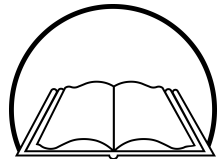


(Special Thanks to the Glenview New Church
for Collecting these Readings)



The New Church



Christmas Readings
2019

“Our Part” An Introduction

This year’s Christmas readings are gathered around a theme titled, “Our Part”. It’s a theme which acknowledges the role that each one of us plays in our eternal destiny. The Lord our God is the Savior of all, but He can’t prepare us for heaven without our cooperation. He has given us hearts that can love, minds that can think wisely and creatively, and bodies that can do many useful things. His hope and expectation are that we will take these gifts and use them to orient ourselves toward Him and toward others around us. He wants us to consider the role we can best play in any given situation, and then pour our energy in that direction.

This theme shows itself throughout the Christmas story. There, each person or group of people has a part to play in the divine narrative: Zacharias and Elizabeth walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless; Mary and Joseph trust the Lord’s leadership, and they devoutly do what is required of them; the shepherds and wise men come with haste to see the newborn babe, they present gifts to Him, and they fall down and worship Him; Simeon waits patiently for the Lord’s coming; and Anna the prophetess speaks of Him to all who seek redemption. Each of these characters symbolizes a different part of us—and a different role that we have to play—in the birth of the Lord’s love and wisdom in our lives.

What is there for us to learn from the different characters in this story? In what way can their lives, and the example they set, help us do *our part* in making loving and wise choices, doing useful things, and contributing to the goodness of any situation that we are in this Christmas season?

Each daily reading in this booklet features a part of the Christmas story followed by readings from the Heavenly Doctrines for the New Church. Each reading touches on one or another part that we have to play in our walk with the Lord.

We hope you will enjoy these readings, and that they will support you in doing *your part* this Christmas season.

Merry Christmas

Investing in Lifelong Spiritual Learning

25

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made...But as many as received Him, to them gave He authority to become the children of God, to them who believe in His name, who were born, not of bloods, nor of the will of flesh, nor of the will of a man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt in a tabernacle among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:1-3,12-14)

It is important to know how a person can be in such enlightenment as to learn the truths that must constitute his faith, and in such affection as to do the goods that must constitute his love. These things are possible as follows: (1) Let him read the Word every day—one or two chapters—and learn from a master and from preachings the dogmas of his religion. Let him especially learn that God is one, that the Lord is the God of heaven and earth, that the Word is holy, that there is a heaven and a hell, and that there is a life after death. (2) Let him learn from the Word, from a master, and from preachings, what works are sins.... Let him learn all these things from childhood to youth. (3) When a person begins to think for himself, it must be to him the first and chief thing to refrain from doing evils for the reason that they are sins against the Word, thus against God.... Afterwards, as he grows up and becomes old, he must turn away from them in thought and intention. But in order to so refrain from them and shun and turn away from them, he must pray to the Lord for help. (4) So far as a person detests these evils because they are opposed to the Word, and thence opposed to God, so far there is granted him communication with the Lord, and conjunction (i.e., togetherness) is effected with heaven. (5) So far, then, as a person detests these sins, so far good affections enter. (6) So far as a person is in these good affections, he is led by the Lord and not by self. (7) The affections that are granted are an affection for knowing and understanding the truths and goods of heaven and the Church, together with an affection for willing and doing them; also an affection for combating with zeal against falsities and evils and dispersing them—both with himself and with others. (8) Thus and in no other way is a person reformed; and so far as he knows and believes truths, and wills and does them, so far is he regenerated, and from natural becomes spiritual. (*Apocalypse Explained* 803)

Giving of Ourselves to Others

...and when they had opened their treasures, they presented to Him gifts: gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. (Matt. 2:11)

It was a custom in ancient times to give gifts to the priest and the prophet, as also to the prince and the king, when they were approached...And as this was a customary and holy practice, meaning introduction, the wise men from the east who came to Jesus soon after His birth by the gifts offered to Jehovah - that is, to the Lord - are signified such things as are of the will, or of the heart and which are accepted by Him...Because external gifts signified internal or spiritual gifts, namely, such as go forth from the heart, and thence are of the affection and faith; and as by these conjunction is effected, in the spiritual sense "gifts" in reference to God signify conjunction, (*Apocalypse Explained* 661; *Arcana Coelestia* 4262:3, 9293:1; *AE* 661)

The wise men from the east opened their treasures, and offered to the Lord recently born, gold, frankincense, and myrrh (Matt. 2:11). The reason why they offered these three was, because "gold" signified celestial good, "frankincense" spiritual good, and "myrrh" natural good, and from those three goods all worship is made. (*Apocalypse Revealed* 277 See also: *Arcana Coelestia* 4262:3 *True Christian Religion* 205)

They were called "gifts and offerings made to Jehovah," although Jehovah, that is, the Lord, does not accept any gifts or offerings, but gives to everyone freely. Nevertheless He wills that these things should come from man as from himself, provided he acknowledges that they are not from himself, but from the Lord. For the Lord imparts the affection of doing good from love, and the affection of speaking truth from faith; but the affection itself flows in from the Lord, and it appears as if it were in the man, thus from the man; ...From this it is evident that what are called "gifts and offerings made to the Lord" by man are in their essence gifts and offerings made to man by the Lord. (*Arcana Coelestia* 9938:2)

