

*Christmas
Readings*

2020

*From the Sacred Scriptures
and the Heavenly Doctrines of the New Jerusalem*

1

Until Shiloh Come: Seek Peace and Pursue It.

December 1

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 adherence of the peoples. (Genesis 49:10)

[The words of Scripture] "until Shiloh come," signifies the coming of the Lord, and the tranquillity of peace then. ["Shiloh" comes from the Hebrew for "tranquility"] (*AC 6362, 6373*)

The Divine of peace in heaven is from the Lord, springing from His conjunction with the angels of heaven, and in particular from the conjunction of good and truth in each angel. ... Because the peace of heaven is the Divine inmostly 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, (*HH 286, 288*)

Peace is like the dawn in the early morning, and like the spring in the springtime. The dawn and the spring cause all things that then meet the senses to be full of joy and gladness; every object draws an affection from the general one of the dawn and of the springtime. So is it with the state of peace in the Lord's kingdom: in the state of peace all celestial and spiritual things are as it were in their morning or spring-tide flower and smile, that is, in their happiness itself. (*AC 1726*)

Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, give I to you. Let not your heart be disturbed, neither let it be frightened. (John 14:27)

The Lord is peace itself. (*AC 1726*)

A Star Shall Come out of Jacob: Knowledge of the Lord and His Qualities

December 2

2

I shall see Him, but not now;
I shall observe Him, but not near;
there shall come a star out of Jacob,
and a scepter shall arise out of Israel,
and shall strike the quarters of Moab,
and topple all the sons of Sheth. (Numbers 24:17)

[In the Word] “a star” signifies knowledge from heaven / knowledge of inner good and truth that come from the Lord. / In the deepest sense it signifies knowledge respecting the Lord Himself. (SS 23.3, AC 9293.3, AE 422.20)

That in the spiritual world no one knows another from his name only, but from the idea of his quality. This idea causes that the other becomes present and is known. Thus, and not otherwise, parents are known by their children;...From all this, then, it appears, that no one has the Lord present with himself, unless he knows His quality. This quality the truths of the Word make manifest; for, as many truths as there are in the Word, there are just so many mirrors and ideas of the Lord; for He is the Word itself and He is the Truth itself, as He Himself says. (*Inv.* 41.1-2)

Before everyone who has formed the state of his mind from God the Holy Scripture stands like a mirror wherein he sees God; but everyone in his own way. This mirror is made up of those truths that man learns from the Word, and that he appropriates by living in accordance with them. From all this it is evident, in the first place, that the Holy Scripture is the fullness of God. (*TCR* 6.2)

3

Butter and Honey He Shall Eat: Food of Angels

December 3

Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign; Behold, the virgin shall conceive, and give birth to a Son; and shall call His name Immanuel. *Butter and honey shall He eat, that He may know to reject the evil, and to choose the good.* (Isaiah 7:14-15)

So far as it is known how to reject evil and to choose good, so far spiritual and natural Divine good is appropriated. Therefore it was said of the [Lord in respect to His Human;] that “He would know to reject the evil and choose the good.” (AE 617.8)

When the Lord was in the world, He fought against all the hells, and completely subjugated them. From this He also became righteousness. Thus He redeemed from damnation those who receive the Divine good and truth from Him. Unless this had been done by the Lord, no man could have been saved; for insofar as the Lord does not remove them, the hells are constantly with man, and have dominion over him; and He removes them in proportion as the man desists from evils.. (AC 9937.3)

That goods and truths are the genuine foods of man must be evident to everyone, for he who is destitute of them has no life, but is dead....That in the Word "food" means no other than spiritual and celestial food, which is faith in the Lord, and love. (AC 680.1,4)

Work not for the food which perishes, but for the food which remains to everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give to you. (John 6:27)

Out of Darkness, Into the Light

December 4

4

*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)

"Seeing a great light" signifies receiving and believing the truths which are of faith. On those who are in faith heavenly light is said to "shine," for the light which is in heaven is Divine truth from Divine good. (AC 3863)

In these passages "darkness" signifies the falsities of ignorance, such as existed, and as exist at this day among the upright Gentiles. 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. It is otherwise with the falsities of evil; these are averse to all truth and cast it off because it is truth, and thus is not in agreement with evil. (AE 526.15)

