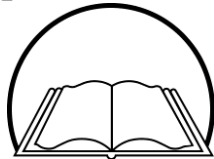


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Christmas Readings

2022

1

Conviction, Trust, and Confidence

And he lifted up his enunciation, and said, Balaam the son of Beor has said, and the man whose eyes are open has said; he has said, who heard the sayings of God, and knew the knowledge of the Most High, who beheld the vision of Shaddai, falling forward, but having his eyes uncovered: 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 24:15,17)

“A star” signifies spiritual Divine truth (*Apocalypse Revealed* 420)

The power of Divine truth is directed especially against falsities and evils, thus against the hells. The fight against these must be waged by means of truths from the sense of the letter of the Word. Moreover, it is by means of the truths in a man that the Lord has the power to save him; for man is reformed and regenerated and is at the same time taken out of hell and introduced into heaven, by means of truths from the sense of the letter of the Word. This power the Lord took upon Himself, even as to His Divine Human, after He had fulfilled all things of the Word down to its ultimates. (*Sacred Scripture* 49.1)

[Then an angel from heaven said], “Our faith is, was, and forever will be, a faith in the Lord God the Savior, whose Human is Divine and whose Divine is Human. Thus it is adapted to reception, and by it the Divine spiritual is united to the natural of man, and a spiritual faith is formed in the natural, and from the spiritual light in which our faith is, the natural becomes as it were transparent. The truths of which our faith consists are as many as the verses in the sacred Volume. These truths are all like stars, which by their light make the faith manifest and give it form. Man acquires this faith from the Word by means of his natural light, in which light it is knowledge, thought, and persuasion. But the Lord causes it, in those who believe in Him, to become conviction, trust, and confidence. Thus faith becomes spiritual-natural, and by means of charity becomes living. (*True Christian Religion* 137.4)

The Word Made Flesh

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. This was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not one thing made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men... He 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 He gave authority to become the children of God, to those 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 observed His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:1-4,9-14)

THE FAITH OF THE NEW HEAVEN AND OF THE NEW CHURCH IN SINGULAR FORM is as follows: Jehovah God is love itself and wisdom itself, or is good itself and truth itself. And in respect to Divine truth, which is the Word, and which was God with God, He came down and took on the Human, for the purpose of reducing to order all things that were in heaven, and all things in hell, and all things in the church. (*True Christian Religion* 3.1)

All may be regenerated and thus saved, because the Lord with His Divine good and truth is present with every man. This is the source of everyone's life and his ability to understand and will, together with freedom of choice in spiritual things; in no man are these lacking. And the means to these are also given, for Christians in the Word, and for Gentiles in their religions, which teach that there is a God, and which furnish precepts respecting good and evil. From all this it follows that everyone may be saved; consequently, that it is not the Lord's fault if man is not saved but man's, because he does not co-operate. (*True Christian Religion* 580.3)

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 accomplished by means of regeneration. (*Arcana Coelestia* 10730.3)

25

Gifts for the Lord

And when they had heard the king they went out; and behold, the star which they saw in the east went before them, till it came and stood over where the little Child was. And having seen the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. And coming into the house, they found the little Child with Mary His mother, and falling down, they worshiped Him. And opening their treasures, they offered to Him gifts: gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed into their own country by another way. (Matthew 2:9-12)

The good of faith, which is signified by the “land of the east,” is no other than that which in the Word is called charity toward the neighbor; and charity toward the neighbor is nothing else than a life according to the Lord’s commandments.... Therefore they who were in the knowledges of the good of faith were called “sons of the east.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 3249)

These truths, which 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 they must also be acknowledged and believed. And so far as they are acknowledged, believed, and ingrafted in the life, so far the man is regenerated, and so far they are at the same time implanted in the man’s natural, in which they are as in their own ground. They are first implanted in it through instruction by parents and teachers; next from the Word of the Lord; and afterwards through the man’s own reflection about them. But by these means they are merely stored up in the memory of the natural man, being classed among the knowledges there, 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 so far as he comes into affection from life, so far these truths are implanted in his natural as in their ground. (*Arcana Coelestia* 3762.2)

Defend What is Good

2

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 He shall eat, that He may know to reject the evil and to choose the good. (Isaiah 7:14-15)

