers, and their ill feeling was increased to the point of hatred by the fact that he told his father of their wrongdoings—as our spiritual perceptions reveal the evils we try to hide—and later they resented the two dreams which likewise set him above them. When Jacob sent Joseph to Shechem to find his brothers and report to him concerning them, the first thing we read is, “And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh.” We are all able to recognize that it is the man who dreams who leads others; but in practice many of us are inclined to belittle “idealists” and to try, like Joseph’s brothers, to put them aside where they will not interfere with our worldly ambitions. The scribes and Pharisees treated the Lord this way when He came among them and rebuked their evils. We can all see how many points in the story of Joseph foreshadow the life of the Lord. Swedenborg tells us (AC 4669) that Joseph “signifies the Lord’s Divine spiritual Human,” and more clearly, “the Divine spiritual which proceeds from His Divine Human” or “the Divine truth which is from Him in heaven and in the church.” We should remember that it was as the Divine truth that the Lord came into the world to save the human race.

The story of Joseph is a true story. His brothers really did plot to kill him and finally sold him into slavery in Egypt. But the Lord uses this story to teach us a beautiful, practical lesson. He was with Joseph and turned his very troubles into a means of advancing him and eventually of saving his whole family. Egypt, we recall, represents the plane of memory-knowledge. We need memory-knowledge not only for our life in the world but for our spiritual development as well. And there is a time in our lives when it is especially orderly and appropriate that our attention should be centered upon acquiring it. The instances in the Bible story of “going down into Egypt” for food and for protection are symbolic of this fact. The Lord takes special care of children until they have learned to take care of themselves. He gives us a long childhood because we need so much knowledge in order to face the problems of adult life. When He came into the world, He Himself went down

into Egypt to show us that this is an orderly part of our lives, and also as a symbol of what He in His assumed human was learning: the letter of Scripture. We remember how constantly He used quotations from the Scriptures during His ministry. It was all stored in His external memory during His childhood. Swedenborg tells us that truth from the Lord does not flow into our minds and remain there for our use except as we have the vessels for receiving and holding it, which are knowledges of the Word learned in an external way. And the Lord constantly reminds us that if we wish to progress spiritually, we must continue to learn more from the letter of the Word throughout our lives. “Search the Scriptures.” We should note that we are not obeying this command when we go to the Word merely to find passages to support our own ideas, or when we read only the passages which we enjoy.

All the stories of the Word relate inmost to the Lord’s life and in their internal sense to the life of each one of us. The twelve sons of Jacob all represent necessary affections, good when properly used; but any of these may be perverted—turned to selfish purposes—just as Joseph’s brothers turned against him. When this happens, the Lord makes use of the best things in us to try to save us. Joseph in us is our affection for truth from the Lord, our love of thinking about the Lord and His care over us. This is one of the “remains” stored up in us by the Lord from our innocent childhood states. As Joseph dreamed dreams and later was given the power to interpret them, so when we are thinking about the Lord from genuine affection, worldly things fall into their proper subordinate place; we see above and beyond them, and can understand the reasons for our various experiences.

But very often our more external affections get the better of our Joseph and put him away in the realm of memory-knowledge, where he is at first imprisoned. Even then the Lord works within us to preserve and strengthen Joseph against our time of need. When some experience comes which our worldly principles are unable to explain and in the face of which our worldly affections fail us completely, we are led to the rediscovery of Joseph and

find him no longer a weak child, but a mighty ruler under whose protection we may willingly place ourselves.

From the Writings of Swedenborg

Arcana Coelestia, n. 4669: "Joseph. That this signifies the Lord's Divine spiritual Human, is evident from the representation of Joseph, as being in the supreme sense the Lord as to the Divine spiritual . . . That the Lord is represented by Joseph is known in the church, for when the heavenly Joseph is spoken of, no one else is thought of; but what of the Lord is represented by Joseph is not so well known, for it is the Divine spiritual which proceeds from His Divine Human. The Divine spiritual which proceeds from the Lord's Divine Human is the Divine truth which is from Him in heaven and in the church. The spiritual in its essence is nothing else. The Divine spiritual, or Divine truth, is also what is called the Lord's royalty, and it is likewise signified by the Christ, or the Messiah . . . For this reason Joseph was made as it were a king in Egypt, that he might then represent what is of the Lord's royalty."

Suggested Questions on the Lesson

- P. How many sons were born to Jacob in Haran? *eleven*
- J. Who was the oldest? *Reuben*
- P. Who was the last one born in Haran? *Joseph*
- P. What son was born after they returned to Canaan? *Benjamin*
- J. Which two sons were the children of Rachel? *Joseph and Benjamin*
- P. Which son did Jacob love best? *Joseph*
- P. What did Jacob make for Joseph? *tunic of various colors*
- J. Why did Joseph's older brothers hate him? *father's favorite, his dreams*
- J. Can you tell about Joseph's two dreams? *sheaves; sun, moon, stars*
- P. On what errand did Jacob send Joseph? *to find brothers*
- J. Where did Joseph find his brothers? *Dothan*
- P. What did they decide to do? *kill him*
- J. Who saved Joseph's life? *Reuben*
- P. What did the brothers finally do with Joseph? *threw him in a pit*
- P. Into what country was he sold? *Egypt*
- S. What do the twelve sons of Jacob represent? *all basic mental faculties*
- I. What does Joseph represent? *spiritual principle*
- S. What is pictured by Joseph's being sold into Egypt?
trying to relegate that principle to our external memory

JOSEPH IN PRISON

Genesis 39; 40

A short review of the last lesson will lead easily into the story of Joseph. For the background of today's lesson the important points to bring out are the length of time Jacob stayed in Haran, the number of sons born to him there, the fact that Joseph was Rachel's son, and the reasons why his older brothers hated him. In all the older classes mention the meaning of the series Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and recall the meaning of Egypt which they learned in connection with the story of Abram and Lot. All the classes above the Primary should be fairly familiar with the general outline of the Joseph story. It is a long and interesting one, and the events are so closely connected that it is hard to pass over any of it. If the teacher prefers, he may tell the whole story very briefly before concentrating on the events of these two chapters.

Doctrinal Points

The Lord preserves and strengthens our spiritual affections even when we try to forget that we have them.

The story of Joseph has a close relationship to the life of the Lord. So it helps us to see how closely the Old and the New Testaments are bound together.

Truth is necessary to protect good.

Obedience to the Lord enables one to receive understanding.

Notes for Parents

Most people are familiar with the beautiful story of Joseph. He is an example of a man who remained faithful and upright in the face of the severest trials, and the lesson is one from which we can all profit. The Lord can be with us only as we look to Him for help and keep His commandments. When we do wrong, there are always consequences which cannot be averted. Joseph went

through some hard experiences, but his brothers were much worse off because they had guilty consciences to bother them. As we read the rest of the story, in chapters 41 to the end of Genesis, we find that Joseph, because of his character, is in a position of control in every situation. The brothers, on the other hand, are afraid at every unexpected turn of events. Read chapter 42, verses 21 to 24, and see the difference between them.

Joseph represents something in the life of every one of us—the voice deep within us which tells us that the most important thing in the world is to do right in the sight of God, whatever may happen to us. We sometimes try to silence that voice and think we have succeeded, but it is there just the same. The brothers were never really happy until they found Joseph again and realized that he had forgiven them and wanted to take care of them. The Lord takes care of us if we let Him.

Primary

The Primary class needs to know that Joseph was Jacob's favorite son and the reason why his brothers were jealous of him. Then read them verses 8 through 23 of chapter 40. You will probably have to explain what a butler is. More of the beginning of the Joseph story should then be given. Stress the fact that the Lord was with Joseph so that he prospered in spite of everything that was done by his enemies. Tell the class also the end of his story and how he forgave his brothers and took care of his whole family.

Today we have a story about Joseph, Jacob's favorite son. Joseph had ten older brothers and they hated him, partly because his father loved him best and partly because he was brighter and more unselfish than they were, and the Lord gave him some wonderful dreams which showed that he was to be greater than his brothers and even greater than his father and mother. The Lord also gave him power to interpret dreams—that is, to tell what dreams meant.

One day, when his brothers were all tending their flocks away from home, the older brothers decided to get rid of Joseph. First they thought they would kill him, but then they decided it would be better to sell him. They sold him to a caravan of Ishmaelites,

who were on their way to Egypt. In Egypt Joseph was sold to a man named Potiphar, who was captain of the king's guard. The king of Egypt was always called Pharaoh.

Joseph was always faithful to the Lord and honest in everything he did, and the Lord always took care of him. Potiphar made him ruler over his household, but Potiphar's wife became angry with Joseph and told her husband lies about him, and Potiphar believed his wife and put Joseph in prison.