The reason is that they have not confirmed themselves against the truths of faith, as have very many Christians; and therefore their internal man is not closed, but, as with little children, is readily opened and receptive of truth....and therefore the internal of these persons is opened upward (that is, into heaven and toward the Lord), if not in this world, yet in the other life; ... 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... (AC 9256.2,4)

And seeing the crowds, He went up into the mountain; and when He had sat, His disciples came to Him. And opening His mouth He taught them, saying, ... Happy are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. (Matthew 5:1-2,5)

5

The Zeal of the Jehovah of Armies

December 5

For a Child is born to us, a Son is given to us; and the principality shall be on His shoulder; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, God, Hero, Father Everlasting, Prince of Peace. *Of the multiplying of His principality and peace there shall be no end; on the throne of David, and on his kingdom, to establish her, and to sustain her, in judgment and in justice, from now and even to eternity; the zeal of Jehovah of Armies will do this.*

(Isaiah 9:6-7)

"Prince of Peace" manifestly denotes the Lord; and "the increase of His government and peace" denotes the things which are in His kingdom, thus His kingdom itself. . . . In all these passages in the supreme sense "peace" signifies the Lord; and in the representative sense His kingdom, and good from the Lord therein, thus the Divine which flows into good, or into the affections of good, which also causes joy and happiness from the inmost. / "Peace" is charity, spiritual security, and internal rest; for when man is in the Lord, he is in peace with his neighbor, which is charity; in protection against the hells, which is spiritual security; and when he is in peace with his neighbor, and in protection against the hells, he is in internal rest from evils and falsities. / Peace is a state of blessedness in the heavens, affecting with good and truth from the inmosts ... hence the Lord is called the "Prince of peace," and it is said that "of the multiplying of His principality and peace there shall be no end." (AC 3780.2,5, AR 306, AC 5044.3)

The Lord from the Divine love and thence from Divine zeal calling and calling together all who are in the spiritual affection of truth, and who think of heaven, to the New Church, and to conjunction with Himself, and thus to eternal life. (AR 831)

Zeal belongs to those who are in love to the Lord and in love towards the neighbor. Therefore zeal looks to the salvation of man, (AE 693.2)

Holy Fear

December 6

6

And there shall come out a Shaft from the trunk of Jesse; and a Stem from his roots shall become fruitful; and *the spirit of Jehovah shall rest on Him*; the spirit of wisdom and understanding; the spirit of counsel and might; *the spirit of knowledge and the fear of Jehovah*; (Isaiah 11:1-2)

Divine truth proceeding from the Lord is "the Spirit of God," because from it men have all their life; and those who receive that Divine truth in faith and life have heavenly life. / [In and from Divine truth], is all wisdom and all intelligence. (AE 183.8, 696.17)

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. But this fear is various, and is not the same with one person as with another. Speaking generally, the greater the amount of the love of good and truth, the greater the fear of injuring them. (AC 3718)

7

Thy Light Comes!

December 7

Arise, be thou enlightened; for thy light comes, and the glory of Jehovah has risen upon thee.

For, behold! The darkness shall cover the earth, and dense darkness the peoples; but upon thee shall

Jehovah rise, and His glory shall be seen upon thee.

And the nations shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.

(Isaiah 60:1-3)

In the Word frequent mention is made of "light," and by this in the internal sense is signified the truth which is from good but in the supreme internal sense there is signified the Lord Himself, because He is good and truth itself. /As regards the very origin of light, this has been from eternity from the Lord alone; for Divine good itself and Divine truth, from which light comes, is the Lord. The Divine Human, which was from eternity (John 17:5), was this light itself. / Spirits and angels behold one another in that light, and by means of it all the glory that exists in heaven is clearly visible. Such light holds wisdom within itself, so much so that it is nothing else but wisdom that shines in this manner before the eyes of angels. / And whereas this light could no longer affect the human race, which had removed itself so far from good and truth, thus from light, and had cast itself into darkness, therefore the Lord willed to put on by birth the human itself; for thus He could illumine not only the rational but also the natural things of man; for He made both the rational and the natural in Himself Divine, in order that He might also be a light to those who were in such gross darkness. (AC 3195.2/3)