Seek Peace

The scepter shall not be removed from Judah, and a lawgiver from between his feet, even until Shiloh come; and to Him will be the obedience of the peoples. (Genesis 49:10)

"Until Shiloh come." That this signifies the coming of the Lord, and the tranquillity of peace then, is evident from the signification of "Shiloh," as being the Lord, who is called "Shiloh" from the fact that He pacified and made all things tranquil; for in the original, "Shiloh" is derived from a word which means tranquillity. (*Arcana Coelestia* 6373)

The chariots of God are ten thousands of thousands of peaceable ones (Ps. 68:17); where the "chariots of God" denote those things which are of the Word and of the doctrine thence derived; "ten thousands of thousands" denote the infinite things which are therein. (*Arcana Coelestia* 3186:2, See also 5321:7)

Because the peace of heaven is the Divine inmost affecting with blessedness the veriest good in angels, it can be clearly perceived by them only in the delight of their hearts when they are in the good of their life, in the pleasure with which they hear truth that agrees with their good, and in gladness of mind when they perceive the conjunction of good and truth. From this it flows into all the acts and thoughts of their life, and there presents itself as **joy**, even in **outward** appearance...This peace may be likened to morning or dawn in spring time, when the night being passed, with the rising of the sun all things of the earth begin to live anew, the fragrance of growing vegetation is spread abroad with the dew that descends from heaven, and the mild vernal temperature gives fertility to the ground and imparts pleasure to the minds of men, and this because morning or dawn in the time of spring corresponds to the state of peace of angels in heaven (*Heaven and Hell* 288-289)

Happy are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the sons of God. (Matthew 5:9)

2

Turning on the Lord's Light

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; they who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, on them has the light given brightness. (Isaiah 9:2)

"Darkness" signifies in the Word the falsities of evil. "Darkness" signifies also falsities not of evil, such as

were the falsities of religion among the upright Gentiles, which falsities were with them because of their ignorance of the truth... These falsities are altogether distinct from the falsities of evil, which have evil stored up in them because they are from evil, while the former have good stored up in them because they have good as an end. Those, therefore, who are in these falsities can be instructed in truths, and they also when instructed receive truths in the heart, for the reason that good, which is in their falsities, loves truth, and also conjoins itself to truth when it is heard.— as with little children, —if not in this world, yet in the other life; and then all the earthly and worldly things they have brought with them from their life in the world, are at the same time uplifted so as together to look upward; whereby they are in a state to receive the truths of faith and the goods of charity from the Lord, and to become imbued with intelligence and wisdom, and thus to be endowed with eternal happiness. Such is the lot of all who have lived in good in accordance with their religion (*Apocalypse Explained* 526:15, *Arcana Coelestia* 9256:2,4)

"Seeing a great light" signifies receiving and believing the truths which are of faith. (*Arcana Coelestia* 3863)

The divine mercy is pure mercy towards the whole human race, to save it; and it is also unceasing towards every man, and is never withdrawn from any one; so that everyone is saved who can be saved. And yet no one can be saved except by Divine means, which means the Lord reveals in the Word. The Divine means are what are called Divine truths, which teach how man must live in order to be saved. By these truths the Lord leads man to heaven, and by them He implants in man the life of heaven. This the Lord does for all. (*Heaven and Hell* 522)

And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying... "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." (Matthew 5:1-2,5)

Remaining Humble

23

And when they had come into the house, they found the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him... (Matt. 2:11)

All inward endeavours that are of the will, thus of the love or affection, consequently of the life, have outward acts or gestures corresponding to them..

Holy fear with its consequent humility (and therefore adoration), has acts or gestures corresponding to itself, namely, bending the knees, falling down upon the knees, and also prostrating the body down to the earth. (*Arcana Coelestia* 5323:1)

Humiliation before a man produces a bowing down, according to the estimation of him; but in presence of the Divine it produces total prostration, especially when man thinks that the Divine in respect to power and wisdom is everything, and man in comparison is nothing ... When man is in this acknowledgment from the heart he comes as it were out of himself, and thence falls upon his face, and when he is thus out of himself he also is removed from the proprium [what is his own], which in itself is wholly evil; when this is removed, the Divine fills him and raises him up. (*Apocalypse Explained* 77:1)

True adoration, or humiliation of heart, carries with it prostration to the earth upon the face before the Lord, as a gesture naturally flowing from it. For in humiliation of heart there is the acknowledgment of self as being nothing but filthiness, and at the same time the acknowledgment of the Lord's infinite mercy toward that which is such; and when the mind is kept in these two acknowledgments, the very mind droops in lowness toward hell, and prostrates the body; nor does it uplift itself until it is uplifted by the Lord. This takes place in all true humiliation, with a perception of being uplifted by the Lord's mercy. (*Arcana Coelestia* 1999)

22

Turning to the Lord for Help against Evil

But having heard, Herod the king was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him.... And sending them to Bethlehem, he said, Go and search earnestly for the young Child; and when you have found Him, report to me, that I also may come and worship Him.