Even in prison Joseph made such a good impression on his keepers that they put him in charge of all the other prisoners.

Two of Pharaoh's servants were in prison at the same time.

Who were these two servants?

Why did they come to Joseph one day?

What did Joseph tell them about the interpretation of dreams?

What was the chief butler's dream?

What did Joseph tell him it meant?

What was the chief baker's dream?

What was Joseph's interpretation of it?

How did the interpretations come true?

What did Joseph ask the butler to do for him?

Did the butler remember?

Although the butler forgot Joseph as soon as he was free, later—when Pharaoh himself had a strange dream which none of his wise men could interpret—the butler remembered Joseph and told Pharaoh about him. Joseph was taken out of prison and was able to interpret Pharaoh's dream; so Pharaoh decided this was a very wise man, and he made him ruler—under himself—of all Egypt. So some time afterward, when there was a great famine in the Holy Land, Joseph was able to save his father and his brothers and their families, and Pharaoh invited them to come to Egypt to live during the famine, and gave them the best part of the land to live in.

Junior

Discuss especially the reasons why Joseph was disliked by his brothers and

point out how liable we are to belittle people who seem to be different from ourselves. Joseph's uprightness and desire to serve the Lord should be cited as the reason why the Lord could take care of him and why he always rose to positions of trust and authority. Try to cover the whole story of Joseph, getting as much as possible from what the class themselves remember from former years.

Of all his sons Jacob loved Joseph best and this made the older sons jealous. Also Joseph was different from the others. The Lord was with him especially and he had dreams which showed him that he was to be greater than his brothers or even his father and mother. The brothers hated him for this, also. They stripped him, threw him in a pit and plotted to kill him, but finally decided to sell him instead. While they were making their plans, caravans of Ishmaelites and Midianites, on their way to Egypt, came to the pit and drew Joseph up out of the pit, and took him to Egypt with them. Our lesson today begins with the selling of Joseph to Potiphar, captain of the king's guard in Egypt.

The Lord was with Joseph. Read Genesis 45:4-8, which tells of his reunion with his brothers many years later and his forgiveness of them. Wherever Joseph went, the Lord was with him no matter how hard his outward condition might be. We can see this in our story today. Joseph's ability and honesty at first led Potiphar to advance him until he was ruler over all Potiphar's household. But again someone plotted against him.

Who was it this time?

Potiphar believed his wife's story.

What did he do with Joseph?

Yet you see that even in the prison Joseph's ability and honesty attracted attention and led the keeper of the prison to put him over the other prisoners. Even today men who have really committed crimes, if they show a disposition to obey the prison authorities and to improve, are made "trusties" and given certain privileges. Joseph had done no wrong.

Which servants of Pharaoh were in the prison at the same time?

Pharaoh is the name by which all the kings of Egypt were called,

just as we call the head of our government President, no matter what his own name is.

What led the chief butler and the chief baker to come to Joseph for help?

What did Joseph tell them about the interpretation of dreams?

You see the real difference between Joseph and other people was that Joseph knew that all goodness and wisdom and power were in the Lord and not in himself, and he looked to the Lord for guidance and tried to serve Him. So the Lord could show Joseph what was true and right.

What was the chief butler's dream about?

What did Joseph tell him it meant?

What was the chief baker's dream about?

What did Joseph tell him?

Did the dreams come true?

There is something in the literal story which may show us the difference between these two men. The butler was willing to tell Joseph his dream as soon as Joseph said that interpretations belonged to God, but the baker waited until he found that the interpretation of the butler's dream was good before he told his dream. That is, the baker was willing to let God into the picture only when he thought it would be profitable to him. We are sometimes like the baker: we like to hear good things about ourselves, but we don't want to be told when we have not been good.

What did Joseph ask of the butler?

Did the butler remember?

Sometimes we promise things when we are in trouble and want help, and then forget all about our promises after the trouble is over.

But the butler did remember later. Pharaoh had a dream which no one could interpret, and that reminded the butler; and, because he was really a good man, he was sorry he had forgotten his promise. Read Genesis 41:9-13. Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and because Joseph could interpret his dream, he made him ruler under himself over the whole land of Egypt. Later, when famine came, Joseph was able to invite his father and his brothers and all their families

to come and live in Egypt until the famine was over. So he saved their lives, and helped them to settle in the best part of Egypt—the land of Goshen. The hard things which had happened to Joseph enabled him to be of great service to the others. But this would not have been true if Joseph had not wanted to serve the Lord and the neighbor. If we have this good desire, everything that happens to us can be turned by the Lord into a means of making us better and stronger men and women, and more useful to the world.

Intermediate

This class can understand the meaning of Joseph as distinct from his brothers. They all have Joseph in them and if they can see what is meant by trying to get rid of him and by putting him in prison, it may help them to meet some of the temptations to selfishness and worldliness which come with the modern environment.

Jacob's twelve sons picture all of our faculties and affections through which we may serve the Lord. The highest of these faculties develop last, because we have to learn to live in this world before our minds are free to think deeply of spiritual things. This does not mean that we do not need to know what is right and try to do it all along, but it is easier to do right in our outward life than it is to think and to feel right.

Joseph was different from his brothers and had dreams which told him that he was to be greater than they; this caused his older brothers to be jealous of him and to try to kill him. Joseph pictures a desire to be truly good in the Lord's sight. It does not come to us until we have had a good deal of experience in trying to lead successful lives. When it does come, we are ready to go back to the Holy Land; but all the faculties and affections which we have developed before it, which are centered on the things of this world, resist being governed by it. The Lord protects our "Joseph" as He protected the Joseph of the Bible story, and does not let it be killed. But for a long time we may put it away in the back of our minds and go on living as if it were dead. This is the

time in our lives when Joseph is in prison in Egypt. Egypt in the Word is the land of “memory-knowledge”: that is, all the body of facts stored up in our memories.

Even in this land of memory-knowledge, Joseph easily became a great man. I wonder if we can see how this is. When once we have felt the desire to be truly good, we can never again think of the world around us as something just created for our benefit. We know that there are higher things than having good food and clothes and money to spend, and even though we don't yet really want to be unselfish, we know that unselfishness is best and we can see and appreciate it in other people. We can see the use which trouble and temptation and hard work and disappointments serve, and things in life fall into their true order in our minds. So Joseph was able, even while he was a servant in Egypt, to rise to a position of control over the household of the master. Then came the effort of Potiphar's wife to make him do what he knew to be wrong. The desire to be good cannot be used in this way, and our selfish desires try to shut it up so that it won't bother us. Joseph is cast into prison.

The butler and the baker were servants of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. They represent our senses, which serve us while we are in this world. The Lord, when He instituted the Holy Supper, said that the bread was His body and the wine His blood. Bread pictures goodness and wine truth, and the Lord's body and blood are the divine goodness and truth which nourish us if we accept them from Him. When the butler and the baker came to Joseph for the interpretation of their dreams, he told them that interpretations belonged to God; that is, that only a knowledge of the Lord's truth could show them the meaning of what happened to them. In the butler's dream he was making the wine perform its proper use, pouring it into his master's cup; but in the baker's dream the birds were carrying off the bread from his basket before it reached his master's table. So the dreams meant that the butler would be restored to his proper place but the baker would have to die. This is a very important lesson for us. When our senses

perform their true use of bringing truth into our minds so that we can serve the Lord more intelligently, all will be well with us. But when we let false ideas, like the thieving birds, take away our goodness, our senses are no longer true servants and what they tell us is destructive to our spiritual life. An example of this is found in the kind of books we choose to read. If we choose good, wholesome books which give us a picture of life as it ought to be, our minds remain clean and healthy; but when we read bad books, we take into our minds ideas which steal away our good affections and destroy our souls. Our Joseph—our honest desire to be good in the Lord's sight—tells us truly what will happen to us. This is proved many times in our experience. Sometimes, when everything is going well with us, we—like the butler after he had been restored to favor—forget all about Joseph down in his prison. But the time comes again, as it did later in the Bible story, when something reminds us, and then we are sorry for our forgetfulness, and Joseph is brought out of prison and set over our whole life.

The story of Joseph is a beautiful story and one which will mean more and more to you as your experience grows. You need to know it well and to read it often. You will find also that it is a picture of the Lord's life when He was on earth, and that many of the things that happened to Joseph are very similar to things that happened to the Lord. Joseph is one of the people in the Bible who most clearly picture the Lord.

Basic Correspondences

bread = goodness
wine = truth

Senior

A good lesson for the Seniors is found in the power of Joseph to interpret dreams. Only our recognition of the Lord and of His power in the life can give us an understanding of the experiences we have and enable us to be of real help to other people. People who persist in keeping Joseph shut up in the back of their minds are left to their own imaginations, and one man's guess

is then as good as another's as to the meaning and purpose of life. Young people should be led to feel that it is a sad thing for people to be in spiritual darkness.