The Lord is light, that is, good itself and truth itself, and that thus from Him is all intelligence and wisdom, consequently all salvation, (AC 3195.4)

The Promise of John's Birth

December 8

8

There was in the days of Herod the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, ... 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. ... But it came to pass that while he exercised the priest's office in his daily service before God, according to the custom of the priest's office, ... And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord ... *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.* For he ... shall be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. *And many of the sons of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall ... turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and in the prudence of the just to make ready the disobedient, a people prepared for the Lord.* (Luke 1:5-17)

"Terror" and "alarm" mean in the Word various disturbances of mind arising from the influx of such things as cause amazement, connected also with joy. (AE 677.8)

"To declare good tidings" [signifies the Lord's coming and His kingdom at that time (AR 478.5)

"Fear not", signifies resuscitation, and then adoration from the deepest humiliation. (AR 56)

"turning the heart of the fathers to the sons and the heart of the sons to the fathers" signifies, ... the conjunction of spiritual goods with truths and truths with goods, thus of regeneration by the Lord by means of the Word. For regeneration is the conjunction of goods with truths and of truths with goods, and it is the Lord who regenerates, and the Word that teaches. (AE 724.8)

9

Zacharias' Doubt

December 9

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 the people were waiting for Zacharias, ... But when he came out he could not speak to them, and they knew that he had seen a vision in the temple; and he beckoned to them, and remained dumb. And it came to pass that when the days of his ritual were accomplished, he departed to his own house. *And after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived,* and hid herself five months, saying, Thus has the Lord done to me in the days wherein He looked on me to take away my reproach among men. (Luke 1:18-25)

In all temptation there is somewhat of doubt concerning the Lord's presence and mercy, and concerning salvation and the like things. (AC 2334.1)

A man may know that in which he is, but cannot know that in which he is not. If from description or from thinking about it a man knows something in which he is not, he nevertheless knows of it merely as of something in the dark, and *there remains some doubt about* it, so that no one sees anything in the light and free from doubt until he is actually in it. This last therefore is to know, whereas the other is both to know and not to know.. (*Doctrine of Life* 76, emphasis added)

By "conceptions" and "births" in the Word are signified spiritual conceptions and births, such as occur when man is born anew, / [and] are receptions of truth from good, / "to travail," "to bring forth," and "to beget," signify the procreation of such things as pertain to the church. / "to bring forth" signifying to make truths fruitful by doing them, from which comes reformation. (AC 3856, 3919, AE 721.16-17)

Mary the Mother of Jesus: Affection for Truth

December 10

10

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 coming in to her said, *Hail, thou who art graced! The Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women....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)

The virgin also, of whom He was born, signifies the church as to the affection of truth. (*God the Savior* 37, modified)

The spiritual affection of truth consists in loving the truth itself, and esteeming it above every good of the world, because through it man has eternal life. (*AE* 444.10)

They who are in the genuine affection of truth, ... long to know truths for the sake of good use, and for the sake of life, ...they search the Scriptures and supplicate the Lord for enlightenment, and when they are enlightened they rejoice from the heart. (*AC* 8993.4)

The Lord leads [a Christian's] will, or love, and gives him the affection of good, that is, the faculty of being affected, or made glad, by reason of good; he also leads his understanding, so that he may be affected with truth, and so that, immediately he hears it, he is also gladdened, and it is implanted in his life; and, so far as he learns the truth, so far it abides in him, and, by its means, he is led by the Lord. (*SD* 5796)

The spiritual affection of truth is the very life of heaven with man. (*AE* 483)

11

With God Not Any Saying Shall Be Impossible

December 11

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.* And behold, thy kinswoman Elizabeth, she has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. *For with God not any saying shall be impossible.* (Luke 1:34-37)

The question is, “What is the first step toward faith in [the Lord God our Savior Jesus Christ?]” The answer is, “The acknowledgement that He is the Son of God.” This was the first principle of faith, which the Lord revealed and announced when He came into the world. (TCR 342)