From the Divine love [the Lord] fought and conquered in the world. From the Divine power in the Human thence acquired, He alone forever fights and conquers for heaven and the church, and thus for the whole human race, and thereby saves them. This then is the good of merit, which is called “justice,” because it belongs to justice to restrain the hells, which are endeavoring to destroy the human race, and to protect and save the good and faithful (*Arcana Coelestia* 9715.7)

[In His combats of temptation] the Lord never looked for any prize of victory for Himself. His prize of victories was the salvation of the whole human race, and it was from love toward the entire human race that He fought. He who fights from this love demands for himself no prize, because this love is such that it wills to give and transfer all its own to others, and to have nothing for itself. So it is the salvation of the whole human race that is here signified by the “reward.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 1789)

But in all His combats of temptations the Lord never fought from the love of self, or for Himself, but for all in the universe; consequently, not that He might become the greatest in heaven, for this is contrary to the Divine Love, and scarcely even that He might be the least; but only that all others might become something, and be saved. (*Arcana Coelestia* 1812)

3

People of All Faiths and Cultures Can Be Saved

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

Before his regeneration, man is called “the earth, void and empty” and also the “ground” in which nothing of good and truth has been sown. “Void” is where there is nothing of good, and “empty” where there is nothing of truth. Hence comes “thick darkness,” that is, stupidity, and an ignorance of all things belonging to faith in the Lord, and consequently of all things belonging to spiritual and heavenly life. (*Arcana Coelestia* 17)

In heaven those are in light who are in a state of wisdom and intelligence, exactly according to their state. Those are in the greatest light who are in a state of the highest wisdom and intelligence. But the wisdom there is that of love and charity, and the intelligence is that of faith in the Lord. (*Arcana Coelestia* 1458)

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 anyone, so that everyone is saved who can be saved. And yet no one can be saved except by Divine means, the means which 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. The Lord does this for all. But the life of heaven can be implanted in no one unless he abstains from evil, for evil obstructs. So far, therefore, as man abstains from evil, he is led by the Lord out of pure mercy by His Divine means. (*Heaven and Hell* 522)

Distance Yourself from What is Self-Serving

24

But having heard, Herod the king was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea; for thus it is written by the prophet: And thou, Bethlehem, of the land of Judah, art by no means the least among the governors of Judah, for out of thee shall come a Governor, who shall shepherd My people Israel. Then Herod, privately calling the Magi, precisely inquired of them at what time the star appeared. And sending them to Bethlehem, he said, Go and search earnestly for the little Child; and when you have found Him, report to me, so that I also may come and worship Him. (Matthew 2:3-8)

There are two loves which have long been enrooted in the human race, the love of ruling over all, and the love of possessing the goods of all. The former love, if free rein is given to it, rushes on even so far as to wish to be the God of heaven; and the latter, if free rein is given to it, rushes on even so far as to wish to be the God of the world. (*True Christian Religion* 533.1)

There are many means by which man, as he progresses in his early years, is prepared for the church and introduced into it. But the means by which the church is established in man are acts of repentance. Acts of repentance are all such things as cause man not to will and consequently not to commit evils, which are sins against God. (*True Christian Religion* 510)

The question therefore is, How ought man to repent? And the reply is, Actually. That is to say, he must examine himself, recognize and acknowledge his sins, pray to the Lord, and begin a new life... 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 actuality [of 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. (*True Christian Religion* 530)

23

Search for Wisdom

And when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, 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. (Matthew 2:1-2)

“The land of the sons of the east” signifies the truths of love ... Those truths are called the truths of love which have been elsewhere termed celestial truths, for they are knowledges that relate to charity toward the neighbor and love to the Lord. In the supreme sense, in which the Lord is treated of, they are the truths of Divine love. (*Arcana Coelestia* 3762)

Purification is effected by the Divine truth that proceeds from the Lord’s Divine good.... For truth teaches man what is good and how he should live, and when a man knows this, then for the first time, the affection or love of good can be implanted, and thus the man be regenerated. For knowledge must come first before man can have faith and live the life of faith, which is the life of good. All purification from evils and falsities is effected through the truths of faith, and consequently all regeneration. (*Arcana Coelestia* 10026.1)

There has been given to man the ability to elevate his understanding almost into the light in which the angels of heaven are, that he may see what he must will and must then do, that he may be prosperous in the world for a time and blessed after death to eternity. He becomes prosperous and blessed if he acquires for himself wisdom and keeps his will in obedience to it. But he becomes unprosperous and unhappy if he makes his understanding subservient to his will. (*True Christian Religion* 588)

Your Potential

For a Child is born to us, a Son is given to us; and the sovereignty 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 sovereignty 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)*

*In Hebrew this word comes from the word for “Prince,” as “princeship.”

