

The Life of Moses

A close-up photograph of a person's hand, wearing a white shirt cuff and a grey suit sleeve, resting on the cover of a dark brown leather-bound Bible. The Bible is placed on a wooden surface. The lighting is warm, highlighting the texture of the leather and the skin of the hand.

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Please read at the beginning:

Exodus Chapter 2: verses 1 – 3

1And there went a man of the house of Levi, and took to wife a daughter of Levi. **2**And the woman conceived, and bare a son: and when she saw him that he was a goodly child, she hid him three months. **3**And when she could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch; and she put the child therein, and laid it in the flags by the river's brink.



Addictions in our communities

It is very likely the same in China as it is in my country, Australia, that over the last twenty years or so people seem to spend so much of their waking moments on their iphones. I see people walking their dog in the local park and they seem totally focussed on their iphones. At a nearby shopping mall people sometimes come close to bumping into you so absorbed they seem to be on their iphone. It is not of course with everyone but for many people their iphone seems to rule their life and be in control of them, when they should be in control of it!



Iphones are by no means the only things that come to dominate people's lives. Hopefully it is under better control in China, but narcotics rule the lives of a small, and yet significant, percentage of people, especially young people. They have become slaves of their addiction and the challenge for suitably trained health workers is to help free them from this slavery.

And so it is with other addictions that come to rule the lives of people. Playing computer games can be another such addiction. And so can obsessing about "body image" become an addiction.



Less obvious addictions

It is the teaching of the Doctrines of the New Church that we are “**upside down**” people, in this sense, that before we become re-born, or regenerate, in our adulthood, our priorities are upside down. Our strongest inclinations, or tendencies, are to love ourselves and to love the world as first in importance, relegating love of our neighbour and love of the Lord, to third and fourth place of our priorities. A simple, and easily remembered, definition of a re-born person is someone who **has chosen the Lord first, our love of our neighbour second, and love of the world third and love of self in fourth place.**



This, however, doesn't happen by just wishing it to be so. Our decision to become a "right side up" person involves many, many, **temptation battles**, even throughout our life. Our inclinations to love ourselves and to love the world strongly resist our efforts to dislodge them. The devil, meaning evil spirits, activates these two inclinations, even to the point that they come to dominate us and make us their slaves.

To talk about the loves of self and of the world making us slaves may at first sound over-dramatic. But it simply means that we become **fixated on self** in every situation or we become **obsessed by worldly thinking and worldly things**.



Worldly thinking

Worldly thinking is, essentially, all about being ruled by whatever our five senses tell us. If we cannot see it, hear it, smell it, touch it or taste it, then it doesn't exist, so says a person in the grip of worldly thinking. And this results in having **a closed mind** against higher level, spiritual thinking. For such a person the world is everything and conclusions based on what the five senses tell us are regarded as authoritative and to be believed.



Now, this is not about other people! **This is about traps or deceptions we can all fall victim to.** The devil doesn't give up easily and, instead, comes at us from all kinds of angles and as the result of all kinds of challenges and experiences. We can have our faith in God and in His love and care of us, securely embedded in our heart – or think we have – until some event or catastrophe stops us in our tracks and calls this conviction into question.

You would be a rare person, indeed, if this hasn't happened to you at different times. Something has happened and you can't make sense of it or reconcile it with belief in a loving and caring God.



Young people and worldly thinking and natural pursuits

It can be shown that young people and young adults are especially vulnerable to worldly thinking. After all they are finding their place in the world, wondering if they have what is needed to thrive in the world, and they are often struggling with self-esteem, and are aware they need to succeed in a worldly sense if they are to secure a sound financial future and be ready for the time when they have family responsibilities. Can you remember a time when you went through this stage of your life? Whilst it is unlikely, perhaps you didn't. But the vast majority of young people do.



The danger of becoming a slave of worldly and natural thinking

It is not that worldly and natural thinking is wrong. But the great challenge is **not to allow it to dominate us; be centre stage; and for us to become its slave.**

Partly because of vast libraries having once been there, wherever Egypt is mentioned in the Bible it represents natural knowledge and conclusions based solely on the evidence of our five senses.

