

## INTRODUCTION TO SPIRITUAL CHRISTIANITY

### THE HIDDEN DEPTHS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE

#### **From The Doctrines For Spiritual Christianity**

From the first chapter of Genesis up to this point, or rather up to Eber, the story elements were not true history but were made up, and on an inner level they symbolised heavenly and spiritual matters. In the current chapter, and in those to come, the narrative details are not made up but are truly historical details. On a deeper level they too symbolise heavenly and spiritual matters, as anyone can see simply by considering that it is the Lord's Word. ([Arcana Coelestia](#) 1403)

The situation resembles that in which we hear someone talking and focus on the words. We do not pick up on the idea of the speaker as well as we would if we ignored the words and their definitions. Scripture's inner meaning (compared to its outer letter) is almost the same as speech whose words we only barely hear, much less pay attention to, when our mind is entirely absorbed by the ideas embodied in the speaker's words. The ancient method of writing used words and human figures to represent ideas in an entirely allegorical way. Secular writers of the day composed their histories in this way, and also [their works on] issues of public and private life. As a matter of fact, not a single written word was what it literally seemed to be; each represented another meaning. Ancient authors even presented the full range of passions as gods and goddesses, whom pagan peoples later began to worship as divine. Any literate person can see that this is so, since ancient books of the kind are still in existence. ([Arcana Coelestia](#) 1756{1-2})

The most ancient people, who were celestial, were by nature such that they did actually see with their eyes whatever objects they beheld in the world or on earth, but their thoughts were focused on the heavenly and Divine things which those objects meant and represented. Their physical sight was only something instrumental, and so consequently was their speech. Anyone may recognise the nature of this from his own experience, for a person who directs his attention to the sense of the words a speaker uses does indeed hear his words, but so to speak does not hear them. He grasps only the sense of them. And anyone who thinks more profoundly does not pay attention even to the sense of the words, only to their fuller implications. This generation of the descendants of the Most Ancient Church, however, who are the subject now, were not like their forefathers when they beheld worldly and earthly objects. Because they loved these objects, their minds were fixed on them. They thought about them, and from them thought about heavenly and Divine things. In this way the sensory part began to be the principal, and not, as it had been with their forefathers, the instrumental. And when the worldly and the

earthly become the principal, people reason about heavenly things and blind themselves. The nature of this also anyone can recognise from his own experience; for a person who pays no attention to the sense of the speaker's words but to the words themselves grasps very little of their sense, still less any fuller implications; and sometimes he relies on a single expression or even one grammatical usage to determine the whole of what somebody is saying. (Arcana Coelestia 241)

When internal breathing came to an end, external breathing practically the same as that today gradually took its place. And with external breathing came vocal speech or articulated sounds, which encapsulated the ideas comprising thought. In this way man's state was changed completely, and he became such as to be incapable any longer of possessing perception of that kind. Instead of perception he had a different kind of dictate, which may be called conscience, for though similar to conscience, it was in fact something half-way between perception and conscience as some people know it today. And once such an encapsulation of the ideas comprising thought had taken place, that is to say, within vocal speech, people could not be taught any longer by way of the internal man, as the most ancient people had been, but by way of the external. Consequently the revelations that the Most Ancient Church received were succeeded by matters of doctrine which had first of all to be apprehended by the external senses. These would produce material ideas in the memory, from which the ideas comprising thought were formed, such ideas being the means by which they were taught. Consequently the mental constitution of this Church was altogether different from that of the Most Ancient Church which it succeeded. (Arcana Coelestia 608)

The truths in the literal sense of the Word are in part not bare truths, but appearances of truth. They are like similes and comparative analogies taken from appearances in the natural world. Thus they are adapted and brought down to the level at which they may be understood by simple people and even children. But because they are at the same time correspondences, they serve to receive and make a home for genuine truth. They are containers in the sense that a crystal cup is a container of vintage wine, a silver salver of tempting foods; or like the clothes which we wear, whether a baby's shawls or the pretty dresses of a girl. They are also like the facts stored in the memory of the natural man, which include his perception of and affections for spiritual truth. The bare truths themselves which are wrapped, contained, clothed and grasped, exist in the spiritual sense of the Word; the bare forms of good exist in its celestial sense. (True Christian Religion 215)