Swedenborg explains the meaning of Joseph in various ways. Perhaps the simplest is in *Arcana Coelestia*, n. 3969, where he says that Joseph represents "the good from which is truth." We may think of this as the deep desire to be good in the Lord's sight rather than merely in the sight of men. It is this desire which leads us to read and study the Word and to accept correction from it in our own feelings and thoughts as well as in our outward lives. You remember that when Joseph's older brothers saw him coming, they said, "Behold, this dreamer cometh." (Genesis 37:19) This was because Joseph had had dreams which showed him that he was to be greater than any of his brothers and even than his father and mother. Our spiritual affections are greater than our natural affections, but the natural affections resist the thought and try to put it out of sight "in the back of the mind." The brothers first put Joseph in a pit and then he was sold into Egypt. Egypt is the land of "memory-knowledges," as we remember from the story of Abram. We need memory-knowledges, but we should not be bound by our knowledge of natural science so that we reject spiritual truths.

Joseph had the power to interpret dreams; that is, to see the true meaning and effect of the experiences that come to us. This power comes to us from the genuine desire to do right in the Lord's sight. Sometimes, perhaps for a long time, it makes us uncomfortable and we try to shut it up. It is so much easier and more pleasant to forget about right and wrong and go on getting what we can of fun and satisfaction for ourselves without looking at our spiritual future at all. But the Lord protected Joseph in Egypt. First he rose to favor in the house of Potiphar, captain of the king's guard. Even in our time of most complete devotion to worldly pursuits we can see that it is to our advantage to go to church and to associate ourselves with churchgoing people. Eventually, however, this association with religion comes into con-

flict with our selfish affection—pictured by Potiphar's wife—which is trying to use religion selfishly and wants to control our higher impulses. Then we put away our religious feeling still more deeply. Joseph is cast into prison.

Pharaoh's chief butler and chief baker were also in prison. Pharaoh represents the principle which is at the moment ruling over the things in our memories—sometimes the Pharaoh is a good ruler and sometimes an evil one. His servants are the bodily senses which bring into the mind facts necessary to maintain it. In the Holy Supper the bread represents goodness and the wine truth. The butler represents those senses which bring in things which affect the intellect, while the baker represents those senses which primarily move the will. Our senses are orderly servants when their ministrations lead us to truth and good, disorderly when they deceive us and lead us to evil. It is significant that when Joseph said, "Do not interpretations belong to God?" the butler did not hesitate to tell his dream, but the baker waited until he found that the interpretation of the butler's dream was good. The butler in his dream was pouring wine into Pharaoh's cup, performing his proper use; but in the baker's dream birds were stealing the bread before it reached Pharaoh. We may think here of the parable of the Sower and the wayside, or hard-trodden path, which offered no soil for the seeds so that the birds of the air carried them off. These are birds in a bad sense, or falsities which destroy goodness before it is taken into the life.

The whole story of Joseph is especially important for young people just starting out in life. The temptation is to become so absorbed in the life of the world, in the occupation or studies chosen, that the thought of religion is put away into the memory instead of being kept in the forefront of the daily life. But Joseph was to be the savior of his people; in time of famine they were to come to him for food and protection. Sooner or later in life come troubles which cannot be met except in the light and strength of faith in the Lord. The Lord preserves our "Joseph," however we may try to get rid of him, until the time when we seek him out

and put ourselves under his protection.

Adult

The meaning of Joseph's imprisonment in Egypt and of the dreams of the butler and baker should be discussed in their application to our own states of temptations in the present materialistic age. The teacher will find excellent discussion material in AC 5077-5078.

The stories of Joseph are among the best-loved in the Bible. This is partly, no doubt, because of their variety and dramatic qualities, and partly because our sense of justice is satisfied by the triumph of right in spite of scheming and persecution. We know, however, that the real power in them comes from the fact that they picture states through which the Lord passed during His life on earth, and states through which we all pass in our youth, as well as repeatedly throughout our lives as we feel the temptation to stifle our spiritual promptings in the face of the pressure of our worldly environment.

We recall that Joseph was the eleventh son of Jacob and the first son of Rachel, the last of Jacob's sons to be born in Haran before they returned to the Holy Land. Jacob and his sons represent development of the church on the natural or external plane. His two wives, Leah and Rachel, represent affection for exterior truth and affection for interior truth. Jacob loved Rachel first but was given Leah instead, and he had six sons by Leah before he had any by Rachel; and, although Jacob at first was angry at Laban's deception, we find (Genesis 30:2) that after he had had four sons by Leah, he was angry with Rachel because she complained of her childlessness. So the natural man catches a first vision of a higher spiritual state, but readily settles down into satisfaction with external accomplishment. The sons of Jacob represent the gradual development of orderly living on the natural plane until, with Joseph, there is a beginning of true spiritual feeling, which is followed by the birth of Benjamin—its complementary truth—after the return to the Holy Land. Benjamin was born near Bethlehem

and Rachel died at his birth. Jacob settled down with Leah and eventually they were both buried in the cave of Machpelah with Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah. This would indicate that Jacob's glimpse of something higher than the external order did not take very deep root in his life, and that Leah was actually his true wife. Nevertheless, Joseph remained his favorite son. Do we not see this illustrated in the case of many people who live orderly external lives? The external life satisfies them and they do not really wish to think more deeply; yet they like to remind themselves of a higher possibility within them which they recognized in their youth.

The representation of Joseph is described by Swedenborg in several phrasings: "the Lord's spiritual kingdom," "the spiritual man," "the celestial spiritual man," "the charity from which is faith, or the good from which is truth." In the Lord's life Joseph represents the "Divine Spiritual." In our lives we can perhaps best think of him as our inner desire to be good in the Lord's sight rather than just in the sight of our neighbors. Joseph is the "dreamer" who was disliked by his brothers because his dreams showed that he was their superior. We really know that this higher urge is the true ruler of our lives, but we rebel against the thought. Joseph also had the power to interpret dreams. That inner voice which brings the Lord before our minds is able to point out the true meaning of life and all its experiences. The Lord sees to it that each of us has his "Joseph," and that it is preserved no matter how hard we try to stifle or even destroy it. And if we come to the realization of our need, as Jacob and his sons did in the time of famine, we are enabled by the Lord to dig down into our memories and find our "Joseph" not only still alive but in a position to save and protect us.

Our lesson today finds Joseph a slave in Egypt. Egypt, we remember, is the land of memory-knowledge. How often we relegate our Joseph to the land of memory-knowledge! Joseph was first sold to Potiphar, captain of the guard of Pharaoh. Because the Lord was with Joseph, under him Potiphar's affairs prospered and Poti-

phar advanced Joseph to charge over his household. The very fact that we have deep within us the recognition of our duty to the Lord serves to bring a type of order into our external lives, even though we do not understand the source of our outward success. But Potiphar's wife, who represents the affection which belongs to natural truth, is not satisfied. She wants to own Joseph. We see this temptation in the effort of the natural mind to explain away spiritual causes and to reduce everything in life to the level of the finite human rationality. Joseph resists and leaves the house, but his garment is left in the hand of Potiphar's wife and she uses it as evidence against Joseph. Garments represent outmost truths; Joseph's garment—like the Lord's nearly two thousand years later—represents “the ultimate of spiritual truth,” the letter of the Word. Think how at times the letter of the Word is used to discredit religion! So Potiphar puts Joseph in prison. We put Joseph further and further out of sight.

Still, Joseph cannot be kept down. In prison he rises to be given charge of all the other prisoners. When we are bent on leading worldly lives, we keep many things in ourselves in prison: some good things because they would bring to our minds truths which would rebuke and correct us, and some evil things because they would lead us to acts which would lower our reputation in the world. The chief butler of Pharaoh and his chief baker represent these two kinds of prisoner. We are familiar with the thought that in the Holy Supper the wine represents truth and the bread good. In the butler's dream he is performing his proper office, pouring the wine into the cup of his master. But in the baker's dream the bread which he is carrying to his master is being stolen from his basket by the birds of the air.