The Lord healed [people] according to their faith, because the first and primary thing of the church then to be established was to believe that the Lord is God Almighty, for without that faith no church could have been established. / The acknowledgment of the Lord is the first of all things of spiritual life, and the most essential thing of the church, and because without it no one can receive from heaven anything of the truth of faith and the good of love, (AE 815.3, AC 10083.6)

For the same reason those in the world at the present day who look to His Human alone and not at the same time to His Divine, ... [The Lord] is not present in man with Divine omnipotence; for faith presents the Lord as present in man according to the quality of the perception of Him. (AE 815.7,8)

Mary's Innocence:

December 12

12

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)

[A betrothed virgin] ... represents the truth of the church that is to be conjoined with good. (AC 3164.2)

I have talked much with angels about innocence, and have been told that innocence is the being [esse] of all good, and that good is therefore so far good as it has innocence in it, consequently that wisdom is so far wisdom as it partakes of innocence; and the same is true of love, charity, and faith. (HH 281)

Innocence consists in being led by the Lord and not by self, so all who are in heaven are in innocence; for all who are there love to be led by the Lord. (HH 280)

A new birth or creation can only be brought about by the Lord through charity and faith as the two means, and with man's cooperation. (TCR 576)

Peace has in it confidence in the Lord, that He directs all things, and provides all things, and that He leads to a good end. When a man is in this faith, he is in peace, for he then fears nothing, and no solicitude about things to come disquiets him. A man comes into this state in proportion as he comes into love to the Lord. (AC 8455.1)

13

The Babe Leaped in Her Womb: December 13

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 whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, *as soon as the voice of thy greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for gladness. And happy 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)

That he was filled with the Holy Spirit in his mother's womb; and that the babe leaped in the womb at the salutation of Mary ... This signified that he was to represent the Lord in relation to the Word, as Elijah did; for in the Word, which is Divine truth, there is everywhere the marriage of Divine good and Divine truth, and Divine good united with Divine truth is the Divine proceeding from the Lord, which is called the Holy Spirit. The leaping in the womb at the salutation of Mary represented the joy arising from the love of the conjunction of good and truth, thus the joy of celestial conjugal love, which is in every particular of the Word. (*AE* 710.31)

[It is] declared that the Holy Spirit filled Elizabeth...because the Spirit of Jehovah the Father filled [her], which was called the Holy Spirit because of the Lord who was already in the world. (*TCR* 158)

Gratitude for the Lord's Mercy

December 14

14

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 maid-
servant; 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.

And His mercy is to generations of generations, to those who fear Him.

He has made might by His arm;

He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their heart.

He has taken down the powerful from thrones, and has exalted the lowly.

He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty.

He has accepted His servant Israel, to remember mercy,

as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.

(Luke 1:46-55)

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. . . . when yet the whole act of regeneration is mercy, and none are regenerated except those who receive the mercy of the Lord in faith and life while in the world: / ...the whole act of regeneration is mercy, and none are regenerated except those who receive the mercy of the Lord in faith and life while in the world; (HH 522, AC 9336)

And thou shalt be glad in every good thing which Jehovah thy God has given to thee... (Deuteronomy 26:11)

15

The Birth of John

December 15

And to Elizabeth was fulfilled the time that she should bring forth; and she gave birth to a son. And her neighbors 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, and *they called him by the name of his father, Zacharias*. And his mother answered and said, *Not so, but he shall be called John*. ... And they beckoned to his father, what he would have him called. And he asked for a tablet, and wrote, saying, *John is his name*; and they all marveled. And immediately his mouth was opened, and his tongue, and he spoke, blessing God. And fear came on all who dwelt around them; and all these sayings were talked of in all the hill-country of Judea. And all who heard laid ^{them} up in their hearts, saying, Who then shall this little child be? And the hand of the Lord was with him.

(Luke 1:57-66)

Unless evils are removed by repentance, man cannot love his neighbor, still less God; ...If at recurring seasons there is actual repentance, as often, for instance, as a man prepares for the communion of the holy supper, and if he afterward abstains from one or another sin which he then discovers in himself, this is sufficient to initiate him into the [actual repentance], and when he is in that he is on the way to heaven, for he then from being natural begins to be spiritual, and to be born anew from the Lord. (TCR 530)

“And a son of eight days.”...And as the eighth day is the first day of a new week, it signifies any beginning whatever. This shows also that, as circumcision was itself a representative of purification, s... "the eighth day" signified that this ought to be effected at all times, and thus always, as from a new beginning. (AC 2044)

Man's reformation, ... is from the Lord and not from man. (AE 721.17)

Zacharias' Prophecy

December 16

16

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.