(Matt. 2:3,8)

Joseph here spake to his brethren: "Ye thought evil against me, God thought it for good, in order to do as it is this day, to make alive a great people" are words which contain within them a secret of heaven. which secret is this: In the other life the Lord permits infernal spirits to lead the good into temptation, consequently to pour in evils and falsities; But the Lord Himself is then present with those in temptation, both immediately, and mediately by angels, and resists by rebutting the falsities of the infernal spirits, and by dissipating their evil, thus giving refreshment, hope, and victory. Thus with those who are in the truths of good, the truths of faith and the goods of charity are more inwardly implanted and more strongly confirmed. *(Arcana Coelestia 6574:2)*

While a man is being reformed good and evil are brought together, and then arise conflict and combat. This, if severe, is called temptation; but if not severe, what takes place is like the fermentation of wine or strong drink. If good then conquers, evil with its falsity is removed to the outskirts as, to use a comparison, the lees fall to the bottom of a vessel; and the good is like wine that becomes generous after fermentation and like strong drink that becomes clear. *(Divine Providence 284)*

How great are Thy deeds, O Jehovah!
Thy thoughts are exceedingly deep.
When the wicked flourish as the herb,
And all the workers of iniquity flower;
Yet it is for them to be blotted out forever and ever;
(Psalm 92:5,7)

Choosing the Lord's Way

3

*There was in the days of Herod the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the daily ministry of Abijah; and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both just in the sight of God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.... And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And Zacharias was disturbed at the sight, and fear fell upon him. And the angel said to him, Fear not, Zacharias, for thy prayer is heard, and thy wife Elizabeth shall give birth to a son for thee, and thou shalt call his name John. And thou shalt have joy and gladness, and many shall rejoice at his birth. *(Luke 1:5-6,11-14)**

"To walk in the law of Jehovah" denotes to live a life of truth and good according to doctrine. *(Arcana Coelestia 8420)*

The internal man that should command, and the external that should obey, and that does obey when the man has not the world as the end, but heaven, and not self but the neighbor, consequently when he regards bodily and worldly things as means and not as the end; and he so regards them when he loves his neighbor more than himself, and the things of heaven more than those of the world. When this is the case, the natural obeys; the natural is the same as the external man. *(Arcana Coelestia 5368:1-2)*

Men are nothing else than forms receptive of life from the Lord, and these forms are such by inheritance and by actual life that they refuse to admit the spiritual life which is from the Lord. But when these receptacles have been so far renounced that they no longer have any freedom from the man's own, there is total submission....In order that He may make a man blessed and happy, the Lord wills a total submission, that is, that he be not partly his own and partly the Lord's, for then there are two lords, which no one can serve at the same time *(Matt. 6:24)*. ...That submission must be total is very evident from the first commandment of the church: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God from all thy heart, and from all thy soul, and from all thy mind, and from all thy forces; this is the first commandment *(Mark 12:30)*. *(Arcana Coelestia 6138.1-3)*

4

Working on Our Faith

And Zacharias said to the angel, Whereby shall I know this? For I am old, and my wife is far advanced in her days. And the angel answering said to him, I am Gabriel, who stands in the sight of God, and am sent to speak to thee, and to announce to thee these good tidings. And behold, thou shalt be silent, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall come to pass, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their time. (Luke 1:18-20)

There are therefore two principles; one of which leads to all folly and insanity, and the other to all intelligence and wisdom. The former principle is to deny all things, or to say in the heart that we cannot believe them until we are convinced by what we can apprehend, or perceive by the senses; this is the principle that leads to all folly and insanity, and is to be called the negative principle. The other principle is to affirm the things which are of doctrine from the Word, or to think and believe within ourselves that they are true because the Lord has said them: this is the principle that leads to all intelligence and wisdom, and is to be called the affirmative principle. (*Arcana Coelestia* 2568:4)

Real faith is nothing else than an acknowledgment that the thing is so because it is true; for one who is in real faith thinks and says, "This is true, and therefore I believe it." For faith is of truth, and truth is of faith. If such a person does not see the truth of a thing, he says, "I do not know whether this is true, and therefore as yet I do not believe it. How can I believe what I do not intellectually comprehend? Perhaps it is false." (*Doctrine of Faith* 2)

Spirits are perfectly well distinguished from each other, as to whether they are in the faith of charity or not. Those who are in the faith of charity do not reason about the truths of faith, but say that the thing is so, and also as far as possible confirm it by things of sense and of memory, and by the analysis of reason; but as soon as anything obscure comes in their way the truth of which they do not perceive, they defer it, and never suffer such a thing to bring them into doubt, saying that there are but very few things they can apprehend, and therefore to think that anything is not true because they do not apprehend it, would be madness. (*Arcana Coelestia* 1072:2)

Perseverance on Our Spiritual Journey

21

And when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came Magi from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is He who is born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him....And when they had heard the king they departed; and lo, the star which they saw in the east went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. And having seen the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. (*or wise-men)
(Matt. 2:1-2,9-10)*

Because man, in respect to his self is such, means have been given by the Divine mercy of the Lord, by which man can be withdrawn from his self; these means are given in the Word; and when man cooperates with these means, that is, when he thinks and speaks, wills and acts, from the Divine Word, he is kept by the Lord in things Divine, and is thus withheld from self; and when this continues there is formed with man by the Lord as it were a new self, both voluntary and intellectual, which is wholly separated from man's self; thus man becomes as it were created anew, and this is what is called his reformation and regeneration by truths from the Word, and by a life according to them. (*Apocalypse Explained* 585:3)

And he that overcometh and keepeth My works unto the end, signifies perseverance in love and faith after combat against these loves and their removal as far as possible. This is evident from the signification of "overcoming" as being to fight against the delights of the loves of self and of the world, and to remove them. ...

