

Notes on this year's Journey program From Kurt Asplundh

The *Shift* program is based on the Genesis account of Jacob (from Gen. 25:21 to Gen. 35: 20, ten chapters). It presents a series of mental “shifts” in Jacob’s life that model shifts we need to make in our life if we hope to grow spiritually.

The Jacob story is richly expounded in the *Heavenly Doctrine*, especially in the *Arcana Coelestia*. The internal sense that is revealed does present a remarkable account of spiritual development. But it is multi-level and far more detailed than what was possible in the *Shift* program. The most interior level of meaning has to do with Lord’s own development in the process of glorifying the human which he took on from Mary at birth. Specifically, this story refers to the development of the Divine Natural. The series of the patriarchs of Israel in the Word (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) reveals the Lord’s development from interiors to exteriors, from the **spiritual** (Abraham) through the **rational** (Isaac) to the **natural** (Jacob). That is one level of meaning.

Another meaning revealed in the *Arcana* is the process of human regeneration or our personal spiritual development. Here, specifically, the story is about the regeneration of that part of our life called the “natural man.” This is a huge subject! The process of changing the state of our natural man as it is with us at birth into what the Lord hopes it will become by the end of our life is a continuing and lifelong process. The process is surrounded and supported by the Lord in more ways than we can imagine. If the Lord had not done it first, by His own power against the hells, we could never survive the journey. He leads us along the paths He Himself has blazed. There are states of our infancy and childhood that we carry in our life that make the process possible. Providence governs everything about it. It is a very human thing. Our affections and delights as human beings enter into it. Our knowledge, thoughts and ideas are its building blocks. It goes on from week to week and month to month as we go about our daily life in this world of duties, complex relationships and choices.

As we go through the *Shift* program, I hope to direct your thought to some of the deeper aspects of what the Lord has revealed in the Word about the Jacob story. I will refer you to some of the key passages on the subject. Also, there are fine sermons and classes that throw light on what is taught there. These help us see our part in the process and how we can use this opportunity to be led by the Lord to a more thoughtful and spiritual way of life. The passage quoted below declares that the Lord “utterly changes” us, making our “old man” (our unregenerate self) new! This is the story of that change.

That these things have an internal sense, and that what they signify cannot be known without the internal sense (namely, what is signified by two nations being in the womb, and by two peoples being separated from the bowels, and by one people prevailing over the other, and the elder serving the younger), is evident;

and that they signify what has been said, is evident from what follows, where much will be said on this subject.... In the internal sense indeed the Lord is treated of, and here how He made His natural Divine; nevertheless in the representative sense the regeneration of man is also treated of; for man's regeneration is an image of the Lord's glorification (n. 3043, 3138, 3212); that is, in regeneration as in a certain image it appears how the Lord glorified His Human, or what is the same, made it Divine. For as the Lord altogether changed His human state into the Divine, so also in man, when He regenerates him, the Lord utterly changes the man's state, for He makes his old man new. (AC 3296: 2).

My plan is to provide more material week by week at each meeting. What I hope to provide on the 26th will be for study and reflection during that week.