And thou, little child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest; for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways; *to give the knowledge of salvation to His people for the forgiveness of their sins*, through the tender mercy of our God, by which the Dayspring from on high has visited us; to appear to them who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, *to guide our feet into the way of peace.*

(Luke 1:67-79)

And the little child grew, and became strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his appearing to Israel. (Luke 1:80)

Heaven is granted only to those who know the way to it and walk in that way. (*Divine Providence* 60)

17

Joseph: A Just Man

December 17

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.*

(Matthew 1:18-21)

[The Lord] was a carpenter's son, was because "a worker in wood" signifies the good of life from the doctrine of truth. (*Athanasian Creed* 99)

the Lord's presence with man is in good, and therefore in what is just and equitable, and further in what is honorable and becoming ... for these are goods which succeed in order, and are the planes in man on which conscience is founded by the Lord, and consequently intelligence and wisdom. (*AC* 2915)

Heavenly love consists in loving what is good, honest, and just, because it is good, honest and just, and in doing this from love; and those that have this love have a life of goodness, honesty, and justice, which is the heavenly life. (*HH* 481.1)

And therefore he who does any good whatsoever for the sake of good, and anything just for the sake of justice, loves the neighbor and exercises charity, for he acts from the love of what is good, and the love of what is just, and thus from the love of those in whom these are. (*AC* 8123)

Jesus answered and said to him, If anyone love Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make an abode with him. (John 14:23)

**The Birth of Genuine Love:
No Other Father than the Divine**
December 18

18

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. (Matthew 1:24-25)

In order that the External Man may be reduced into order, it must be made subordinate to the Internal Man, and it is made subordinate when it obeys. So far as this is effected, so far the External Man also is wise. This is meant by the old man with its evil affections needing to die in order that the man may become a new creature. (*AC* 9708)

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. (*AC* 6138.2)

[The Lord] is not the son of Joseph. / Nor was there another Father from whom He was conceived but the very Divine. (*TCR* 683, *Athanasian Creed* 30)

There are two things which make the life of heaven with man, the good of love and the truth of faith. Man has this life from God, and nothing at all of it is from man. Therefore the primary principle of the church is, to acknowledge God, to believe in God, and to love Him. (*NJHD* 281)

A new birth or creation can only be brought about by the Lord through charity and faith as the two means. (*TCR* 576)

19

And She Brought Forth Her First-born Son

December 19

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. (Luke 2:1-7)

"Bethlehem" signifies the Word in respect to its spiritual sense; and there He chose to be born because the Lord is the Word / The manger in the stable where the sacks lay, signified spiritual instruction for the understanding. ...for a horse signifies the understanding: hence a manger signifies its nourishment. / An "inn" signifying a place of instruction. ["no place in the inn;" signifies] mere falsities, through the adulteration of the Word, ..."swaddling clothes" signify first truths, which are truths of innocence, and which are also truths of the Divine love. (*AE* 700.9, *dVer* 1, *AE* 706.12)

When the life of charity and faith is breathed into [man] by the Lord, the flesh is made alive, and becomes spiritual and celestial, and [he] is called a "new creature" (*AC* 780)

As [man] receives from the Lord a new life, so he receives the human form and, at length, a very beautiful angelic form, which is the likeness of the Lord. (*SD* 4837)

Good Tidings of Great Joy: On Earth Peace, Goodwill Among Men

December 20

20

And there were in the same country shepherds, abiding in the field, and keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, the angel of the Lord stood by them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they feared with great fear. And the angel said to them, *Fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy that shall be to all the people. For to you is born today a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David.* And this shall be the sign to you: you shall find the Babe wrapped in swaddling-clothes, laid in a manger. *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, goodwill among men.* (Luke 2:8-14)