The Lord, being born as are other men, and having a nature inherited from the mother, was like other men also in respect to the miraculous formation of the rational by means of knowledges, to the end that by combats of temptations and by victories, He might reduce all things into order. Therefore, His rational was conceived and born in the same way as with other men, but with the difference that inmosty in all things that were His, both in general and particular, there was the Divine, or Jehovah, and thus the life of love toward the whole human race, for whom and for whose salvation He fought in all His temptations. (*Arcana Coelestia* 1902)

Man must first of all be reborn as a little child, and must learn what is evil and false, and also what is good and true; for without knowledge, he cannot be imbued with any good. (*Arcana Coelestia* 3701)

Man is indeed born of his parents as a man, but he does not become a man until he is reborn of the Lord. Spiritual and heavenly life is that which makes a man, for this distinguishes him from brute animals. It is this spiritual conception and birth which is signified in the Word by the conceptions and births mentioned there. (*Arcana Coelestia* 3860)

4

5

Become Wise in the Lord

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 of the fear of Jehovah. (Isaiah 11:1-2)

By the capacity to be wise is not meant the capacity to reason about truths and goods from memory-knowledges, nor the capacity to confirm whatever one pleases; but the capacity to discern what is true and good, to choose what is suitable, and to apply it to the uses of life. They who ascribe all things to the Lord do thus discern, choose, and apply. (*Arcana Coelestia* 10227.3)

All have the capacity to understand and to be wise. But the reason one person is wiser than another is that they do not in like manner ascribe to the Lord all things of intelligence and wisdom, which are all things of truth and good. Those who ascribe all to the Lord are wiser than the rest, because all things of truth and good, which constitute wisdom, flow in from heaven, that is, from the Lord there. The ascription of all things to the Lord opens the interiors of man toward heaven, for thus it is acknowledged that nothing of truth and good is from himself. And in proportion as this is acknowledged, the love of self departs, and with the love of self the thick darkness from falsities and evils. In the same proportion also the man comes into innocence, and into love and faith to the Lord, from which comes conjunction with the Divine, influx from Him, and enlightenment. (*Arcana Coelestia* 10227.2)

Experience Peace

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 did not stand back from the temple, serving God with fastings and prayers night and day. And she, standing by, at the hour itself, confessed the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who waited for redemption in Jerusalem. (Luke 2:36-38)

“And I will redeem you with a stretched-out arm.” That this signifies leading forth from hell by virtue of Divine power, is evident from the signification of “redeeming,” as being to bring forth from hell. “Redemption” is said of bondage, of evil, and of death—that men are released from these—thus it is said of hell; and the Lord as to the Divine Human is called the “Redeemer.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 7205)

In the conflicts or temptations of men the Lord works a particular redemption, as He wrought a total redemption when in the world. By conflicts and temptations in the world the Lord glorified His Human, that is, made it Divine; in like manner now with man individually, when he is in temptations, the Lord fights for him, conquers the evil spirits who are infesting him, and after temptation glorifies him, that is, renders him spiritual.

After His universal redemption the Lord reduced to order all things in heaven and in hell. With man after temptation He does in like manner, that is, He reduces to order all the things of heaven and the world that are in him. After redemption the Lord established a new church; in like manner He also establishes what pertains to the church in man, and makes him to be a church in particular.