It is evident also from the signification of "keeping unto the end," as being perseverance even unto death; for he who perseveres even unto death in love and faith is saved; It is evident also from the signification of "works" as being the things of love and faith in cause and in effect, that is in internals and in externals. (*Apocalypse Explained* 174)

Neither with men nor with angels can any love ever become pure. So also with this love. But since it is the intention which is of the will that is primarily regarded by the Lord, therefore, so far as a man is in this intention and perseveres therein, so far he is initiated into the purity and holiness of this love and successively progresses therein. (*Conjugal Love* 71:2)

20

Remaining Faithful

And there was Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher; she was advanced in many days, having lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; and she was a widow of about eighty-four years, who stood not back from the temple, serving God With fastings and prayers night and

day. And she, at that very hour, standing by, confessed the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who waited for redemption in Jerusalem. (Luke 2:36-38)

Also those who are with Him are called, and chosen, and faithful, signifies that those that are in love to the Lord, in love towards the neighbor, and in the faith of charity, have the truth respecting the Lord's Divine authority and the Divine holiness of the Word. This is evident from the signification of the "called," as being in reference to the Lord those who are in love to the Lord; also from the signification of the "chosen," as being those who are in love towards the neighbor; also from the signification of the "faithful," as being those who are in the faith of charity. (*Apocalypse Explained* 1074:1)

"To fast" signifies to mourn on account of the lack of truth and good....the desire of learning the goods and truths of faith. (*Apocalypse Explained* 1189:2; *Arcana Coelestia* 9050:7)

Be thou faithful unto death, signifies reception and acknowledgment of truths, until falsities are removed, and as it were abolished. By "be thou faithful unto death," in the natural sense, is meant, that they must not depart from fidelity even to the end of life; but in the spiritual sense, that they must receive and acknowledge truths, even until falsities are removed by them, and as it were abolished; for this sense is properly for those who are in the spiritual world, for whom there is no death. (*Apocalypse Revealed* 102)

...be thou faithful to death, and I will give thee a crown of life. (Rev. 2:10)

Doing What is Good

5

And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the name of the virgin was Mary...

And the angel said to her, Fear not, Mary; for thou hast found grace with God. And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a Son, and shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest, and the Lord God shall give to Him the throne of His father David. And He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end. (Luke 1:26-33)

In the internal sense "to bring forth" denotes:

- * the things of the spiritual birth...
- * such things as pertain to the church, which are doctrinals, here those concerning love to the Lord and charity towards the neighbour...
- * to acknowledge in faith and act ...
- * has respect to good and truth, and in this sense means to come into existence to make truths fruitful by doing them, from which comes reformation. (*Arcana Coelestia* 4586; *Apocalypse Explained* 721:16; *AC* 3298, 4070; *AE* 721:17)

When truth which is of faith passes into good which is of charity; and when it is in the will, it is in its womb, and is then first produced; and when man is in good in act, that is, when he produces good from the will, thus from delight and freedom, it then goes forth from the womb or is born-which also is meant by being reborn or regenerated. From this it is evident what is signified in the spiritual sense by "being with child." (*Arcana Coelestia* 4904)

As to its being said, "Bring forth abundantly in the earth, and be ye multiplied therein" the case is this: nothing is multiplied with the regenerate man in his external man, that is, nothing of good and truth receives increase, except as the effect of charity. Charity is like heat in the time of spring or summer, which causes grass and plants and trees to grow. Without charity, or spiritual heat, nothing grows, and for this reason it is here said in the first place, "Bring forth abundantly in the earth" which is predicated of the goods that are of charity, by means of which there is multiplication of good and truth. (*Arcana Coelestia* 1016)

6

Trusting in the Lord

But Mary said to the angel, How shall this be, since I know not a man? And the angel answering said to her, The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that which shall be born of thee Holy shall be called the Son of God. For with God not any saying shall be impossible. (Luke 1:34-37)

Man can never be led better [than he is led]. Spirits suppose that they could have been led differently, and so become better than they are, thus be kept from actual evils, and many things. The evil throw the blame on the Lord, but they were told that it is their fault. I perceived in spiritual idea, that they can never be led better [than they are]: so that there are necessities every moment of their lives...and it was foreseen from eternity, and so foreseen that each and all things tend to our ultimate end, to be [that they may be] parts in the Grand Man, that is, in the Lord's kingdom. Inasmuch as this is not perceptible by them, on account of intuitions of particulars, it was given to perceive that omnipotence, or infinite power can so dispose...(Spiritual Experiences 3114)

He who lives in good, and believes that the Lord governs the universe, and that all the good which is of love and charity, and all the truth which is of faith, are from the Lord alone; nay, that life is from Him, and thus that from Him we live, move, and have our being, is in such a state that he can be gifted with heavenly freedom, and together with it with peace; for he then trusts solely in the Lord and has no care for other things, and is certain that all things are tending to his good, his blessedness, and his happiness to eternity. (*Arcana Coelestia* 2892)