Swedenborg says (AC 5077-5078) that the butler represents the external sensual which is subject to the *intellectual* part of the internal man, and the baker represents the external sensual which is subject to the *voluntary* part of the internal man. This is why the chief butler was restored to his place and the chief baker was hanged. Our intellectual capacity often is able and willing to re-

ceive memory-knowledges of truth, but at the same time reject knowledges of good because we did not want to live according to them. In short, we often are eager to learn things but unwilling to put them into practice. Even in the letter there is a difference between the butler and the baker. When they told Joseph that they had been troubled by their dreams and Joseph said, “Do not interpretations belong to God? tell me them, I pray you,” the butler had no hesitation in telling his dream immediately. But it is said of the baker, “When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was good,” he proceeded to tell his own dream to Joseph. That is, the butler was willing to submit himself to the Lord’s judgment, but the baker waited to see if the judgment was likely to be favorable to him. Still another indication is found in Swedenborg’s translation of verse 16 of chapter 40. The King James Version says the baker had “three white baskets” on his head, and the Revised Standard Version says “three cake baskets.” The latter version gives no indication of any other possible translation, but the center column in the Oxford teacher’s edition (King James) gives as an alternate translation, “baskets full of holes.”* Swedenborg says “three baskets with holes in them” [*canistra perforata*], and explains the verse as meaning that the baskets represent the planes of the mind and their having holes in them means that the “interiors were without termination anywhere in the middle.” Read here AC 5145. Compare this with Haggai’s rebuke to those who returned from exile (Haggai 1:4-6).

From the Writings of Swedenborg

Arcana Coelestia, n. 5149: “There is falsity from two origins—falsity of doctrine, and falsity of evil. Falsity of doctrine does not consume goods, for a man may be in falsity of doctrine, and yet in good, and therefore men of every doctrine, even Gentiles, are saved; but the falsity of evil is that which consumes goods. Evil in itself is opposite to good, yet by itself it does not

*Two recent versions, the New American Bible and the Anchor Bible, have “three wicker baskets.”

consume goods, but by means of falsity, for falsity attacks the truths which belong to good, because truths are as it were outworks that encompass good. These outworks are assaulted by means of falsity, and when these are assaulted, good is given to destruction."

Suggested Questions on the Lesson

- P. Why did Joseph's older brothers dislike him? *favorite, dreams*
- P. Where was he taken by the Ishmaelite caravan? *Egypt*
- J. How did he come to be put in prison? *Potiphar's wife's lies*
- P. Who else were in prison with him? *Pharaoh's butler and baker*
- P. What did he do for them? *interpreted dreams*
- J. What was the butler's dream? *wine into cup*
- P. What was the baker's dream? *birds eating bread*
- J. What happened to the butler and the baker? *butler restored, baker hanged*
- P. Did the butler remember Joseph? *no*
- I. What is Joseph in our lives? *desire to be good*
- S. How do we sometimes "put him in prison in Egypt"? *try to forget him when we have selfish desires*
- S. What is meant by his being able to interpret dreams? *to understand our experiences*
- I. Why could the Lord always take care of Joseph? *wanted to do right*

JOSEPH RULER OF EGYPT

Genesis 41

The story should be very familiar to all the young people of the Junior age and up, and a few questions and reminders should be enough except with the Primary class. The emphasis should be on the difference between Joseph and his older brothers in their outlook on life, and on the fact that because Joseph was gentle and upright, the Lord could be with him and make his very hardships stepping-stones to success.

Doctrinal Points

The nature of memory-knowledges.

The spiritual should be ruler of these knowledges in us.

Notes for Parents

We all know the story of Joseph. It is one of the most familiar and the best-loved in the Bible. Looked at from the outside we might think of it just as a “success story,” the story of a young boy driven from his home by the jealousy of his own brothers, sold as a slave, cast into prison on false charges, and nevertheless in thirteen short years declared ruler of Egypt, second only to the king. Joseph was indeed honest, industrious, prudent, and faithful, but there is something else in his story which is sometimes overlooked: When Pharaoh sent for Joseph out of the prison and said to him, “I have dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it: and I have heard say of thee, that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it,” Joseph answered, “It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace.” And after Joseph had interpreted Pharaoh’s dreams, telling him of the coming famine, and had advised him to choose a wise man and set him over the country to prepare against the famine, Pharaoh said to his servants:

“Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?” Joseph took no credit to himself for his wisdom. He believed in God and trusted in His guidance. When Joseph ruled Egypt, it was the Lord who really ruled.

This is the lesson we should learn from Joseph. We are not wise except as we learn wisdom from the Lord through His Word. We all have our seven years of plenty, our times when we have opportunity to learn the Lord’s way of life and when it is easy for us to learn, and we have our years of famine, the times when the way seems too hard for us and we recognize our ignorance and weakness. But if in the time of plenty we store our minds with as much of the Lord’s truth as possible, we shall be able to draw on that store in the hard times.

Childhood and youth are given us for the particular purpose of acquiring knowledge for life, and the most important knowledge of all is knowledge of the Lord and His ways. Let us all help our children to make the most of their years of plenty.

Primary

The teacher should plan to retell the whole story of Joseph as simply as possible, not adding anything that is not in the Word. Stress the fact that the Lord could be with Joseph and take care of him because Joseph was good. There may be children in the class who can tell some of the story themselves. Always give them an opportunity when possible to tell what they remember. Point out that things which happen to us that seem very hard at the time will often lead to good for us if we remain good ourselves.

When Joseph was seventeen, his brothers decided to get rid of him. When they were all away from home, they seized Joseph and he was sold to men of a caravan which was on its way to Egypt. They pretended to their father that Joseph had been killed by a wild beast.

In Egypt Joseph was sold as a slave to Potiphar, the captain of the king’s guard. Joseph was so industrious and so wise that he rose to be overseer over his master’s household. But Potiphar’s wife lied to her husband about Joseph and her husband believed

her and threw Joseph into prison.

But in prison also Joseph rose, until he was in charge of all the other prisoners. The king's butler and his baker happened to be in prison, too, and Joseph interpreted some strange dreams that they had.

Later Pharaoh—the king—had two dreams which none of his wise men could interpret.

So the butler who had been in prison told him of Joseph, and he sent for him.
What were Pharaoh's dreams?

What did Joseph tell him they meant?

What did Joseph advise Pharaoh to do?

Pharaoh found Joseph so wise and so favored by the Lord that he decided to put Joseph in charge of all the land of Egypt.

Junior

We have included in the Junior notes a description of Egypt for the purpose of impressing on the children's minds the nature of the country, since its correspondence will become very important when they reach the Intermediate age. The same principal lesson should be stressed as for the Primary class.

The Joseph story is a very familiar one and most of you have heard it from the time when you were little children. Let us see how much you remember of the part of the story which precedes our chapter for today.

What did Joseph's brothers do with him?

To whom was he sold in Egypt?

To what position did he rise in Potiphar's house?

Who told lies about him to Potiphar?

What did Potiphar do with him?

How did he get along in the prison?

Who were in prison with him?

What did he do for them?

What did Joseph ask of the king's butler?

Did the butler remember when he was free what Joseph had asked him to do?

What finally made the butler remember Joseph?

This last question is part of our lesson for today. Egypt is a unique country. It is long and narrow because it follows the course

of the Nile River, and all its fertile land is in the valley on either side of the Nile. This is what a Bible dictionary says about Egypt: ". . . The general appearance of the country cannot have greatly changed since the days of Moses. The whole country is remarkable for its extreme fertility, which especially strikes the beholder when the rich green of the fields is contrasted with the utterly bare, yellow mountains or the sand-strewn rocky desert on either side. The climate is equable and healthy. Rain is not very infrequent, on the northern coast, but inland is very rare. Cultivation nowhere depends upon it. The inundation of the Nile fertilizes and sustains the country, and makes the river its chief blessing. The Nile was on this account anciently worshiped. The rise begins in Egypt about the summer solstice, and the inundation commences about two months later. The greatest height is attained about or somewhat after the autumnal equinox. The inundation lasts about three months. The atmosphere, except on the seacoast, is remarkably dry and clear, which accounts for the so perfect preservation of the monuments, with their pictures and inscriptions. The heat is extreme during a large part of the year. The winters are mild—from 50° to 60° in the afternoon shade, in the coldest season."

So you can see that seven years of famine in Egypt would be a very unexpected calamity. And as Egypt, because of its steady climate and productiveness, was the place to which all the surrounding countries were in the habit of sending for food in times of drought and famine, it would have been a calamity for many besides the Egyptians if the famine had caught Egypt unprepared.

How was the Pharaoh (the title of the king of Egypt) of the time of Joseph warned of the approaching famine?

Who finally interpreted his dreams?

What did Joseph advise him to do?

Why did Pharaoh choose Joseph to carry out this advice?

What power did he give him?

Whom did he give him for his wife?

What two sons were born to Joseph?

How did he prepare for the famine?

The story of Joseph teaches us a great many lessons which you

will study when you are a little older. But there is one principal lesson which you can understand now. When things happen to us which we do not like, we are all liable to waste a great deal of time and energy in being sorry for ourselves, blaming other people, and thinking of ways to "pay back" the wrong we believe has been done to us, and even in finding fault with the Lord for not making everything in the world just to suit us. If instead of this we, like Joseph, would accept what has happened without resentment and begin immediately to make the best of our changed condition and set ourselves to work at being useful, we should soon find that what we thought was a misfortune was really an opportunity for new and greater achievement. We gain strength of character by meeting our difficulties in the right way, just as we gain physical strength by exercise.