From among the many references in the Doctrines of The New Church, as to the meaning of Egypt, we read “The way natural people look upon spiritual things as, so to speak, a body of slaves was represented by the way the Egyptians regarded the Hebrews as nothing else than their slaves; for the Egyptians represented those who are preoccupied with natural knowledge, and so are natural people.” (“Arcana Caelestia” 5013:2)



Keeping this in mind, we can understand why the prophet Isaiah was inspired to write so disparagingly of the help Egypt can be. “Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, and rely on horses, who trust in chariots because they are many, and in horsemen because they are very strong, but who do not look to the Holy One of Israel, nor seek the LORD!” (Chapter 31:1) And, in another place, Egypt is described as “a broken reed on which if a person leans it will go into his hand and pierce it.” (Isaiah 36:6)

Natural thinking and a focus on what is external and worldly; conclusions narrowly based on the evidence of our five senses; are a broken reed and, if we over rely on them, they will cause us hurt and harm.



The Lord's quiet work in our lives

However unpromising our lives, however rigid our mindsets, however much we become caught up in worldly thinking and make worldly life our focus and as being more important than anything else; **the Lord is quietly and silently working within us.**

The Lord never abandons us and, instead, He follows us into whatever byways and cul-de-sacs we take ourselves down. We can ignore Him, but He never ignores us. We can separate ourselves from Him but He never separates Himself from us. We may claim we have no love for Him but He unfailingly and unceasingly loves us.

He created us to become an angel in heaven and it is the goal He works towards every second of every hour.



The Lord knows that there comes a time when **we need to break free from the grip that what is natural and worldly holds over us**. If we don't we remain its miserable slaves never able to enjoy the happiness in heaven which is His gift to us. And the story of the birth of Moses, how he was laid in a little basket which was released to float on the river, discovered, rescued and nurtured, is a story which teaches us how the Lord sets in motion our liberation.

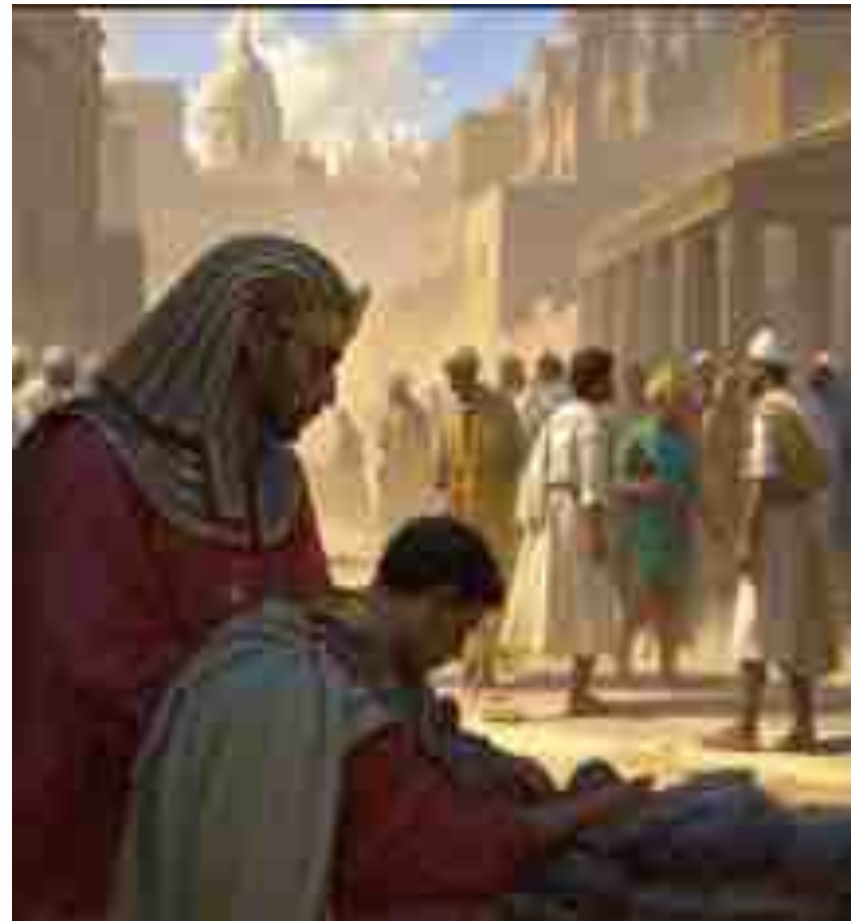
Moses represents “The Law”, meaning our early, innocent, understanding and appreciation of what is right, respectful, and of what other-people-orientated thinking and living involves. Moses represents **the stirring within us** such as causes us to sense that **life is much more than what we just see around us**.



But Egypt has no place for this. **Egypt wants to suffocate and kill this**, even at the very moment of birth. You may remember that the Hebrew midwives were ordered to kill boy babies as they were being born. (Exodus 1:16)

But the Lord had a way around this all those centuries ago and He has a way around this in His work in our lives.

