

The Peace Of Christmas

by the Rev. B. David Holm

It is common practice at this time of year to speak of “the peace of Christmas.” And probably all of us have experienced at least something of it. But what is the origin of peace? What is the real quality of peace? What is it in us that receives peace? And how can we prepare ourselves for the peace of this season? With the answers to these questions, we may come to see the great power that can exist in our celebration of the Lord’s first Advent.

The Lord is peace itself (*Arcana Coelestia* 1726). He alone is the Prince of Peace, and this is why He came on earth—to become peace itself and so restore peace in the heavens and on earth. He accomplished this through the wonder of the reciprocal union of His Divine Soul with His Divine Human, and of the Divine Human with His Divine Soul (*Apocalypse Explained* 365:11; *Arcana Coelestia* 10730:2). Thus He *glorified* His Human—making it totally Divine through constant temptations from the hells and total victories over them. From these victories, and His consequent Glorification, came peace—Divine peace in the Lord Himself, His peace in the heavens, and the potential of His peace among people on earth. For peace is the Lord’s Divine inmost affecting the good in those who are in His Kingdom—or, more briefly, peace is the Divine present in good (*Arcana Coelestia* 3780:2, 8722). So it is that the Glorified Lord is the origin of all peace. Truly, this is why He came upon earth, and it is good to remind ourselves of this in preparation for the Advent season.

With humans—both angels and men—there can be peace only in the same proportion as there is a real trust in the Lord (see *Arcana Coelestia* 5660:3). This, of course, involves a life of good, which is a life of mutual love (*Arcana Coelestia* 2892, 1038:2). So it is that peace is defined as charity—spiritual security and internal rest (*Apocalypse Revealed* 306). As we trust in the Lord and live the life of charity, so we come into peace, for then we are in the good of innocence and are willing to be led by the Lord in a life of use (See *Heaven and Hell* 285e; *Arcana Coelestia* 0517e). If we would have peace, then, we must strive to cultivate a complete trust in the Lord and His Providence (*Arcana Coelestia* 8478:4). By a life of regeneration, we not only shun evils as sins against God, but also strive to enter into a life of innocence and charity—a life of active use. These are the states in us that are receptive of the Lord’s peace, because they are the means whereby good and truth are conjoined in us. And those who have good and truth conjoined in them have peace (*Arcana Coelestia* 4213:2).

Christmas, if it is properly celebrated, is a time in which the things of love to the Lord and charity toward the neighbor can come forward and rule in us—at least for a time—and so be helpful to our spiritual progress. Our minds can be raised up toward the Lord, as we think of His Divine mercy in being born among people. Our hearts can go out to others with a real desire for their spiritual well being. We can, indeed, sense the peace of Christmas around us as we prepare to celebrate it. But, in order for this to happen, we must prepare *mentally* as well as externally for the many happy customs and traditions.

One of the first steps in this process is to raise our minds above the materialism of the world that so invades this holy time of year. Too much gross materialism can lead us away from the very

things that bring the peace of Christmas—such as trust in the Lord as the Divine Human who leads us—and that, in turn, bring out states of innocence and inner security, of mutual love and charity, of peace. We must try to resist all such merely materialistic attitudes, and lead our children away from them as well.

In the New Church, we should have a truly distinctive celebration of this sacred festival. Yet, our celebrations should be distinctive as to *substance*, not necessarily as to external observations—except where these are obviously destructive of the true spirit of Christmas. The delightful externals of family and social traditions can serve as fit receptacles of Christmas peace and joy. So, as we prepare for our celebrations of Christmas, let us strive to *infill* these with the true meaning of Christmas. Let them be external reflections of our heartfelt joy that the Lord was indeed born on earth to lead us to a new love of one another. Let us do all that we can to live the true meaning of this season, striving to worship the Lord in His Divine Human and, from this, working for a heartfelt concern for our fellow people. And let us initiate our children into the love, charity, innocence, and peace of Christmas, that they may receive the lasting spiritual affections (remains) which come from these states (*Arcana Coelestia* 1738).

To celebrate Christmas is a holy privilege. Let us prepare early for this happy day, so that the message of the herald angel can truly come to us saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men” (Luke 2:14).