

SPIRITUAL HOUSE OF OUR MIND

By Rev. Dusan Sever
Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania
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Lessons:

I Kings 6:1, 7, 11-14, 38

Luke 1:68-79

Arcana Coelestia 8176, 8941

And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building (I Kings 6:7).

The house that was "in building" refers to the first temple, built by King Solomon. It represents fulfillment of the Lord's prophecy given to Solomon's father, David. In the spiritual sense the erection of that magnificent house denotes, among other things, preparation of the human mind for the reception of the Coming Lord. In the Third Testament we read that "house" in the Word signifies man as to the things of his mind, and also the human mind itself (see Araca Coelestia 1488, Apocalypse Explained 650:66, Apocalypse Explained 1159:2). The house of our mind, just like Solomon's temple, is to be built up in a precise way, according to Divine precepts, using spiritual stone and wood, namely, by means of what is true and good from the Lord. The house of our mind is thus prepared and made ready for the Lord, with all the things of it present and ordered in their true and full spiritual form before the light of Heaven. When such a spiritual building is to some degree finished, the Lord's presence with man is felt with power and great beauty through the living experience of God that penetrates beyond time and space, giving an exalted sense of the Lord Jesus Christ as the true reality of human life.

At the time of the observance of Christmas the natural mind tends to keep alive the other reality, that of the Lord's life on earth, of the historic Lord. It is highly doubtful whether the Savior of the world can be felt as a present reality in His New Church through the traditional keeping of the coming Christian festival. Old, persistent habits of thinking in terms of time and space assert themselves and keep our thought of the Lord in some distant land, under conditions of life that existed centuries ago, thus outside of us.

The most that can be done in such a state is to draw a parallel that we, too, like the children of Israel, need the Lord's Coming for our salvation. There are many who hunger and thirst after the Lord's teaching, who long for His guidance and desire His protection under the sphere of Heaven. But the spiritual condition of the unregenerated human mind is such that it cannot receive the Coming Lord without sincere, careful and thorough preparation. Yet, we must strive for our mind to be opened to the light of Heaven apart from any historical tradition, looking to and constantly searching for the living God within us, according to His words in The Apocalypse: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock" (Revelation 3:20).

The Lord knocking signifies His love to be received, but He does not really enter and make a permanent abode with man as long as the house of man's mind remains unprepared. The Lord already has His dwelling place in man's soul, which is the inmost part of man (see *Conjugal Love* 315), and this allows the finite man to continue his life after the material body has been put off. However, the spiritual quality of that life depends upon reciprocal conjunction of the man with the Lord. This is

"a mutual conjunction, [and is] not affected by action and reaction, but by cooperation; for the Lord acts, and man receives action from Him, operating as if from himself, indeed of himself, [but] from the Lord" (*True Christian Religion* 371).

The spiritual cooperation of the Lord and man is the very basis of true Christian life, which is meant also by these words in Micah: "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of thee but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God" (*Micah* 6:8). Man, endowed with free will and rationality, is by no means a passive bystander in the Lord's work of salvation. When the spiritual house of man's mind is being prepared, by means of given faculties, man for the first time starts a life of true charity concerning which he has only dreamed before. This change of spiritual state is meant by the Lord's words in *The Apocalypse*: "Behold, I have set before you an open door" (*Revelation* 3:8).

The preparation of man's mind for the Lord to come and dwell therein is the essential task of our spiritual lives. In the story of Solomon's Temple, the quality of that preparation is meant by the words: "There was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building" (*I Kings* 6:7). "Hammer, axe and tool of iron" signify the falsities of man's self-intelligence, and also sensual truths which oppose any spiritual progress by keeping a person in an erroneous belief that nothing is to be trusted unless it can be experienced by the five bodily senses (see *Apocalypse Revealed* 847; *Apocalypse Explained* 458:8; *Arcana Coelestia* 7693). Things derived from man's self-intelligence represent the self-deception which prevents honest self-examination, confession and repentance. It can also project a feeling of goodness that is in reality not good at all. Self-examination is a painful process, revealing unsuspected depths of self-deception.

Living too much on the surface of the experience of life often makes such confession seem extreme, emotionally unhealthy, and even a dangerous invitation to evil influence. It may be thought far less morbid to shun the evils of self-love because they are unpleasant or ugly to think about, rather than consider them as sins against the Lord. But to dwell on what appears beautiful and exalting without knowing the depths of resistance to the dominion of the proprium is to miss the spiritual vigor of the Lord's Salvation. Indeed, faith in the Lord's power to save man from the illusion of self-sufficiency involves action on the part of man, for to stand hanging our hands down would lead us into faith alone. Shunning evils as sins against the Lord is as healthful and orderly as it is necessary for spiritual development, because "as man of himself can close heaven, he can of himself open it, provided that when he thinks and wills to desist from evils, he looks to the Lord" (*Apocalypse Explained* 798).

Therefore, preparation for the coming Lord consists in the acknowledgment of His saving Power, followed by a cleansing of the proprial things which oppose His coming.

Amen

We know that if a man really desires something, he makes every effort to attain it. Of all things which appear to be good and desirable, the living presence of the Lord with man is incomparably the best and the most desirable. What is the reason then for these words in Jeremiah: "Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, are these" (Jeremiah 7:4). The reason for these words seems to imply a warning against a sudden outburst of self-pride in the knowledges of Divine things, or what may even be worse, in the life which on the surface appears as orderly. He who has not yet attained a true knowledge of God vivified by the same quality of Divine Love, described by the internal perception of truth from good, is still proud of his apparent spiritual progress. But he who has been granted genuine knowledge keeps in mind the words of Abraham when his spiritual eyes were opened: "[I] am but dust and ashes" (Genesis 18:27). If we start to feel a pride in any of the elements of our spiritual development, the only safe guideline to resist such a subtle temptation is to keep the mind focused on the Lord in His Divine Human, doing everything for the sake of His Divine Love. This will also help us to come out of complex reasonings concerning Divine things—for which we may not yet be ready—and will enable us to come into the simplicity of genuine innocence and trust into the Lord, so necessary for any real progress.

It is complete trust and confidence in the coming Lord that are contained in the words: "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). The description of the building process of the Lord's house under King Solomon mirrors the spiritual preparation for the reception of the Lord. It may be further compared to the words of the prophecy concerning John the Baptist: "Thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways" (Luke 1:76). John prepared the way before the Lord by preaching repentance and by baptizing in the river Jordan all who came to him (see Matthew 3:6, Mark 1:5). John the Baptist represents the ordering of the external life by man, the cleansing of the impurities of his life according to Divine direction and by means of the sense of the letter of the Word. Thus, he prepares a way for the Lord to renew man's internal plane of life by cleansing it from proprial impurities. The new internal prepared in such a way becomes the core of a new human, making the entire man ready for spiritual conjunction with the Divine Human of the Lord.

Thus, it is obvious that in different ways, according to differing spiritual states, the Lord continually prepares man for heaven, giving His precious gift of spiritual birth that heavenly life may be received, understood and freely lived in its wholeness. The fullness of development possible for all men and women, in this sense of the Lord as present reality and not as historical event, has as yet scarcely been conceived. Opening our minds to the Lord in His Divine Human should make us more alive to spiritual actuality, searching for ourselves the meaning of the words: "Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?" (Isaiah 66:1).

Amen.