Intermediate

The correspondence of the story of Joseph—particularly of this part of it—is especially important for the Intermediates because it may affect their general attitude toward their lessons in school and Sunday school. The meaning of the time of famine and of the fact that only Joseph was capable of foreseeing and providing for it will be of great help to them if they will take it to heart.

There are many things in Joseph's story which remind us of the Lord's experience when He was on earth. Men hated the Lord because he pointed out the wrong things they were doing, and the Lord was betrayed by one who should have loved him, and was sold for a few pieces of silver. But just as the Lord's trials were the means of our salvation, so the hardships through which Joseph passed became a means of advancing him and eventually of saving his brothers.

Through this story also the Lord teaches us a beautiful, practical lesson. Egypt represents the plane of memory-knowledge. This means not only knowledge about the natural world but also the kind of knowledge we learn in Sunday school: the stories of the Bible, the Psalms and other passages which we memorize, the Commandments, and the simple lessons we get even before we under-

stand any of it very deeply. You know from your study of geography that Egypt for the most part is a low, flat country, depending for its fertility entirely on the inundations of the Nile River, which rarely fail. The rich soil deposited throughout the valley by these floods raises rich crops of grain, but no precious metals or precious stones are found in Egypt, although the Egyptians were skilled workers in the gold and silver which they imported. The Egyptians of Joseph's time were simple, peaceful, and industrious, and their great men were noted for their natural learning in the sciences. The fact that Egypt was the granary of the ancient world is symbolic of its collected learning. Swedenborg tells us that in ancient times the knowledge of correspondences was especially cherished in Egypt and that the Egyptian hieroglyphics were based upon this knowledge. Ancient Egyptians worshiped the calf, the symbol of affection for useful natural learning.

The Lord was with Joseph and protected him. His being sold in Egypt saved him from the jealous plots of his brothers. Hundreds of years later another Joseph was warned in a dream to take the infant Jesus into Egypt to save him from the wrath of Herod. This has a meaning for us also. The chief business of every one of us during our childhood and youth is to acquire knowledge of all sorts. Did you ever hear it said of someone who had been a very active child, "I don't see how he ever lived to grow up"? The Lord takes special care of children until they have learned to take care of themselves. He gives us a long childhood for the very reason that we need so much knowledge with which to face the problems of life, and He takes care of us while we are acquiring this knowledge. When He came into the world, He went down into Egypt to show us that this is an orderly part of our lives and also as a symbol of what He in His assumed humanity was doing: learning the letter of the Scriptures.

The Lord used quotations from the Scriptures constantly in his ministry. He had learned these in His childhood just as we memorize Bible verses. Only unlike us the Lord in His childhood stored in His memory *all* of the Word of the Old Testament. This shows

us how important it is that we use the opportunities we have in childhood and youth to store our minds with knowledge of the Word and to memorize as much of it as we can.

We have learned that the twelve sons of Jacob represent all the good thoughts and affections which we develop. But we must remember that any of these may be “perverted,” which means turned to selfish purposes, just as Joseph’s brothers turned against him because they were thinking of their own importance. When this happens, the Lord makes use of the higher things in us as a means to save us. Joseph in us is our affection for spiritual truth. Joseph lived in a higher thought world than his older brothers; he dreamed dreams and interpreted them. So when we love to think about the Lord and heaven, worldly things—food and clothes and parties—do not seem so important because we see over and beyond them. But very often for a time at least our worldly affections get the better of our “Joseph” and try to get rid of him. Then the Lord preserves him for us in Egypt. He becomes a part of our memory-knowledge and he is in prison there. But even in prison Joseph rose to become ruler, and he interpreted the dreams of the butler and the baker. This is a picture of how the Lord works in our lives even when we have tried to put Him out of our thoughts. He holds our lives in some sort of order and from time to time gives us glimpses of what the results of our actions must finally be.

Then some day an experience comes to us which we cannot understand, and none of the principles by which we have been living in our selfish pursuit of our own pleasure is able to help us. This is Pharaoh with his strange dreams which none of his magicians could interpret. So we are reminded of Joseph and we send for him out of prison: we think of the Lord and try to see things in the light of His truth. And in that light everything becomes clear and we realize that we must set our lives in order according to the Lord’s way instead of our own, as Pharaoh placed Joseph over all the land.

The seven years of plenty are the times when it is easy for us

to learn and when we have the opportunity. The seven years of famine are the times—which come to all of us—when we are too busy earning a living and taking care of our families to acquire new knowledge, and have to depend on the principles we have acquired in our youth. So the earlier we put Joseph in charge of our land the better.

Basic Correspondences

Joseph = the affection for spiritual truth
for the sake of life

famine = prolonged lack of knowledge

Senior

The principal lesson for the Seniors is the same as that for the Intermediates but should be approached in terms of the spiritual and natural planes of life rather than as merely teaching the necessity of storing up knowledge. The quotation from the writings will serve as a guide here.

Joseph's gradual rise to power in Egypt pictures our gradual realization that the only really safe and wise ordering of our everyday life must come from putting it under the government of spiritual principles. When we are young, we are carried away with the delights of natural learning and natural satisfactions. But we have premonitions even then that these will not always be enough. Pharaoh's dreams are a picture of these times of ours when we ask ourselves, "Where do we go from here?" None of the magicians of Egypt—none of the specious arguments of self-interest—can answer this question. But from deep within us, where worldly interests have buried it, comes a reminder of someone who can answer, someone who in the past has told us truly what our life would be like. The Lord once said to His disciples, "And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe." Most of the spiritual instruction of our childhood is of this sort. When the magicians could not interpret Pharaoh's dreams, the butler suddenly remembered Joseph.

Egypt under the Pharaoh who chose Joseph for his governor

pictures a practical life which is inclined to be rightly ordered. In such a life the seven years of plenty picture all the states in which we are eager to learn and to do what is right. The experiences of these times of plenty are stored up to tide us over the inevitable times of doubt and uncertainty, which the famine represents. Whenever in times of sorrow or temptation we remind ourselves of what we have learned of the Lord's goodness and of His Divine providence over us, we are going to Joseph's storehouses to buy food.

The ability of the spiritual truths we have learned in childhood to show us plainly what the future will bring and how we should provide for it leads the wise to order their lives accordingly. As in the Bible story, we still have many years in Egypt. When we recognize that spiritual principles must rule in our everyday life, we are not immediately freed from all necessity of worldly learning and prudence. Nor are we safely on the highroad to heaven. In the story the captivity and the forty years wandering in the wilderness are still ahead, before the bones of Joseph can be taken back to the Holy Land.

Our chapter for today shows us the necessity of storing up in our minds, while we are young and learn easily, as much as possible of the letter of the Word, so that when we need it, the Lord can recall it to us and give us guidance and strength to see our way and to resist temptation. And it shows us also that if we are truly wise, we shall from the start recognize the spiritual as our true ruler. As Pharaoh said, "Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?"

Adult

The most fruitful discussion topic is probably the application of this story to our own lives in our recurring states of temptation, especially the lesson of the Lord's wise providence in preparing for these states in us before we ourselves have reached them. The meaning of Joseph is worthy of careful study. It is not simple—but our mental processes are not simple—and we could all

profit by a clearer understanding of what actually goes on in our minds and hearts and of the Lord's care over us.

The story of Joseph is so familiar to us and contains so many obvious lessons that we do not always stop to think of its spiritual meaning. In reference to the education of our children we see readily that Joseph sold into Egypt and there cast into prison is a picture of how the spiritual inclinations of childhood and youth are often pushed into the background and even willfully confined there as our young people grow up and become absorbed in the activities and pleasures of adult life in the world. If we have been careful to give them adequate spiritual instruction in their childhood and to foster in them an affirmative attitude toward religion and the church, we can be patient during this period of lessened interest, knowing that Joseph is still alive and at work under the surface and will in the Lord's good time be brought forth to interpret their problems and nourish them in the inevitable time of famine.

But no part of the Word is applicable to one period of life alone. If we are making spiritual progress, we pass through various cycles of the Word again and again in the course of our lives. With every spiritual success—such as is pictured by the return of Jacob and his family to the Holy Land—there comes the temptation to be self-satisfied, to forget that our seeming goodness is not our own and to imagine that we shall not again be in want of spiritual instruction and help. The place we think we have earned for ourselves in the world is very satisfactory. Every time we close our minds to the thought that we still have shortcomings, “Joseph” is sold into Egypt.