After redemption the Lord bestowed peace upon those who believed on Him, for He said: “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you” (John 14:27). Likewise He gives to man after temptation a sense of peace, that is, gladness of mind and consolation. From all this it is clear that the Lord is the Redeemer forever. (*True Christian Religion* 599)

22

21

Witness Salvation

And when the days of her purification were fulfilled, according to the Law of Moses, 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 a response was made to him by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came by the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents were bringing in the little Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, he even received Him into his arms, and blessed God, and said, Now Thou sendest Thy servant away in peace, O Lord, according to Thy saying. For my eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples: a light for a revelation for the nations, and the glory of Thy people Israel. (Luke 2:22,25-32)

“Salvation unto Him,” signifies that salvation is from Him, since He is salvation; for everything of salvation and of eternal life is from the Lord, and is with man and angel. For all the good of love and all the truth of faith with man are the Lord's with him, and not the man's. For [all good and truth] is the Divine proceeding, which is the Lord in heaven with the angels and in the church with men; and from the good of love and the truth of faith come salvation and eternal life. So... it is said that salvation is the Lord's, and that the Lord Himself is salvation.... (*Apocalypse Explained* 460.2)

Here “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, [Simeon] 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. (*Apocalypse Explained* 340.3)

“Peace” stands for heavenly blessedness, happiness, and delight. And as these are granted only with those who love to do the Lord's commandments, it is said, “Much peace have they who love Thy law” (Psalm 119:165). (*Apocalypse Explained* 365.20)

A New Phase Dawns

Arise, give light; for Thy light comes, and the glory of Jehovah has risen on Thee. For, behold! The darkness shall cover the earth, and dense darkness the peoples; but on Thee shall Jehovah rise, and His glory shall be seen upon Thee. And the nations shall walk to Thy light, and kings to the brightness of Thy rising. (Isaiah 60:1-3)

“Morning” [in Scripture] is... a state... of light, or of truth and of the cognitions of faith. (*Arcana Coelestia* 22)

That they who are being reformed are reduced into ignorance of truth, or desolation, even to grief and despair, and that they then for the first time have comfort and help from the Lord, is unknown at this day, for the reason that few are reformed. Those who are such that they can be reformed are brought into this state, if not in the life of the body, nevertheless in the other life, where this state is well known, and it is called vastation or desolation... Those who are in such vastation or desolation are reduced even to despair; and when they are in this state they then receive comfort and help from the Lord, and are at length taken away into heaven, where they are instructed among the angels as it were anew in the goods and truths of faith. (*Arcana Coelestia* 2694.2)

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)

6

7

Do What the Lord Wants

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 all the multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of the incense. And there appeared to Zacharias an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And seeing him, Zacharias was disturbed, and fear fell on 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 1:5-17)

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

No one becomes an angel, that is, comes into heaven, unless he carries with him from the world something of the angelic character. And in this there is present a knowledge of the way from walking in it, and a walking in the way through a knowledge of it. (*Divine Providence* 60)

Worship with those who live a moral life from a spiritual origin... is truly a worship of God, for their prayers are elevated to heaven and are heard, for the Lord leads their prayers through heaven to Himself. (*Apocalypse Explained* 182.4)

The entire process of the reformation and regeneration of those who are becoming men of the church... [involves] that at first they perceive something of temptation, but when they persist and overcome, the Lord has an abode with them, and confirms them in good, introduces them to Himself in His kingdom, and dwells with them, and there purifies and perfects them, and at the same time appropriates good and happy things to them, and this by means of His Divine Human and Holy proceeding. (*Arcana Coelestia* 2343)

Praise the Lord

20

And it came to pass, that after the angels had 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 lying 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 that they had heard and seen, as it was spoken to them. (Luke 2:15-20)*

* “Men” here means human beings.

The signification of “praising God,” is to confess and worship Him.... “To praise God” signifies confession and worship, because the Lord has no wish to be praised and glorified from any love of Himself, but only from His love for man. For man cannot help but praise and glorify the Lord, that is, give praise and glory to Him, when he acknowledges in heart that there is nothing of good in himself, and that he can do nothing of himself, and on the other hand, that all good is from the Lord, and that the Lord can do all things. 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 humility before the Lord, and why humility can be from no other source than self-acknowledgment and acknowledgment of the Lord. According to this acknowledgment, reception takes place. (*Apocalypse Explained* 1210)