The Word's literal meaning alone, when it monopolises our thinking, can never provide a view of the inner contents. Take for example this first chapter of Genesis. The literal meaning by itself offers no clue that it is speaking of anything but the world's creation, the Garden of Eden (paradise), and Adam, the first human ever created. Who supposes anything else? The wisdom hidden in these details (and

never before revealed) will be clear enough from what follows. The inner sense of the first chapter of Genesis deals in general with the process that creates us anew — that is to say, with regeneration — and in particular with the very earliest church; and it does so in such a way that not even the smallest syllable fails to represent, symbolise, and incorporate this meaning. ([Arcana Coelestia 4](#))

The spiritual sense of the Word and its natural sense. I have sometimes talked with spirits who were unwilling to know anything about the spiritual sense of the Word, saying that its natural sense is the only meaning the Word has, and this is holy because it comes from God. They asserted that if a spiritual sense were to be accepted, the literal form of the Word would be worthless. Many of them insisted on this, but they received a reply from heaven, that the Word without a spiritual sense in it would not be Divine, and because the spiritual sense is its soul, it is consequently Divine, in fact alive; for without this the literal sense would be as if dead. The real holiness of the Word consists in this. Thus the Word can be compared to the Divine Man, who is the Lord; in Him there is not only a natural Divine, but also a spiritual Divine and a celestial Divine. This is why the Lord calls Himself the Word. It was also said that the real holiness of the Word lies in its literal sense, and that this is more holy than the others, the internal senses, because it is the wrapping and container of the others, and it is like the body which is made alive by the soul. So the Word in its literal or natural sense possesses its fullness and also its power; and by its means a person is linked with the heavens, which would be separated from mankind but for the literal sense. Everyone knows and acknowledges that the Word is in its depths spiritual, but up to now it has been obscure where this spirituality was hidden. But since the spirits who took a stand on behalf of the literal sense alone were unwilling to be convinced by these arguments, there was produced countless passages from the natural sense, which could never be understood without the spiritual sense. For instance there are in the Prophets lists of nothing but names; many kinds of animals are named, such as lions, bears, oxen, calves, dogs, wolves, owls, ojim, <sup>1</sup> dragons; also mountains and forests, and many other things besides, which would mean nothing without a spiritual sense. For instance, what might be the meaning of a dragon described as red with seven heads and seven diadems on its heads, pulling down with its tail a third of the stars of heaven, and wanting to swallow the baby to which the woman was about to give birth; the woman being given the two wings of the great eagle to fly into the desert, where the dragon ejected water from its mouth after her like a river? Again, without the spiritual sense it would not be known what was the meaning of the dragon's two beasts; by the one which came up out of the sea, resembling a leopard, with feet like a bear's and a mouth like a lion's; and by its other beast which came up out of the ground, as described in Revelation Chapters [12](#) and [13](#). Again, what is the meaning there of the Lamb opening the seal of the book, horses coming out, first a white one, then a red, then a black and then a pale one, described in [Revelation 6](#), as well as the other things in that book? Again, in

Zechariah, what is the meaning of the four horns and the four smiths (Chapter [1:18-21](#)); the lamp-stand and the two olive trees next to it (Chapter [4](#)); the four chariots coming out between the two mountains, attached to which were horses, red, black, white and dappled (Chapter [6](#))? Again, the ram and the he-goat and their horns, with which they fought each other in Daniel (Chapter [8](#)); and the four beasts coming up out of the sea (Chapter [7](#)); not to mention vast quantities of similar things? To convince them further it was cited what the Lord said to the disciples in Matthew (Chapter [24](#)) about the ending of the age and His coming again, which no one could understand without the spiritual sense. The existence of a spiritual sense in every detail of the Word can also be confirmed by some of the Lord's sayings, which could not be grasped unless understood spiritually. For instance, no one would be allowed to call his father on earth 'father', nor 'teacher' or 'master', because they have one Father, Teacher and Master ([Matthew 23:7-10](#)); or that they should not judge for fear of being judged ([Matthew 7:1-2](#)); or that a husband and wife are not two, but one flesh ([Matthew 19:5-6](#)), although they are not one flesh in the natural sense. Nor is there any prohibition of judging one's companion or neighbour as regards his natural life, for this is in society's interest; but the prohibition is on judging him as regards his spiritual life, for this is known to none but the Lord. Again, the Lord did not forbid calling one's father 'father', nor a teacher 'teacher', nor a master 'master' in the natural sense, but He did in the spiritual sense. In this there is only one Father, Teacher and Master. And the same is true in other cases. They were convinced by this that there is a spiritual sense contained in the natural sense of the Word, and that still the real holiness of the Word resides in its literal sense, because all the inner meanings of the Word are fully present in it. In addition it was proved that the literal sense also exhibits clearly everything which teaches the way to salvation, and so how to live and what to believe. Also, every teaching of the church is to be drawn from the literal sense of the Word, and proved by it; not purely by the spiritual sense, since this does not permit linking with heaven and through heaven with the Lord, but this must take place by means of the literal sense. For the Lord's Divine influence coming through the Word extends from first to last. (The Word/De Verbo 5{1-4})