They who trust in the Lord continually receive good from Him; for whatsoever happens to them, whether it appears to be prosperous or not prosperous, is still good, because it conduces as a means to their eternal happiness. But they who trust in themselves are continually drawing evil upon themselves; for whatever happens to them, even if it appears to be prosperous and happy, is nevertheless evil, and consequently conduces as a means to their eternal unhappiness. (*Arcana Coelestia* 8480:3)

The signification of "God shall be with you," [is] the Divine providence of the Lord; for when the Lord is with anyone, He leads him, and provides that all things which happen, whether sad or joyful, befall him for good: this is the Divine providence. (*Arcana Coelestia* 6303)

They who are in the perception of the Lord's presence are in the perception that each and all things which befall them tend to their good, and that evils do not reach them; hence they are in tranquillity.. (*Arcana Coelestia* 5963)

Striving for Patience

19

And when the days of her purification were accomplished, according to the Law of Moses, they brought Him up to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Lord, as it is written in the Law of the Lord, that every male opening the womb shall be called holy to the Lord; and to offer the sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, A pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons. And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was just and circumspect, waiting for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Spirit was upon him. (Luke 2:22-35)

"The patience of the saints" signifies the temptation of the faithful, or of those who are made spiritual by the Lord, because "patience" signifies spiritual patience, which is patience in sustaining temptations. (*Apocalypse Explained* 813)

"Because thou hast kept the word of My endurance", signifies because they have fought against evils, and then have rejected falsities. Spiritual combat, which is temptation, is called the word of the Lord's endurance or patience, because in temptations the Lord fights for man, and He fights by means of truths out of His Word. (*Apocalypse Revealed* 185)

But in respect to temptations, which are also meant here by "patience," there are spiritual temptations which those undergo who receive genuine charity from the Lord. (*Apocalypse Explained* 893:3)

When man is in a state of love, or of celestial affection, he is in an angelic state, that is to say, as if not in time, provided there is no impatience in the affection; for impatience is a corporeal affection, and insofar as man is in it, so far he is in time; but insofar as man is not in it, so far he is not in time. ...The reason why time appears to be something is that we reflect upon things that do not belong to the affection or love, thus which are tedious. (*Arcana Coelestia* 3827)

Wait for Jehovah; hold firm and He shall encourage thine heart; and wait for Jehovah. (Psalm 27:14)

In your patience you possess your souls. (Luke 21:19)

18

Sharing Good Things with Others

And the angel said to them, Fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people. For to you is born today a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David.... And they came in haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe laid in the manger. And when they had seen, they made known abroad the saying which was spoken to them concerning this little Child. (Luke 2:10-11,16-17)

And the eleven disciples went into Galilee, into the mountain where Jesus had directed them. And when they saw Him, they worshiped Him; and yet they doubted. And Jesus coming spoke to them, saying, All authority is given to Me in heaven and on earth. Going forth, therefore, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to keep all things whatever I have commanded you; and, behold, I am with you all the days, even to the consummation of the age. Amen. (Matthew 28:16-20)

And after these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two and two before His face, to every city and place, whither He Himself was about to come. Then He said to them, The harvest is indeed much, but the workers are few; entreat you therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He may send-out workers into His harvest. (Luke 10:1-2)

After this work [True Christian Religion] was finished the Lord called together His twelve disciples who followed Him in the world; and the next day He sent them all forth throughout the whole spiritual world to preach the Gospel that THE LORD GOD JESUS CHRIST reigns, whose kingdom shall be for ages and ages, according to the prediction in Daniel (7:13, 14), and in Revelation (11:15). Also that blessed are those that come to the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:9). This took place on the nineteenth day of June, 1770. This is what is meant by these words of the Lord: He shall send His angels and they shall gather together His elect, from the end of the heavens to the end thereof (Matt. 24:31). (True Christian Religion 791)

Freely you have received, freely give. (Matthew 10:8)

Allowing Ourselves to Be Led

And Mary said, Behold, the maidservant of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy saying. And the angel departed from her. (Luke 1:38)

Those who are in a state of innocence attribute nothing of good to themselves, but regard all things as received and ascribe them to the Lord; that they wish to be led by Him and not by themselves; that they love everything that is good and find delight in everything that is true, because they know and perceive that loving what is good, that is, willing and doing it, is loving the Lord, and loving truth is loving the neighbour; that they live contented with their own, whether it be little or much, because they know that they receive just as much as is good for them—those receiving little for whom a little is useful, and those receiving much for whom much is useful; also that they do not themselves know what is good for them, the Lord alone knowing this, who looks in all things that He provides to what is eternal. (Heaven and Hell 278:1)

A longing to know the future is innate with most people; but this longing derives its origin from the love of evil. It is therefore taken away from those who believe in the Divine Providence; and there is given them a trust that the Lord is disposing their lot. Consequently they do not desire to know it beforehand lest they should in any way set themselves against the Divine Providence. (Divine Providence 179:1)

When spirits have been prepared for heaven by instruction in the places above described, which is effected in a short time on account of their being in spiritual ideas that comprehend many particulars together, they are clothed with angelic garments, which are mostly glowing white as if made of fine linen; and they are thus brought to the way that leads upwards towards heaven, and are delivered there to angel guards, and afterwards are received by other angels and introduced into societies and into many blessednesses there. After this each one is led by the Lord into his own society, which is also effected by various ways, sometimes by winding paths. The ways by which they are led are not known to any angel, but are known to the Lord alone. (Heaven and Hell 519)