Our own wisdom cannot prevent the recurring famine nor provide against it. Our chapter for today teaches us how the Lord foresees our coming need and prepares us to meet it. We recall that Joseph later said to his brothers, “God did send me before you to preserve life.” (Genesis 45:5) Egypt pictures the plane of memory-knowledge. In that plane in our minds are gathered all the facts we have ever learned, not only the facts concerning the physical

world and life in it but all we have read and heard of the letter of the Word and the instruction which has been given us in connection with it. The Lord's preparation for our time of need begins in this plane. He sees to it that a Pharaoh—a ruling principle—comes to the throne in Egypt who wants to be enlightened. Then he inspires dreams which foreshadow the approaching trouble. Then, to interpret the dreams and provide for the salvation of the people, He causes the butler to remember Joseph and brings Joseph up out of prison.

We should try to come to some understanding of what Joseph and his experiences mean in our own lives, if we are regenerating. For this effort one of the most helpful passages is AC 4286, where in connection with the changing of Jacob's name to *Israel* Swedenborg says: "That this signifies the Divine celestial spiritual now, and that 'Israel' is the celestial spiritual man in the natural, and thus is natural; and that the celestial spiritual man itself, which is rational, is 'Joseph,' is evident from what follows. This is the reason why it is said that Israel is the celestial spiritual man which is in the natural, and thus is natural; and that Joseph is the celestial spiritual man itself, which is rational. For in the universal sense all the good which is of love and charity is called celestial, and all the derivative truth of faith and intelligence is said to be spiritual." Another helpful statement is found in AC 4585 in connection with the birth of Benjamin: "These things cannot fall into the understanding of anyone unless it is known what the external man and the internal man are, and that the former is distinct from the latter, although while man is living in the body they appear as one; also unless it is known that the natural constitutes the external man, and the rational the internal; and further unless it is known what the spiritual is and what the celestial."

The importance to us of the Lord's provision for our times of famine is impressed upon us throughout the interpretation of this part of the Joseph story in the *Arcana*. In AC 5342 we find this especially clear and simple statement: "That truths adjoined to good are stored up in the interiors of the natural mind, and there

preserved for use in after life, especially for use in temptations during man's regeneration, is a secret known to few at this day; and therefore something must be said about this. For by the 'seven years of abundance of produce' are signified the truths first multiplied, and by the corn being 'put in the cities' and 'in the midst' is signified that these truths adjoined to good are stored up in man's interiors; and by the 'seven years of famine,' and by the sustenance at that time from the gatherings, is signified a state of regeneration through truths adjoined to good, stored up in the interiors. . . . It is these truths adjoined to good that in the proper sense are called 'remains.' In so far therefore as the man suffers himself to be regenerated, so far the remains serve for use; for so far a supply from them is drawn forth by the Lord, and is sent back into the natural, in order to produce a correspondence of the exteriors with the interiors, or of what is natural with what is spiritual; and this is effected in the state signified by the 'seven years of famine.' Such is the secret. The man of the church at this day believes that no matter what anyone's life is, he may of mercy be received into heaven, and there enjoy eternal bliss; for he supposes admission to be all that is necessary. But he is much mistaken, for no one can be admitted and received into heaven unless he has received spiritual life, and no one can receive spiritual life unless he is being regenerated, and no one can be regenerated except through the good of life conjoined with the truth of doctrine: from this he has spiritual life."

From the Writings of Swedenborg

Arcana Coelestia, n. 5326: "The natural in the man who is being created anew, that is who is being regenerated, is entirely different from what it is in the man who is not being regenerated. The natural in the man who is not being regenerated is everything; from it the man thinks and desires, and not from the rational, still less from the spiritual, because these are closed and for the most part extinct. But in the man who is being regenerated the spiritual becomes everything, and not only disposes the natural in its thinking and desiring, but also determines the character of it, just as the cause determines

the character of the effect; for in every effect the only thing that acts is the cause. Thus the natural becomes as the spiritual is; for the natural things in the natural, such as the knowledges that derive somewhat from the natural world, do nothing from themselves; they merely agree that the spiritual should act in the natural, and by means of it, thus naturally."

Suggested Questions on the Lesson

- J. How did Joseph get into prison in Egypt? *Potiphar's wife's lies*
- P. What did he do there for the king's butler and baker? *interpreted dreams*
- P. Why did Pharaoh send for him? *butler remembered him when Pharaoh dreamed*
- J. What were Pharaoh's two dreams? *seven fat/thin cattle, seven fat/thin ears of grain*
- J. What did Joseph tell him they meant? *seven years plenty/famine*
- J. What did he advise Pharaoh to do? *appoint wise leader, store food*
- P. Whom did Pharaoh choose to carry out this advice? *Joseph*
- J. What powers did he give Joseph? *control of whole country*
- J. Whom did he give him for his wife? *Asenath*
- J. Who were Joseph's two sons? *Manasseh and Ephraim*
- J. How did Joseph prepare for the years of famine?
stored grain all through land
- S. What does Joseph represent? *our religious sensitivity*
- I. What does Egypt represent? *state of acquiring memory-knowledge*
- I. What is meant by the famine? *"too busy" to learn new truth*
- S. What is pictured by Joseph's being made ruler of Egypt?
putting our everyday life under control of spiritual principles

JOSEPH'S SONS

Genesis 48; 50:22-26

Here again we have a lesson in which a familiar story needs to be reviewed briefly by way of introduction—the whole story of Joseph. In the notes for each age group the attempt has been made to suggest the particular features of the story best suited to lead into the lesson for the day with children of that age.

Doctrinal Points

The Lord took on a human nature from Mary and glorified it, or or made it Divine, by overcoming the temptations which came to Him through it.

The inmost or celestial sense of the Word describes the inner life of the Lord when He was on earth.

The Lord keeps our early states of belief stored up within us as a basis for our later salvation.

Good will must really be first, although we have to learn what is right before we can do it.

Notes for Parents

We all know something of the beautiful story of Joseph, one of the few people in the Old Testament who seem wholly admirable. There are many things in the story which make us think of the Lord's life on earth. He was despised by his brothers, as the Lord was later "despised and rejected of men." He was sold for a few pieces of silver. He was providentially taken down into Egypt to preserve him from destruction. And because he trusted the Lord and did right, he became wise and great, as the Lord "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man." Finally he became the ruler to whom his brothers bowed down, and he forgave them and saved them.

Joseph is a representative of our higher spiritual perceptions.

These are in all of us, but while our thoughts and efforts are centered on worldly success, we try to forget them, to put them away out of sight. Then the Lord has to preserve them for us, and He strengthens them so that when trouble comes we can go to them for help.

Joseph had two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. How often in the Bible we find stories of two brothers! They always represent faith and charity, or the understanding and the will. Joseph's two sons picture the thoughts and the intentions which spring from our recognition of the fact that we must believe and trust divine truth as the Lord gives it to us in His Word. Manasseh was the firstborn. He is the intention, the will. We never do or think anything except from some impulse of the will. That is the first thing. But we find that Jacob, when he was about to die, put Ephraim before Manasseh. Ephraim is the thought. No intention of ours can be carried out until we have learned how to accomplish it. So we must learn what is right before we can do it. We know that often our good intentions seem to miscarry because, as we say, we "acted on impulse." That is why we bring our children to Sunday school and why we must all continue all our lives to study the Bible and go to church for help in understanding it. We need to learn new truth from the Lord all the time; for no matter how good our intentions, we can make no spiritual progress without it.

Primary

Joseph is almost the only individual in the Old Testament story of whom no unworthy actions are recorded; so his story is easy to present to young children. Be sure they get the name Joseph and know whose son he was and that he himself had two sons who were specially favored by Jacob. The crossing of Jacob's hands will interest the children, and help to fix the story in mind. It may be illustrated by action to impress it on their minds. Call their attention to the fact that Jacob himself had been put ahead of his twin brother Esau, who was actually the firstborn.

When a great famine came to the Holy Land, Jacob sent his sons down to Egypt to buy food, and they had to buy it from Joseph.

Joseph was kind to them and forgave them for what they had done to him, and told them to bring Jacob and their families and all their flocks and herds down to Egypt, and he would take care of them until the famine was over. And the king of Egypt, who was called the Pharaoh, loved Joseph so much that he gave Joseph's family the land of Goshen, which was the best land in Egypt. In fact, they were so prosperous there that they did not want to go home and they stayed on in Egypt for many years.

What two sons did Joseph have?

Which was the older?

When Jacob was about to die, what did Joseph do?

The blessing of the head of the family was considered very important.

Which son did Joseph expect to have the better blessing?

To which one did Jacob give it?

When you are older, you will understand why he did this.

Jacob and Joseph both died in Egypt, but they were finally buried in the Holy Land.

Their bodies were *embalmed*, a method the Egyptians had for preserving the body.

An embalmed body is called a "mummy." You may have heard about them.