The signification of “rejoicing,” is joy on account of salvation... also becoming spiritual by the reception of Divine truth, in doctrine and in life. (*Apocalypse Explained* 751)

19

Do Not Be Afraid

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 which shall be to all the people. For to you is born this day a Savior, 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, lying 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, good will among men. (Luke 2:8-14)

In the Word “night” signifies the time and state when there is no longer any light of truth, but merely falsity and evil. (*Arcana Coelestia* 2353)

“Saying unto me, Fear not,” signifies renewal of life.... For all who come suddenly from self-life into any spiritual life are at first afraid, but their life is renewed by the Lord. This renewal is brought about in this way, that the Divine presence, and fear on account of it, are accommodated to reception.

The Lord is indeed present with all in the universe, but more nearly or remotely according to the reception of good, by means of truths with them from Him. For good is that in which the Lord is present with angel, spirit, and man. Therefore, the extent and quality of good from the Lord with them are what determine the extent and quality of His presence. If the presence goes beyond this, there is anguish and tremor; but by accommodation to reception, there is renewal of life. (*Apocalypse Explained* 80)

Do the Best You Can

And Zacharias said to the angel, Whereby shall I know this? For I am elderly, 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 didst not believe my words, which shall be fulfilled in their time. (Luke 1:18-20)

The word “mute” signifies those who, on account of ignorance of truth, are unable to confess the Lord and the genuine truths of the church. (*Apocalypse Explained* 455.20)

As regards this doubt, the case is this. Within the affection of truth of those who are in this affection there is the affection of good, but so obscurely that they do not perceive, thus do not know, what the affection of good is, and what genuine charity is.... Nevertheless, they do the goods of charity, not in order to merit anything by them, but from obedience; and this so far as they apprehend that it is the truth. For they suffer themselves to be led by the Lord out of their obscurity of good by means of the truth which appears to them to be truth. ... They are at the same time in good as to their interiors, and in this good the angels are present with them, and are delighted there with their appearances of truth, by which such persons are affected. (*Arcana Coelestia* 2425.2)

8

9

Heavenly Qualities

And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent out 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. But when she saw him, she was disturbed at his word, and reasoned within herself what manner of a greeting this should be. 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 forever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end. (Luke 1:26-33)

The expression “this shall be thy name,” when used in the Word, signifies the quality, that is, that the person will be of such a quality... And as the “name” signifies the quality, the name comprehends in one complex whatever is in the man. For in heaven no attention is paid to anyone’s name; but when anyone is named, or when the word “name” is spoken, there is presented the idea of the person’s quality, that is, of all things that are his, that are connected with him, and that are in him. Hence in the Word “name” signifies quality. (*Arcana Coelestia* 2009)

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.... From this, then, it appears, that no one has the Lord present with himself, unless he knows His quality. (*Invitation to the New Church* 41)

[The name] “Jesus” in the internal sense is Divine good, and “Christ” is Divine truth.... That “Jesus” is Divine good comes from the fact that “Jesus” means “safety,” “salvation,” and “Savior;” and because it means these, it signifies the Divine good; for all salvation is from the Divine good which is of the Lord’s love and mercy; and thus salvation is brought about by the reception of that good. (*Arcana Coelestia* 3005)

New Birth

And it came to pass, that while they were there, the days were fulfilled 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 2:6-7)

The Lord Himself came into the world and became Man that He might be in ultimates [or last things] at the same time as in first things, to the end that through ultimates from first things, He might reduce all things to order that had become disordered, namely, all things in the hells and also all things in the heavens. This was the reason for the Lord’s coming, for at the time just before His coming there was no Divine truth in ultimates with men in the world, and none whatever in the church which was then with the Jewish nation, that had not been falsified and perverted, and consequently there was no foundation for the heavens.... But now the Lord, on the earth as in the heavens, is in His fullness, and thus in His omnipotence, because He is in ultimates and in first things. Thus the Lord is able to save all who are in Divine truths from the Word and in a life according to them, for He can be present and dwell with such [people] in ultimate truths from the Word, because ultimate truths are also His, and are Himself, because they are from Him. (*Apocalypse Explained* 726.7)