8

Looking into the Future with Hope

And Mary stood up in those days, and went with haste into the hill-country, into a city of Judah, and entered into the house of Zacharias, and greeted Elizabeth. And it came to pass that when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. And she exclaimed with a great voice and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.... And blessed is she who has believed that there shall be a performance of those things which were spoken to her from the Lord. (Luke 1:39-45)

When anyone proposes anything to himself, he perceives it as present, because he puts his mind into the state of that thing; and from this there are longings and consequent delight as if the thing were present. (*Arcana Coelestia* 7017)

It is the very delight of reason to see from love the effect in thought not the effect in its attainment, but before it, that is, not in the present but in the future. Hence man has what is called Hope, which increases and decreases in the reason as he sees or looks forward to the event. (*Divine Providence* 178)

“He urged them exceedingly.” That this signifies a state of temptation which one overcomes, cannot be seen except by those who have been in temptations. As before said, temptations are attended with doubt in regard to the Lord's presence and mercy, and also in regard to salvation. The evil spirits who are then with the man and induce the temptation strongly inspire negation, but the good spirits and angels from the Lord in every possible way dispel this state of doubt, and keep the man in a state of hope, and at last confirm him in what is affirmative. The result is that a man who is in temptation hangs between what is negative and what is affirmative. One who yields in temptation remains in a state of doubt, and falls into what is negative; but one who overcomes is indeed in doubt, but still, if he suffers himself to be cheered by hope, he stands fast in what is affirmative. (*Arcana Coelestia* 2338)

Preparing for Heaven

17

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, Glory in the highest to God, and on earth peace, good will among men. (*good-pleasure) (Luke 2:13-14)*

From this it can be seen that peace in the heavens is the Divine inmost affecting with blessedness everything good therefrom, and from this is every joy of heaven ...the peace of heaven is the Divine inmost affecting with blessedness the veriest good in angels, it can be clearly perceived by them only in the delight of their hearts when they are in the good of their life, in the pleasure with which they hear truth that agrees with their good, and in gladness of mind when they perceive the conjunction of good and truth. From this it flows into all the acts and thoughts of their life, and there presents itself as joy, even in outward appearance. (*Heaven and Hell* 286, 288)

There are two states that man must enter upon and pass through, when from being natural he is becoming spiritual. The first state is called Reformation, and the second Regeneration. ...The first state is formed by means of truths, which must be truths of faith, and through these he looks to charity; the second state is formed by means of the goods of charity, and by these he enters into the truths of faith. Or what is the same, the first is a state of thought from the understanding, and the second a state of love from the will. When this latter state begins and is progressing, a change takes place in the mind; the mind undergoes a reversal, the love of the will then flowing into the understanding, acting upon it and leading it to think in accord and agreement with its love; and in consequence so far as the good of love comes to act the first part and the truths of faith the second, man is spiritual and is a new creature; and he then acts from charity and speaks from faith; he feels the good of charity and perceives the truth of faith; and he is then in the Lord, and in peace, and thus regenerate. (*True Christian Religion* 571)

For the universal truth of all is that the Lord united His Human to the Divine Itself, and that from this man has peace and salvation. And it is also a universal truth that man must be conjoined with the Lord, in order that he may have peace and salvation, and this is effected by means of regeneration. (*Arcana Coelestia* 10730:3)

[Peace,] is what is central to every form of happiness and bliss ...the ancients therefore used the common saying 'Peace to you', meaning May all be well. (*Arcana Coelestia* 5662.3)

16

Remaining Vigilant

And there were in the same country shepherds, abiding in the field, and keeping watch over their flock by night. (Luke 2:8)

In the Word, “a shepherd,” or one who pastures a flock, means one who teaches and leads to good flowing from charity; “a watchman with God” means an understanding of the Word; and “night” means obscurity—a time when there is no longer any spiritual truth—also the final period of the old Church, and the first of the new. (*Arcana Coelestia* 4713, 6000:1,4,6, 2353; *Apocalypse Explained* 624:12)

[Reading] in Isaiah: “One crieth unto me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night? what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night” (Isa. 21:11, 12); by the “watchman” in the internal sense is meant one who observes the states of the church and its changes, thus every prophet; by “night” is meant the last state of the church; by “morning” its first state; (*Arcana Coelestia* 10134:11)

The signification of the “watches to Jehovah,” [is] the presence of the Lord and thence protection; for by the presence of the Lord those are enlightened who are in good and thence in truth, and those are made blind who are in evil and thence in falsity; and also by the presence of the Lord those are brought out from damnation who are to be raised into heaven, for they are withheld from evil and are kept in good, and this by a strong force from the Lord; (*Arcana Coelestia* 7989:1)

Just as the welfare of the large society depends on order, so also does the welfare of the small society. Therefore, as, in a composite society, it concerns the magistrates to see and provide that order shall exist and be preserved, so with married partners in their particular society. (*Conjugal Love* 283)

Giving Credit to the Lord

And Mary said, My soul magnifies the Lord; and my spirit has been glad in God my Saviour; for He has looked upon the lowliness of His maidservant; for behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For He who is powerful has done for me great things, and Holy is His name. (Luke 1:46-49)

Interior confession [of the Lord’s Divine Human] is of the heart and comes forth in humility, and at the same time in the affection of good; (*Arcana Coelestia* 2329)

