

Reading the Word Conjoins a Person with the Lord

Excerpt from a Sermon by the Rev. B. David Holm

Much is said in the Writings about the importance of reading the Word. In three passages the daily reading of the Word is held out as the ideal for which we should strive (*Spiritual Experiences* 5618; *Apocalypse Explained* 803:2, 1024:2). This is because of the tremendous uses which the Word has both because of its origin and its effect.

One such use of the Word is that it is the place where a person meets with heaven; for we are taught that the Word is the union of earth and heaven (*Arcana Coelestia* 3004:2). The Divine power of the Word is such that it conjoins heaven and earth because when the Word on earth is read, then the angels are moved into the holiness that is in the internal sense of the Word (*Arcana Coelestia* 8615e). This, of course, brings in the whole New Church teaching that there is an internal or spiritual sense of the Word.

Concerning this, we are taught that the written Word is from the Lord. In its formation it descended from the Lord through the three degrees of heaven, by means of correspondences. Then it was dictated to the men on earth who were commanded to write the letter of the Word. Thus the Word is utterly Divine even to the least detail. When it is read, the Word so descends from the Lord through the heavens to a person. As it descends so it ascends or is uplifted again through the heavens to the Lord. Because it so descends and ascends, the Word serves as the perfect link between God and humankind and heaven and humankind.

This means that when the Word returns to the Lord it is Divine. In the third heaven it is celestial; in the second heaven it is spiritual; and in the first heaven it is celestial and spiritual natural. But in the church with man, the Word as to its sense of the letter is natural or worldly. From this we can see that when the Word is being read by a person who is in what is holy, that is, in good and truth, it not only descends to him, but also ascends up through the degrees of heaven to the Lord Himself. So it is that the Word is a living thing that can conjoin a person with both the Lord and the heavens (for this whole paragraph see *Arcana Coelestia* 4279).

Marvelous to say this cycle of descent and ascent does not end here. Rather it continues, for after its ascent to the Lord it descends again through the heavens to the person who rightly reads the Word. For by his reading the angels are stimulated by the spiritual sense of the Word, for then the interiors of the Word are unbound and uncovered and each heaven draws its own from it (*De Verbo* 11-2 and *Arcana Coelestia* 8971). Indeed from many passages it is evident that the angels are dependent upon man's reading and thinking from the Word for their understanding of its spiritual sense (*Arcana Coelestia* 5167, 10604:3, 10551:5; *Doctrine of the Sacred Scripture* 64).

As the angels enter into the spiritual sense of the Word, so a person is affected by the Lord through the angels and also by the angels themselves. As a result the person comes into enlightenment and illustration. He comes into celestial and spiritual thoughts such as the angels have which he senses as delight and bliss. So he is infilled with the goods of love and the truths of wisdom (*Arcana Coelestia* 3735, 4027:2; *Doctrine of the Sacred Scripture* 3e). From this the person who rightly reads the Word can come into a deeper understanding of the Word, and the

cycle of ascent and descent of the Word continues on in an ever more perfect way—conjoining the person more and more with the Lord and with heaven.

In a very real sense the future of the human race on earth and the future of the heavens depend upon us humbly reading the Word—seeking truth that we may live it.