Junior

Draw as much as possible of the story of Joseph from the children's memories. Make the connection with today's lesson through Isaac's blessing of Jacob—it may be well to read aloud some verses from Genesis 27:1-29. This and Genesis 45:4-11 offer a good opportunity to explain how the Lord can make good use of even our wrong actions so that we ourselves learn by experience and those we intended to injure are benefited. Call attention to the reason why Ephraim and Manasseh are later named with the sons of Jacob as heads of tribes in place of Joseph.

In Egypt the Lord took care of Joseph because Joseph was good and trusted Him and obeyed Him always. He did well in every work that was given him and rose to become a great man, ruler of all Egypt, second only to the king.

Joseph did not return evil for evil. You know the Lord never lets misfortunes come to us without a good reason. When the great famine came and Jacob sent his sons down to Egypt to buy food,

the brothers were frightened when they discovered that the great ruler of Egypt was their own brother Joseph, whom they had wronged. But Joseph reassured them and forgave them. Read Genesis 45:4-11. So Jacob and all his family came down to Egypt, and Pharaoh the king, because he loved Joseph, gave them for their home the rich land of Goshen in the Nile delta.

In the Bible story the parental blessing is very important, for it was always inspired by the Lord and was sure to be fulfilled. Jacob himself had deceived his father Isaac into giving him the blessing which he would naturally have given to Esau, his firstborn. But this, too, was something which was permitted to happen for a good reason. Now Jacob does intentionally what his father was tricked into doing. The inner reason is the same in both cases, and you will understand it when you are older. You must remember that everything in the Word of God has a deep meaning and lesson within it.

What two sons were born to Joseph in Egypt?

Which was the older?

Why did Joseph bring them to his father?

How did he try to arrange things so that his blind father would know which which the elder?

What did Jacob do?

What did he say when Joseph tried to move his hands?

What special position did he give to Joseph's sons? (verse 5)

This is why we shall find, as we go on in the Bible story, that among the tribes of the children of Israel there was no tribe called Joseph,* but instead there were two tribes called Ephraim and Manasseh. What the special "portion" was which Jacob added to Joseph's inheritance you may learn by reading Genesis 33:18-20 and John 4:5.

Jacob died in Egypt. We are told that his body was embalmed. The Egyptians had a wonderful way of preserving the body by the use of spices and salt and by wrapping it very carefully in narrow strips of cloth. This was called embalming. Some of the bodies so

*But see Rev. 7:8.

treated have been found in the Egyptian tombs perfectly preserved after several thousand years. They are called mummies. The secret of this process has been lost. It took about forty days, and there was a period of thirty more days of mourning before they started for the burial place. So it is said that they mourned for Jacob seventy days. Jacob's sons took his body back to the Holy Land and placed it in the cave of Machpelah, where Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, and Leah were already buried.

Then they came back and settled down in Egypt.

When Joseph was about to die, what promise did he ask his family to make? What did they do with Joseph's body temporarily?

You will see how they fulfilled their promise if you will read Joshua 24:32. Joseph's body was not placed in the cave of Machpelah but buried in the portion which had come to him by special gift from his father.

Intermediate

Try to give the Intermediates a sense of the story of Joseph as a whole and of its general meaning. Use the chapter for today to emphasize the importance of having knowledge of what is right in addition to good intentions, and Joseph's death as a preparation for the change we shall find in the picture with the opening of the book of Exodus.

In Egypt Joseph gradually proved his wisdom and rose to power. Then his brothers had to come to him for help and bow before him, and he was able to save his whole family and keep them from dying of hunger in the time of famine. The Lord preserves the spiritual faculties in us until we are fully grown up and ready to recognize that we cannot live without them.

Our chapter for today comes near the end of the period of our natural development. Jacob is about to die. The story of Joseph's bringing his sons to his father to bless and of Jacob's giving the greater blessing to the younger son reminds us of the earlier story of Isaac's blessing Jacob and Esau. Ephraim and Manasseh picture much the same thing as Jacob and Esau—truth and good—but on

a plane further advanced in the working out of the heavenly life. Truth still has to be put first, although good is really primary. That is, although everything we do proceeds from some desire, we have to learn what to do before we can carry out our desire. In spiritual things we have to learn from the Lord what is right and make ourselves do it before we come to love it. In this story the placing of truth first is conscious and intentional (verse 19), as we now have a more mature understanding of what is necessary, whereas in the Isaac stage of our life we reacted blindly.

Jacob gives Ephraim and Manasseh an equal place with his own sons, thus giving Joseph's family a double portion in the inheritance. Our spiritual faculties have such a double portion when we recognize our debt to the Lord. Note the last verse in chapter 48. The additional portion here given to Joseph is not described, but we find out elsewhere what it was. Read Genesis 33:18-20, Joshua 24:32, and John 4:5.

Jacob died at the age of one hundred and forty-seven, and his body was embalmed. Mr. Worcester in *The Sower* tells us that the Egyptian practice of embalming did not mean that they thought the body was to be used again, for there are evidences in their paintings that they knew that the soul left the body at death and continued in a spiritual body. It probably meant that the physical body had taken on the form of the soul, and with those who had been good they wanted to indicate that this form would be preserved. They did not even bury the evil. Whether the ancient Egyptians really knew this or not, it is the meaning of the embalming of Jacob and Joseph. Jacob's body was taken back to Hebron and buried in the cave of Machpelah with Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, and Leah. All that we accomplish on the plane of natural goodness is stored up at once as part of our permanent character.

Joseph makes his family give him the same promise that he had given his father, but when he dies, it is not immediately fulfilled. His body is embalmed and put in a coffin in Egypt. As we go further in our worldly development, our spiritual faculties, though

preserved for us by the Lord, are apt again to become dormant for a time, laid away in the memory. All through the period of slavery in Egypt, Joseph's body was still there embalmed and in a coffin, waiting for the promised release and return to the Holy Land.

Basic Correspondences

Ephraim = the truth we learn
by means of Joseph

Manasseh = our desire to live according
to the truth

Senior

The lesson for the Seniors may be centered on the meaning of Manasseh and Ephraim, sons of Joseph, as compared with Esau and Jacob, sons of Isaac. Show them how in our lives similar states recur again and again, but always on a different level, higher or lower according to whether we are progressing spiritually or not.

When we, at the beginning of our adult life, determine to obey the Lord instead of the dictates of worldliness—which is the beginning of the church in each of us—the real struggle within us begins. All our selfish thoughts and habits rise up to resist this new spiritual impulse. But the Lord preserves our “Joseph” in obscurity and he develops to greatness and power without our knowledge. And in the time of famine—when real trouble comes—we rediscover him and submit ourselves to him in Egypt. That is, we begin in earnest the task of learning what the Lord would have us do in order to save our souls. Jacob and all his family go down into Egypt and put themselves under Joseph's protection and care.

. Our story for today reminds us of the story of Esau and Jacob, in which Jacob, although not the firstborn of the twins, succeeded in taking from Esau both the birthright and the paternal blessing. Manasseh and Ephraim, like Esau and Jacob, represent good and truth, but the level has changed. Esau and Jacob, when they were born, represent good and truth on the unregenerate natural plane,

a good disposition and a lively mind, perhaps—but we have now advanced, through Jacob's sojourn in Haran and return to Bethel and through the rise of Joseph to power, to the point where we are able to understand truth and experience goodness intellectually.

Swedenborg makes a distinction, however, between “the intellectual of the church” and what we popularly call “intellectual,” as you will see from the quotation at the end of this lesson. Ephraim and Manasseh represent not our understanding of truth and our will to good unrelated to God, but the intellectual of the church and the good of the church in us. This is still on the natural plane—Ephraim and Manasseh were born in Egypt—but it comes from the higher plane of our souls where the Lord reaches us—their father was Joseph.

Manasseh, like Esau, was the firstborn son. The will is always first. We do nothing and think nothing except from an act of will. It takes a good impulse in our hearts to make us even begin to think about what we ought to do. But the impulse does not teach us what is right. We all know that our good intentions often seem to get lost, and we find ourselves doing harm when we meant to do good. We have to think and to learn from the Word what is right before our good intentions can result in right action. This is why Jacob was permitted to take precedence over Esau and Ephraim over Manasseh. Joseph, our internal perception, knows that the will comes first, but Jacob, our “practical” nature, recognizes that our understanding must for a time have first consideration.

Jacob presently dies in Egypt, but according to his last request, his sons take his body back to Canaan for burial in the cave of Machpelah, where Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, and Leah are already buried. Joseph lives for some time after his father but he, too, eventually dies in Egypt. He does not ask to be taken back immediately but foresees that in the end his people will all go back and makes them promise to take his body with them when they go. By the time of Joseph's death it has become evident that the Israelites have settled down for a long stay in Egypt.