When his mother could no longer hide her baby Moses any longer she made a little basket out of bulrushes, “daubed it with asphalt and pitch, put the child in it, and laid it in the reeds by the river bank.” (Exodus 2:3)



Anything could have happened to it. A wave might have swept it to the middle of the river as a result of which Moses might have been drowned.

But No, **the Lord was vigilant.** As He is with us as well. He makes sure that Moses in us will be safe, rescued, nurtured and **raised to one day be our liberator** and lead us on a journey which one day will bring us to the promised land of heaven.



The basket of bulrushes

To water proof the little basket, and as we have seen, the mother of Moses “daubed it with asphalt and pitch”.

Now asphalt and pitch, both being black, represent **self interest**. And the fascinating thing is that for a long while self-interest protects and keeps alive baby Moses in us.



Think of it this way: Like nearly everyone we learn at an early age the laws forbidding murder, theft, adultery, honoring parents and coveting. And if we have been brought to a knowledge of the Lord we understand these are His laws for us. Now, even if we are not enthusiastic about obeying these laws we know it is a matter of self-interest to obey them. We don't want to be known as a murderer or a thief or an adulterer or as someone who ignores or disrespects his or her parents. This is self interest holding on to these laws, at least outwardly. This is baby Moses put in a basket daubed with asphalt and pitch.



When the basket was discovered and brought to the daughter of Pharaoh she opened it and saw the baby Moses and that he had been crying. It was a touching thing and she was moved by it.

And what this means, or highlights, spiritually, is **the vulnerability of Moses in us**. Let's not forget Moses had been born in a country which was hostile to his people and like so many other boy babies he could easily have been killed at birth. And he was being rescued by a representative, or agent, of this oppression, the Egyptian princess.



For all that Egypt represents what is suffocating of spiritual life; for all that Egypt represents what is natural, sense-based, thinking and worldly priorities; **there are affections with in us** (the princess) who are not so challenged by our very early, innocent, awareness of Divine Law. It sees no threat. And, somewhat enchanted by it, **keeps it alive and nurtures it** thinking it will conform and fit in with Egyptian type mind-sets. But once he had become a young adult Moses refused to conform.



There is a most wonderful promise here, that if things unfold as the Lord intends then there will come a time in our lives when the Moses in us, now grown stronger and more assertive, **will refuse to conform to Egyptian ways** And, at that point, he will start the process which will end in **rebellion against our old sense-based thinking and the domination of our natural and worldly life over what is potentially our spiritual life and a spiritual approach to life.**



Be encouraged, brothers and sisters

Even though we discover that at various times in our lives we be in the grip of powerful oppression; slaves to what is natural and worldly; perhaps having a mindset made up of sense impressions and appearances; yet the Lord patiently and wisely, silently and outside our being aware of it, **is putting in place all that is necessary for our being set free.**

“Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, ‘If you abide in My word, you are My disciples. And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.’” (John 8:31,32)

And the apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, commended the members there who, he said, had been set free from sin and had become slaves of righteousness. (Romans 6:18)



Throughout our lives we so need to be alert to being controlled by sense-based and worldly thinking and objectives in life.

And the way to prevent this happening is to **cherish the Word** as being the casket of treasures that it is, keep it close to our heart, read and meditate on it daily, be encouraged by reading it with others, seek help when we are puzzled or confused, and pray to the Lord for His enlightenment.



Having performed the miracle of feeding the five thousand Jesus went on to teach about Himself as being the Bread of life. Controlled by sense-based thoughts, as they were, “From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. Then Jesus said to the twelve, ‘Do you also want to go away?’ Then Simon Peter answered Him, ‘**Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.**’ ”(John 6:66-68)

Amen



Readings:

Exodus Chapter 1: verses to 6 to 16

Isaiah Chapter 31:1-3

“Arcana Caelestia” 5159:

“In the case of the person who is being regenerated a new state begins when order is turned around (from what it once was). The change takes place when interior things are given dominion over exterior ones, and exterior things begin to serve interior ones - which involves both ideas in the understanding and desires in the will. **People who are being regenerated are conscious of this change as an inner urge** not to allow sensory delights and bodily or earthly pleasures to take control, and draw ideas present in the understanding over to their own side to support them.”



“Arcana Caelestia” 5013:2

“The way natural people look upon spiritual things as so to speak a body of slaves was also represented by the way the Egyptians regarded the Hebrews as nothing else than their slaves; for the Egyptians represented those who are preoccupied with natural knowledge, and so are natural people, whereas the Hebrews represented those who belong to the Church and so are spiritual when considered in relation to the Egyptians.”



THE END