In part the truths of the sense of the letter of the Word are not naked truths, but are appearances of truth, and are like similitudes and comparisons which are taken from such things as exist in nature, and are therefore accommodated and adapted to the capacity of the simple and also of children. But as these are at the same time correspondences, they are receptacles and abodes of genuine truth, and are vessels containing it, as a crystal cup contains noble wine, or a silver dish good food. They are also like garments for clothing the body, as swaddling clothes for an infant, or becoming garments for a maiden. They are also like the knowledges of the natural man, which comprise within them the perceptions and affections of spiritual truth. (*True Christian Religion* 215)

18

17

Make Spiritual Transitions

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled. This enrolling first was made when Kurenios was governor of Syria. And all went to be enrolled, everyone 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 from the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary his betrothed wife, being great with child. (Luke 2:1-5)

Whenever traveling, sojourning, and passing from place to place, occur in the Word, nothing else is suggested to the angels than such change of state as exists with them. There are changes of state of both the thoughts and the affections. Changes of the state of the thoughts are knowledges, and in the world of spirits these changes are presented by means of the processes of instruction. (*Arcana Coelestia* 1463.1)

The state of the interiors is said to be changed when the mind or heart is changed as to affections and consequent thoughts—as from sadness to joy, or from joy to sadness again; from impiety to piety or devotion; and so on. (*Arcana Coelestia* 4850)

When man is being regenerated, he is then becoming altogether another, and is being made new. Therefore also when he has been regenerated, he is called “born again,” and “created anew.” Then, although he has a similar face and a similar speech, yet his mind is not similar. His mind, when he is regenerate, is open toward heaven, and there dwells in it love to the Lord and charity toward the neighbor, together with faith. It is the mind that makes a man another, and a new man. (*Arcana Coelestia* 3212.3)

Your God-Given Talents & Abilities

10

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

Man is an organ recipient of life from God. Consequently, he is a recipient of good so far as he desists from evil. The Lord gives to every man to be able to desist from evil, because He gives him to will and understand as of himself. And whatever the man does from the will, as his own, according to the understanding, as his own, or what is the same, whatever he does from freedom, which is of the will, according to reason, which is of the understanding, this remains. By this the Lord brings man into a state of conjunction with Himself, and in this [state] reforms, regenerates, and saves him. The life which flows in is the life proceeding from the Lord, which is also called the Spirit of God, and in the Word the Holy Spirit. (*Apocalypse Revealed* 875.12-13)

Natural births in the Word mean spiritual births, which are births of good and truth; for whatever is mentioned in the sense of the letter of the Word, which is natural, involves and signifies what is spiritual. (*True Christian Religion* 583)

The angels in heaven have all happiness from uses, and according to uses, so that to them uses are heaven. (*Arcana Coelestia* 7038)

11

Have a Affirmative Attitude

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)

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 one's heart that he cannot believe them until he is convinced by what he can grasp or perceive by the senses. This is the principle that leads to all folly and insanity, and it 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 oneself that they are true because the Lord has said them. This is the principle that leads to all intelligence and wisdom, and it is to be called the affirmative principle. (*Arcana Coelestia* 2568.4)

It is from the doctrine of the Word that the first and principal thing of doctrine is love to the Lord and charity toward the neighbor. Those who are in the affirmative in regard to this can enter into whatever things of reason and of memory, and even of sense, they please, everyone according to his gift, his knowledge, and his experience. In fact, the more they enter in, the more they are confirmed, for universal nature is full of confirmation. (*Arcana Coelestia* 2588.3)

Take, for example, the truth that the Lord is the salvation for the human race.... When this is made an affirmation by the man, [to] all the things he has learned from the Word or in the church concerning the Lord... innumerable things are added, and are filled with the good that flows in. For good continually flows in from the Lord, but where there is no affirmative, it is not received.... An affirmative [attitude] is therefore the first means, and is as it were the first abode of the good that flows in from the Lord. (*Arcana Coelestia* 3913.5)