For a "shepherd," or one who feeds the flock, denotes one who teaches the good of charity and leads to it; and the "flock" denotes one who learns and is led. (AC 4713)

"To proclaim good tidings" signifies to announce the Lord's coming, "the good tidings" in the highest sense signify the Lord Himself in relation to His coming, in relation to judgment, and to the salvation of the faithful. (AE 612.8)

"Praise our God, all ye His servants, and ye that fear Him," signifies influx from the Lord into heaven, and thus the unanimity of the angels, that all who are in the truths of faith and in the goods of love should worship the Lord as the only God of heaven.... By "all His servants" are signified all who are in the truths of faith... by "all that fear Him" are signified they who are in the goods of love. (AR 809.1)

21

They Made Known Abroad the Saying Which Was Spoken to Them

December 21

And it came to pass, that after the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the men, the shepherds, said one to another, *Let us now go even to Bethlehem, and see this saying that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us. 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.* And all who heard marveled at those things which were spoken to them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these sayings, pondering them in her heart. *And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all things which they had heard and seen, as it was spoken to them.*

(Luke 2:15-20)

"Bethlehem" signifies the Word in respect to its spiritual sense; and there He chose to be born because the Lord is the Word. (*AE* 700.9)

The shepherds who made known the birth of the Lord... were able to receive and believe, and, from the good of faith, to make it known, (*SDmin* 4734)

When man is in this acknowledgment he puts aside what is his own [proprium], which belongs to the love of self, and opens all things of his mind, and thus gives room for the Divine to flow in with good and with power. This is why it is necessary for man to be in humiliation before the Lord, and why humiliation can be from no other source than self-acknowledgment and acknowledgment of the Lord, according to which reception is effected. (*AE* 1210.1)

"Praise ye God," ... means, as has been said before, the voice of joy and gladness in confessions of God and in the worship of God. (*AE* 1210.1)

When They Saw the Star They Rejoiced

December 22

22

And Jesus being born in Bethlehem of Judaea, in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came *Magi from the east* into 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.*

(Matthew 2:1-2,9-10)

[The] "Land of the sons of the east" are signified the truths of love, thus the knowledges of truth which tend to good...the wise men from the east who came to Jesus at His birth were of those who were called the "sons of the east," / a "star" signifies the knowledges of good and truth, and in the highest sense the knowledge respecting the Lord. ...the star appeared and went before them, first to Jerusalem, which represented the church itself in respect to doctrine and in respect to the word, and from there to the place where the infant Lord lay. / "Bethlehem" signifies the Word in respect to its spiritual sense; (*AC 3762.3,5, AE 422.20, 700.9*)

These truths, that relate to charity toward the neighbor and to love to the Lord, must be learned before it is possible for a man to be regenerated; and must also be acknowledged and believed; and insofar as they are acknowledged, believed, and ingrafted in the life, so far the man is regenerated...They are first implanted therein through instruction by parents and teachers; next from the Word of the Lord; and afterwards through the man's own reflection about them...but still not acknowledged, believed, and ingrafted, unless the life is in accordance with them; for in this case the man comes into affection, and insofar as he comes into affection from life, so far these truths are implanted in his natural as in their ground. (*AC 3792.2*)

23

Gifts for the King

December 23

And when they had come into the house, they found the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him; *and when they had opened their treasures, they presented to Him gifts: gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.* (Matthew 2:11)

it was a custom in ancient times to give gifts to ... the king, when they were approached. / as this was a holy ritual, signifying initiation, the wise men from the east also, who came to Jesus just after His birth, brought presents. / 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, (*AE 661, AC 4262.3, AE 661, emphasis added*)

The gifts that were offered to Jehovah signified such things as are offered by man from the heart unto the Lord, and are accepted by the Lord. Gifts are like all man's deeds, which in themselves are nothing but gestures, ...But man's deeds regarded along with his will are not such motions, but are forms of the will shown before the eyes; for deeds are nothing else than testifications of such things as belong to the will; and they also have their soul or life from the will. ...The gifts offered to Jehovah - that is, to the Lord - are signified such things as are of the will, or of the heart. (*AC 9293.1*)