This is a picture of a time in our lives when we think our spiri-

tual health and comfort are assured without further effort on our part. Today we sometimes read and hear about “making the decision for Christ,” and the assumption often is that one who has made this decision is “saved.” Even in the New Church there is a tendency to imagine that once we have joined the church and established ourselves as respectable Christian people, we can stop studying the Word and the writings and just “let our conscience be our guide.” The fallacy of this attitude is brought out in the first chapters of the book of Exodus. But no matter how long we remain in Egypt, we should remember that the body of Joseph, though embalmed and in a coffin, is there with us waiting to be restored to its proper place. The Lord preserves our former spiritual perceptions until we are ready to do something with them. And the Lord’s providence is over our external lives, permitting such experiences to come to us as may awaken us again to a sense of need.

Adult

The correspondence of Joseph and Benjamin and of Ephraim and Manasseh is the focal point of the lesson. In discussing the latter the teacher may want to read to the class the quotation from the writings found at the end of the lesson. There is excellent discussion material in the whole of AC 6222.

One of the most striking features of the Bible story is the recurrent cycles, often involving very similar incidents. Our chapter for today, with its account of the blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh, takes us back to the blessing of Jacob and Esau, and still further back to the offerings of Cain and Abel. Each pair of brothers represents faith and charity, or truth and good, but in different contexts and at different levels. In each case a series of events leads up to and follows from the relationship between the two brothers. In the first instance, because of the immediate background of the story, the brother representing faith is born first. In the other two, although the brother representing love is the firstborn, he is supplanted by his brother.

These repetitions are not accidental, and the lesson they teach is an important one. Our lives proceed in cycles, beginning anew with each new emergence of truth and good. If we are progressing spiritually, the cycles carry us ever higher. If we have turned away from the Lord, their course is inverted. We recall that the hells are described as a man upside down (AC 3641).

The life of Jacob followed one cycle: He lived through his time of temptation and development, returned to his childhood home, became reconciled to his brother, and inherited his father's position as head of the family. Joseph and Benjamin, his last-born sons, were still in their childhood. But they constituted the beginning of a new cycle. They, too, represent love and truth; but this time the conflict was not between the two but between Joseph and his older brothers, and Joseph was the one who was despised and rejected. This is because Jacob was the last representative of the Ancient Church, which was a true church, as well as the immediate ancestor of the Israelitish Church, which was only representative of a church. You recall the difference between the names *Jacob* and *Israel*. Note their use in this chapter. A new period is beginning, in which the church is being built up. In order that it may exist at all, it must have some connection with the Lord, and that connection is established through Joseph. The spirit of the older brothers in the story is the spirit of that church toward any internal spiritual qualities.

In technical terms Benjamin represents "the spiritual of the celestial" and Joseph the "celestial of the spiritual." This is not a mere juggling of words. We can understand them and the difference between them if we remember that between the inmost or celestial plane of the soul, where the Lord's influx enters, and the outmost natural plane, which is in contact with the material world, there is the interior or rational plane, which opens both ways. Benjamin represents divine truth as it flows in from the celestial plane through the rational into the natural. Joseph represents the good—the celestial—which belongs to this truth. The older brothers are the various faculties developed in the natural plane itself. They

are good or bad as they serve or resist Joseph.

In terms of the general development of the man or woman who is regenerating, the period of Jacob is the time when he is developing his independent life on the natural plane. At some point in that period he becomes conscious of the possibility of a higher development within him than the merely worldly. This is the birth of Joseph. He returns to the Holy Land of his earlier years and reestablishes himself in worship of the Lord. But this is the signal for a new struggle. The natural faculties resist the encroachment of a higher authority. The older brothers say, “Behold, this dreamer cometh,” and sell Joseph into Egypt. That is, at this point the first desire of our natural faculties is to relegate divine truth to the plane of memory-knowledge and keep it a prisoner there.

The story of Joseph is quite generally recognized as a foreshadowing of the Lord’s life on earth. The Lord was carried into Egypt to escape the wrath of the jealous Herod. He, too, was lost to the sight of the recognized church and in obscurity “increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.” In the regenerating person, the Lord’s providence cares for and develops the faculty of receiving divine truth until a time of famine comes and the person realizes his own helplessness and is ready to submit his judgment to providence. Then a new learning period begins. Jacob and his whole family come to Egypt.

The book of Genesis leaves us with a picture of the Egyptian state when it is orderly. Pharaoh—the natural principle—is on the throne. But he has voluntarily placed Joseph in full control of the land, and Israel and all his family have been settled in the best of the land that they may be nourished and protected during the years of famine. It is a picture of an orderly learning period. Our freedom of choice is unimpaired, but we have chosen the Lord as our ruler, set our natural affections and thoughts in their proper relation to Him, and settled down to receive instruction from Him.

One feature of this picture is Jacob’s final setting up of Joseph’s two sons as equal to his own. He says, “as Reuben and Simeon they shall be mine.” Reuben and Simeon represent faith and obedi-

ence on the natural plane. Ephraim and Manasseh represent faith and obedience on the intellectual plane. In AC 6216 Swedenborg says, “The intellectual of the church is ‘Ephraim,’ and the will of the church is ‘Manasseh.’” From this point on in the Word, the spiritual church is represented by Israel and the children of Israel, even though the Jewish Church, represented by Jacob, is not itself a true church even on the natural plane. We should note here a statement made by Swedenborg in AC 6222 concerning Ephraim: “This intellectual, which is called the intellectual of the church, is more interior than the intellectual which comes from mere memory-knowledges, for it is a perception that the thing is so, not from the dictate of memory-knowledges and philosophy, but from the dictate of the Word in its spiritual sense.” Ephraim and Manasseh are adopted by Jacob, but they are actually the sons of Joseph, who represents the Divine as it enters the rational plane of the mind from above.

The placing of Ephraim before Manasseh by Jacob, although Manasseh was the firstborn, teaches a lesson which recurs so frequently in the Word and is also expressed so clearly in the writings that we have no excuse for ignoring it. The will is primary. We do or think nothing without an act of will. But before the will can accomplish any purpose, the mind must be instructed. And this cannot be done once for all. The same situation recurs in every cycle in the Word. However good our intentions may be, we make no spiritual progress unless we are constantly trying to acquire new truth from the Word and the writings. If we think our conscience, as already developed, is a sufficient guide for the rest of our lives, we are woefully mistaken. We have simply embalmed Joseph and put him in a coffin and settled down to take our direction from the Egyptians.

From the Writings of Swedenborg

Arcana Coelestia, n. 6222: “It is believed that those have an intellectual in the things of the church who are skilful in confirming the tenets or doctrinals

of their own church by many things, and this even to persuasion that it is so, and who also are skilful in dexterously confuting many heresies But this is not the intellectual of the church, for to confirm a tenet is not of the intellectual, but of ingenuity in the sensuous, and it is sometimes found in the worst of men, and can also be done by those who believe nothing whatever, and also by those who are in very falsities Nothing is more easy than for all such persons to confirm whatever they please, even to the point of persuading the simple But the intellectual of the church is, to perceive and see, before any tenet is confirmed, whether it is true or not, and then to confirm it This is the intellectual which is represented by Ephraim, but the good of the church, which is represented by Manasseh, is the good of charity which is insinuated by the Lord into the man of the church by means of the truths of faith, for these, together with the good of charity, are what flow into the intellectual and enlighten it, and also make the intellectual and the will constitute one mind . . all the affection of good and truth, by which comes enlightenment, flows from no other source, and thus is born from no other source, than the internal, that is, through the internal from the Lord ”

Suggested Questions on the Lesson

- P Why did Joseph's brothers go to Egypt? *famme*
- P What did Joseph do for his family? *fed, housed*
- P. What two sons were born to Joseph in Egypt? *Manasseh, Ephraim*
- P Which was the older? *Manasseh*
- P. When Jacob was about to die, why did Joseph bring his sons to him? *blessing*
- P. Which son did Joseph expect to receive the better blessing? *Manasseh*
- P. To which one did Jacob give it? *Ephraim*
- J. What special honor did Jacob give to Joseph's sons? “adopted” *them*
- J. Where was Jacob buried? *cave of Machpelah*
- J. Who else had been buried there? *Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, Leah*
- J. When Joseph died, what did he make his family promise? *take bones to Canaan*
- J. How did they preserve his body? *embalming*
- I. What do Manasseh and Ephraim represent?
Ephraim—knowledge of church
Manasseh—desire to live according to it
- S. Why did Jacob give the younger son the first blessing?
our continuing need first to learn what is right

BIBLICAL STUDY

The first in a six-volume set, this book of the *Bible Study Notes* covers Genesis, the first book of the Bible, and provides a uniquely Swedenborgian view of its meaning—from Creation to the story of Joseph’s dreams.

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