Wake Up Spiritually

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

16

All who have lived a good life in the world and have acted from conscience, who are such as have acknowledged the Divine and have loved Divine truths, especially such as have applied those truths to life, seem to themselves, when let into the state of their interiors, like one aroused from sleep into full wakefulness, or like one passing from darkness into light. They then think from the light of heaven, thus from an interior wisdom, and they act from good, thus from an interior affection. Heaven flows into their thoughts and affections with an interior blessedness and delight of which they had previously had no knowledge, for they have communication with the angels of heaven. They then acknowledge the Lord and worship Him from their very life.... Such is the state of those who have lived a Christian life in accordance with the commandments in the Word. (*Heaven and Hell* 506)

It is religion that makes a man spiritual and conjoins him with the angels, who are purely spiritual. To live well from religion is to think, to will, and to do because it has been so enjoined in the Word, and because the Lord has commanded it (*Apocalypse Explained* 107.3)

15

Care for Others

And while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared 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 1:20-21)

“And he slept.” That this signifies an obscure state, is evident from the signification of “sleeping,” as being an obscure state.

Moreover, in the spiritual sense “sleep” is nothing else, just as “wakefulness” is nothing else than a clear state; for there is spiritual sleep when truths are in obscurity, and spiritual wakefulness when truths are in clarity. (*Arcana Coelestia* 5210)

As long as a man is merely natural, so long his interiors, which see from the light of heaven, are closed; and the exteriors, which see from the light of the world, are open. And then the man looks downward, that is, into the world and to himself, for all the things that belong to his will and thought converge there. And wherever the man looks, there his heart turns, that is, his will and his love.

But when a man becomes spiritual, then his interiors, which see from the light of heaven, are opened, and then the man looks upward, which is brought about by means of an uplifting by the Lord; thus he looks into heaven and to the Lord. Also, all things that belong to his will and his thought are raised there, thus his heart, that is, his love. (*Arcana Coelestia* 10156.3)

The Lord is present with every man, urging and pressing to be received. (*True Christian Religion* 766)

Sources of Joy

12

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)

[An angel was once asked,] “What is heavenly joy?” and the angel replied briefly: “It is the delight of doing something which is of use to oneself and to others; and the delight of use derives its essence from love, and its manifestation from wisdom. The delight of use springing from love by means of wisdom is the soul and life of all heavenly joys. In the heavens there are most cheerful companionships, which exhilarate the minds of the angels, are pleasing to their spirits delight their breasts and recreate their bodies. But they enjoy these delights after they have performed the uses of their employments and occupations. (*Conjugal Love* 5.3-4)

Angelic happiness is in use, from use, and according to use, that is, it is according to the goods of love and of charity. (*Arcana Coelestia* 454)

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; indeed, 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)

13

Closer to Purity

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 said to her, There is no one of thy kinsfolk who is called by this name. And they beckoned to his father, what he willed to 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 put them in their hearts, saying, Who then shall this little child be? And the hand of the Lord was with him. (Luke 1:57-66)

“And a son of eight days.” This signifies any beginning of purification whatever... so “the eighth day” signified that this ought to be done at all times, and thus always, as from a new beginning. (*Arcana Coelestia* 2044)

That repentance is the first of the church is very evident from the Word. John the Baptist, who was sent beforehand to prepare men for the church which the Lord was about to establish, when he baptized preached repentance at the same time. And therefore his baptism was called the baptism of repentance, for the reason that baptism signified spiritual washing, which is a cleansing from sin. The Lord Himself also preached repentance for the forgiveness of sins, teaching thereby that repentance is the first of the church, and that as far as man repents, his sins are put away, and as far as they are put away, they are forgiven. (*True Christian Religion* 510)

Serve the Lord Without Fear

14

And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying, Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, for He has visited and made 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 ages, 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. (Luke 1:67-75)

The Lord God the Savior is to be approached because He is the God of heaven and earth, the Redeemer and Savior, to whom omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, mercy itself, and also justice, belong.... This is why He Himself came into the world and made Himself visible and accessible, and conjunction with Him possible; and this was done solely that man might be saved. (*True Christian Religion* 538)

All worship of God must begin with holy fear. But holy fear is not so much the fear of hell and of damnation as it is of doing or thinking anything against the Lord and against the neighbor. Those have holy fear who are in the good of faith. But those have less of it who are in the good of love, that is, who are in the Lord. Therefore it is written in in Luke: “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 before Him” (Luke 1:73-74). (*Arcana Coelestia* 6071.5, 2826.13-14)