Real confession of the heart, being from celestial love, is in the genuine sense confession. The man who is in this confession acknowledges that all good is from the Lord, and that all evil is from himself; and when he is in this acknowledgment, he is in a state of humiliation, for he then acknowledges that the Lord is everything in him, and that he himself is relatively nothing; and when confession is made from this state, it is made from celestial love. (*Arcana Coelestia* 3880.7)

Angels have nothing of wisdom and intelligence from themselves, they themselves openly confess; nay, they are indignant if anyone ascribes to them anything of wisdom and intelligence, for they know and perceive that this would be to take away from the Divine that which is Divine, and to claim for themselves that which is not theirs, and thus to incur the crime of spiritual theft. (*Arcana Coelestia* 4295)

Let it be known that all true worship consists in adoration of the Lord, adoration of the Lord in humiliation, and humiliation in one's acknowledgment that in himself there is nothing living, and nothing good, but that all within him is dead, yea, cadaverous; and in the acknowledgment that everything living and everything good is from the Lord. The more a man acknowledges these things, not with the mouth, but with the heart, the more he is in humiliation; and consequently the more he is in adoration, that is, in true worship, and the more he is in love and charity, and the more in happiness. (*Arcana Coelestia* 1153:2)

10

Making Spiritual Commitments

And to Elizabeth was fulfilled the time that she should bring forth; and she gave birth to a son. And her neighbours and kinsfolk heard that the Lord had magnified His mercy with her, and they rejoiced with her. And it came to pass that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the young child... (Luke

1:57-59)

That which primarily distinguished the Israelitish church from the other churches in Asia, and afterward from the Christian church, was circumcision. And because, as before said, all things of the Israelitish church, being external, prefigured all things in the Christian church, which are internal, so the especial sign of that church was interiorly like the sign of the Christian church; circumcision signifying the rejection of the lusts of the flesh, and thus purification from evils, and baptism having the same signification;...hence it is said in Jeremiah: Wash your heart free from wickedness, so that you may be saved (Jeremiah 4:14). ...Baptism was enjoined in place of circumcision, in order that what is internal should be more closely known. ...This results from the uses of baptism, which are as follows:

- The first use of baptism is introduction into the Christian church, and at the same time insertion among Christians in the spiritual world.
- The second use of baptism is, that the Christian may know and acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ, the Redeemer and Savior, and follow Him.
- The third use of baptism, which is the final use, is that the person may be regenerated.

(*True Christian Religion* 674-675, 677, 681, 684)

Baptism was instituted to be a sign that a man is of the church, and as a memorial that he is to be regenerated; for the washing of baptism is nothing else than spiritual washing, which is regeneration. Since everyone who is regenerated also undergoes temptations, which are spiritual combats against evils and falsities, therefore by the water of baptism these also are signified. As baptism is for a sign and memorial of these things therefore man may be baptized as an infant, and if not then, he may be baptized as an adult. Let those therefore who are baptized know, that baptism itself does not give faith nor salvation, but it testifies that they may receive faith and be saved, if they are regenerated. (*Heavenly Doctrine* 202,205-207)

Living a Good Life

15

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the inhabited earth should be enrolled. This enrollment was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria. And all went to be enrolled, every one to his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary his betrothed wife, being great with child. And it came to pass, that while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should bring forth; and she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling-clothes, and laid Him in the manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. (*made Him recline) (Luke 2:1-7)*

Faith was said to be the firstborn of the church, and also had attributed to it the right of primogeniture, that is, the right of priority and superiority over the good of charity; when yet the good of charity is actually prior and superior, and the truth of faith only apparently so. (*Arcana Coelestia* 9224:2)

Good is indeed the essential of the church, and is actually the firstborn but the good which those have who belong to the spiritual church is in itself truth; for when they act according to the truth which is of their doctrine, then the truth is called good, having then passed from the understanding into the will and from the will into act, and that which is done from the will is called good. (*Arcana Coelestia* 8042)

Love and the faith thence derived are the "firstborn." All love is of the Lord, and not one whit of it is of man, therefore the Lord alone is the "firstborn." (*Arcana Coelestia* 352)

14

Striving to Be Obedient

And Joseph, being awakened from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord had ordered him, and took unto him his wife, and knew her not, until she brought forth her firstborn Son; and he called His name Jesus. (Matt. 1:24-25)

In order that the truth of faith may live, it must be introduced into the will, that it may there receive life; for truth does not live from knowing, but from willing. Life flows in from the Lord through the new willing that He creates in man. The first life manifests itself by obedience, which is the first of the will; the second by the affection of doing the truth, which is the progression of the will, and which exists when delight and bliss are perceived in doing the truth. Unless there takes place such a progress of faith, truth does not become truth, but becomes a separate affair from life. (*Arcana Coelestia* 3870:1)

Man's external or natural ought to serve his internal or spiritual. Moreover, the natural was created for service; for it does not live from itself, thus can do nothing from itself; but from the internal or spiritual, that is, through this from the Lord. From this it is also evident that man's external or natural is nothing unless it is of service to the internal or spiritual, and that it becomes something in proportion as it is of service. To be of service is to obey, and the natural obeys when it does not take for itself from the understanding reasons which favor the evils of the loves of self and of the world; but when it complies with the dictates of reason and the doctrine of the church, which declare that good and truth ought to be done, not for the sake of self and the world as ends, but for the sake of good and truth itself. In this manner the Lord does these through man's heaven, that is, through his internal; for all good and truth are from the Lord, insomuch that good and truth with man are the Lord Himself. (*Arcana Coelestia* 9776)