The wise men from the east also, who came to Jesus just after His birth, brought presents-gold, frankincense, and myrrh ... "gold" signified celestial love; "frankincense," spiritual love; and "myrrh," these loves in the natural. / and from those three goods all worship is made. (*AC 4262.3, AR 277&TCR 205*)

He Took Him up in His Arms

December 24

24

And ... they brought Him up to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Lord, ... *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. And it was revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents were bringing in the little Child Jesus, to do for Him after the custom of the law, and he took Him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Now Thou sendest Thy servant away in peace, O Lord, according to Thy saying; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples; Light for revelation to the nations, and the Glory of Thy people Israel.*

(Luke 2:22-32)

By "Jehovah hearing," from which Simeon was named, in the interior sense is signified obedience, and in the internal sense faith in the will from the Lord alone..."to hear Him" denotes to have faith in [the Lord], and to obey His commandments; thus to have faith in the will..."to hear the voice of the Son of God" denotes to have faith in the words of the Lord, and to will them. They who have faith of the will, receive life; wherefore it is said, "they that hear shall live." (AC 3869.4)

"To bless God" evidently means to glorify and give thanks because the Lord was to come into the world, to save all who receive Him; consequently he calls the Lord "the salvation" which his eyes saw, which He prepares for all people. Those are called "His people" who are in truths from good, thus who by means of truths receive Him. (AE 340.3)

After redemption the Lord bestowed peace upon those who believed on Him... Likewise He gives to man after temptation a sense of peace, that is, gladness of mind and consolation. (TCR 599)

25

Anna, a Prophetess:

December 25

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)

"Asher" in the original language means "blessedness;" ... [and] the delight of the affections which corresponds to the happiness of eternal life. [This principle] conjoins the external man with the internal; for when a man perceives this corresponding delight within himself, his external man is then beginning to be conjoined with his internal man. It is the delights of the affections of truth and good that conjoin them; for without the delights of the affections nothing is conjoined, because the man's life is in them...when a man perceives this delight or affection, he is beginning to become a church. (AC 3939.1)

"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and worked redemption for His people." (Luke 1:68). [This is said] proving that the Lord from eternity, who is Jehovah Himself, came into the world, and took upon Him the Human, to redeem men, (AR 281)

"The redeemed shall go; and the ransomed of Jehovah shall return, and come to Zion with singing, and the gladness of eternity shall be upon their head" (Isa. 35:9-10). [This] treats of the Lord's coming, and the salvation of those who suffer themselves to be regenerated by the Lord. ... "the redeemed shall go; so shall the ransomed of Jehovah return;" their eternal happiness is signified by "they shall come to Zion with singing, and the gladness of eternity shall be upon their head." (AE 328:11)

But I will hope continually, And I will add to all Thy praise. My mouth shall recount Thy justice, Thy salvation all the day; For I know not the numbers thereof. I will come in the might of the Lord Jehovah; I will make mention of Thy justice, Thine alone. (Psalm 71:14-16)

New Beginnings

December 26

26

*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. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. And the Light appears in the darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not....That was the true Light, which enlightens every man who comes into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came to His own, and His own took Him not in. 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 1:1-5,9-14)

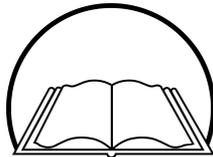
The Word in the letter is like a chest, where precious stones, pearls, and diadems lie in order. The thoughts of a man's mind, who regards the Word as holy, and who reads it for the sake of the uses of life, may be compared to one holding such a chest in his hand... (TCR 238)

"Living waters" are often mentioned in the Word, and by them are meant truths that come from the Lord and are received. These are living, because the Lord is Life itself, as He Himself teaches, and that which comes from Life itself. (AE 483)

Without the Word no one would possess spiritual intelligence, which consists in having knowledge of a God, of heaven and hell, and of a life after death; nor would know anything whatever about the Lord, about faith in him and love to him, nor anything about redemption, by means of which nevertheless comes salvation. / In fact without the Word there would be no heaven, as without the Word there would be no church in the world, thus there would be no conjunction with the Lord. (SS 114, dVer14)

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Kempton New Church



610-756-6140

www.kemptonnewchurch.org

brett.buick@gmail.com

583 Hawk Mountain Rd, Kempton, PA