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### **Key Points From The Video**

**The Spiritual Foundation of Holy Scripture:** The opening chapters of Holy Scripture, including elements like the Garden of Eden, are not literal historical accounts but rather use natural imagery, to symbolically represent the process of the Divine creating a new spiritual consciousness within the human mind.

**The Form of Divine Revelation:** The style of sacred texts evolved from pure symbolism to historical narrative to reflect humanity's shifting focus from spiritual realities toward the material world.

**The Descent of Divine Influx:** Divine revelation emerges from a progressive 'stepping down' of Divine influx.

**The Science of Correspondences:** The "science of correspondences" acts as a key to unlocking the infinite spiritual truths hidden beneath the literal text by connecting natural effects to their spiritual causes.

**The Natural Basis of the Word:** The literal meaning of scripture serves as a necessary vessel that adapts limitless Divine truths into a form that our finite, material minds can comprehend.

**The Power of the Literal Sense:** The Word maintains its full Divine power and holiness in its literal form, providing exactly what is needed for a person's salvation regardless of their current mental or spiritual state.

**Awakening to the Divine Word:** By moving from literal to symbolic engagement with the Word we unlock its boundless power to guide us towards the spiritual heaven and earth meant to flourish within each one of us.

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## Multiple Choice Questions

**1. What was the primary intention of the opening chapters of Holy Scripture?**

- a) To provide a literal historical account of the material universe's creation.
- b) To symbolise the continuous influx of Divine Life into the human mind.
- c) To record ancient human history before the time of Abram.
- d) To describe the physical location of the Garden of Eden.

Answer b)

**2. What caused the shift in Divine revelation from a "mythological" style to a more "factual" narrative?**

- a) The discovery of better writing materials.
- b) A Divine decision to stop using symbols.
- c) Humanity's changing priorities and increased focus on the material world.
- d) The need to record genealogies for legal purposes.

Answer c)

**3. Why is the "literal sense" of the Word described as vital or necessary?**

- a) It adapts limitless spiritual truths to the limitations of finite, material thinking.
- b) It provides a perfect scientific account of natural history.
- c) It is easier to memorise than symbolic meanings.
- d) It acts as a distraction for those not ready for the truth.

Answer a)

**5. What is the primary purpose of the "Science of Correspondences"?**

- a) To translate ancient Hebrew and Greek into modern English.
- b) To find similarities between different world religions.
- c) To reveal the link between natural phenomena and their spiritual causes.
- d) To prove that the Bible is a collection of myths.

Answer c)

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**Reflective Questions**

**1. Consider a familiar biblical story or passage. How might understanding the distinction between literal history and symbolic spiritual truth change your interpretation or appreciation of that text?**

**2. The material suggests that without the natural basis of the Word, spiritual thought would lack definition and certainty. In what ways do you think literal narratives or events in Scripture provide a necessary grounding for deeper spiritual insights?**

**3. The concept of the Word being "infused with the Divine Light that gives natural meaning to literal characters and sounds" implies an ongoing, active process. How might this perspective influence your approach to reading and meditating on Scripture in your daily life?**

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**Experiential Integration**

Choose a short passage from any part of the Holy Scripture each morning.

First, read the passage literally, noting any immediate historical or narrative elements. Then, pause and reflect: "What deeper, spiritual truth might this passage be symbolising or representing in my own life or in the broader human experience?"

Hold both the literal and potential symbolic meanings in your mind throughout the day, observing if new insights emerge as you go about your activities. This practice aims to attune your mind to both the natural basis and the spiritual influx of the Word.

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**Learning Objectives:**

- a) Intellectual:** Learners will be able to differentiate between the literal and symbolic interpretations of the early chapters of Holy Scripture, identifying the transition point where historical writing began.
- b) Praxis:** Learners will be able to articulate how the "science of correspondences" can be applied to draw spiritual truths from the natural sense of the Word.
- c) Devotional:** Learners will develop a deeper appreciation for the multifaceted nature of the Word, recognising its inherent divine power and fullness in both its literal and spiritual meanings.