Worshipping the Lord

11

And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and worked redemption for His people, and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of David His servant, as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from the beginning, Salvation from our enemies, and from the hand of all who hate us; to do mercy with our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant; the oath which He swore to Abraham our father, that He would give to us, that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and justice in His sight, all the days of our life. (*Boy) (Luke 1:67-75)*

"To fear Jehovah and to serve Him" means worship according to the truths of doctrine. For there are two things that constitute worship, namely, doctrine and life; doctrine without life does not constitute it, neither does life without doctrine. (*Apocalypse Explained* 696:10)

The good of love is the essential of worship, but good has its existence and form by means of truths, therefore all worship must be from good by means of truths. For this reason, in many passages in the Word where the expression "to fear Jehovah God" is used it is added, "to keep and to do His words and commandments;" ... Thence it may be seen that so far as man is in the good of love there is fear of God; also that dread and terror disappear and become a holy fear attended with reverence so far as man is in the good of love and in truths therefrom, that is, so far as there is good in his truths.

Present within all worship there is fear, but this fear takes on a different form and nature; for it is holy fear. Holy fear is not so much a fear of hell and of damnation, as a fear lest anything whatever be done or thought that is contrary to the Lord and contrary to the neighbor, thus anything whatever that is contrary to the good of love and to the truth of faith. (*Arcana Coelestia* 2826:13)

12

Heeding Our Conscience

And the birth of Jesus Christ was thus: His mother Mary, being betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, was found with child from the Holy Spirit. And Joseph her husband, being just, and not willing to expose her to public infamy, intended to send her away privately. (*having in the womb) (Matt. 1:18-*

19)

All those are in the good of charity who have conscience (that is, who are unwilling to depart in any degree from what is just and fair, and good and true, and this for the very sake of what is just and fair, and good and true, for this principle is from conscience), and who from having conscience think well of the neighbor and desire his welfare, even should he be an enemy; and this without any recompense. (*Arcana Coelestia* 2380:2)

The Lord's presence is predicated according to the good, that is, according to the quality of the good; the quality of the good is according to the state of innocence, of love, and of charity, in which the truths of faith have been implanted or can be implanted. (*Arcana Coelestia* 2915)

All those are within the Grand Man who are in love to the Lord and in charity toward the neighbor, and who do good to the neighbor from the heart according to the good that is in him, and who have a conscience of what is just and equitable; for these are in the Lord, and consequently in heaven. ...Conscience itself is an interior plane in which the influx of the Divine good terminates. All those with whom the interiors of the will have been terminated are taken up into heaven, for the Divine that flows in can lead them, whereas all those with whom the interior things of the will have not been terminated, betake themselves into hell; for the Divine flows through, and is turned into what is infernal. (*Arcana Coelestia* 4225:1, 5145)

He who does his duty from a sense of duty, and what is just from a sense of justice, exercises charity. (*Arcana Coelestia* 8122)

The works of charity consist solely in giving to the poor and in assisting the miserable, and this they also confirm from the sense of the letter of the Word; when yet the works of charity consist in doing what is just and equitable, each in his own employment, from the love of what is just and equitable, and of what is good and true. (*Arcana Coelestia* 4783:5)

Treating Others with Consideration

13

And the birth of Jesus Christ was thus: His mother Mary, being betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, was found with child from the Holy Spirit. And Joseph her husband, being just, and not willing to expose her to public infamy, intended to send her away privately. And while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appears to him in a dream, saying, Joseph, son of David, fear not to take to thee Mary thy wife, for that which is begotten in her is from the Holy Spirit. And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus; for He shall save His people from their sins. (Matt. 1:18-21)

Speaking generally, "fear" is of two kinds-fear in what is not sacred, and fear in what is sacred; fear in what is not sacred is the fear in which are the wicked; but fear in what is sacred is the fear in which are the good. This latter fear (to wit that in which are the good) is called reverential or sacred fear, and is the result of our wonder at and longing for what is Divine, and also of our love. Love that is devoid of reverential or sacred fear is as it were devoid of savor, or is like food unseasoned with salt, and consequently insipid; but love that is attended with fear is like food that is seasoned, but yet does not taste of salt. The fear of love is a fear of injuring the Lord in any way, or of injuring the neighbor in any way, thus of injuring what is good and true in any way, and consequently of injuring the sacred things of love and faith and the consequent worship. (*Arcana Coelestia* 3718)

When a man feels or perceives in himself that he has good thoughts concerning the Lord, and that he has good thoughts concerning the neighbor, and desires to perform kind offices for him, not for the sake of any gain or honor for himself; and when he feels that he has pity for anyone who is in trouble, and still more for one who is in error in respect to the doctrine of faith, then he may know that he dwells in the tents of Shem, that is, that he has internal things in him through which the Lord is working. (*Arcana Coelestia* 1102)

But those who have faith that inheres in charity are different. They notice the goods, and if they do see evils and falsities they excuse them, and if possible endeavour with that person to correct them. (*Arcana Coelestia* 1079)