

FROM THE LORD'S WORD

The Old Testament

Now Jacob went out from Beersheba and went toward Haran. So he came to a certain place and stayed there all night, because the sun had set. And he took one of the stones of that place and put it at his head, and he lay down in that place to sleep. Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

And behold, the Lord stood above it and said: "I am the Lord God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants. Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed. Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you."

Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it." And he was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!"

Then Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put at his head, set it up as a pillar, and poured oil on top of it. And he called the name of that place Bethel; but the name of that city had been Luz previously. Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going, and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on, so that I come back to my father's house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God. And this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God's house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You" (Genesis 28:10-22).

The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord,
And He delights in his way.

Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down;
For the Lord upholds him with His hand.

(Psalm 37:23, 24)

Look upon me and be merciful to me,
As Your custom is toward those who love Your name.

Direct my steps by Your word,
And let no iniquity have dominion over me.

Redeem me from the oppression of man,
That I may keep Your precepts.

(Psalm 119:132-134)

“The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make His face shine upon you,
And be gracious to you;
The Lord lift up His countenance upon you,
And give you peace.”
(Numbers 4:24-26)

Cause me to hear Your lovingkindness in the morning,
For in You do I trust;
Cause me to know the way in which I should walk,
For I lift up my soul to You.
(Psalm 143:8)

Show me Your ways, O Lord;
Teach me Your paths.
Lead me in Your truth and teach me,
For You are the God of my salvation;
On You I wait all the day.
(Psalm 25:4-5)

He who builds His steps in the heavens,
And has founded His strata in the earth;
Who calls for the waters of the sea,
And pours them out on the face of the earth—
The Lord is His name.
(Amos 9:6)

Let us search out and examine our ways,
And turn back to the Lord;
Let us lift our hearts and hands
To God in heaven.
(Lamentations 3:40-41)

The New Testament

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.... In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:1,4,5,14).

“A man can receive nothing unless it has been given him from heaven” (John 3:27).

Then Jesus said to them, “A little while longer the light is with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going. While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light” (John 12:35-36).

I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness. And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world (John 12:46-47).

Jesus said to him, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes." Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" (Mark 9:23,24)

"If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word" (John 14:23).

The Heavenly Doctrine

The Lord Teaches Us in His Word

The life that flows in from the Lord through the Word is the light of truth into our minds and the love of good into our will (see *De Verbo* 2).

When the Word is read, the Lord comes in and teaches (*Arcana Coelestia* 6516:3).

The Lord instructs everyone by means of the Word, and He instructs a person to the degree that the person receives goodness from the Lord in his will, which in turn depends on the degree to which he abstains from evils because they are sins (*De Verbo* 13:2).

Knowledges from the Word are such that they are open from the Lord Himself; for the Word itself is from the Lord through heaven, and the Lord's life is in all things of the Word (*Arcana Coelestia* 1461).

It is through the Word that the Lord is present with a person and conjoined with him, for the Lord is the Word, and as it were speaks with the person in it (*Doctrine of the Sacred Scripture* 78).

Every person who possesses a spiritual affection for truth, that is, who loves real truth because it is true, is enlightened by the Lord when he reads the Word. Not so, however, one who reads the Word solely out of a natural affection for truth, which is called curiosity. Such a person sees only what accords with his love, or with his philosophic opinions, either that he has conceived for himself, or that he has adopted from others through hearing and reading (*De Verbo* 12).

Conjunction with Heaven Brings Enlightenment

The reason why the Word is the source of enlightenment and instruction is that in its first origin the Word is God's truth itself emanating from the Lord, and on its way down into the world it is adjusted to suit all the heavens. Therefore when a person possessing a heavenly love reads it the Word links him to heaven and through heaven to the Lord, as a result of which he receives enlightenment and instruction. It is different when a person possessing a worldly love reads the Word. He is not linked to heaven and consequently has no enlightenment or instruction (*Arcana Coelestia* 9382:3).

When these two commandments [that the Lord is to be loved above everything else and the neighbor as themselves] are the end in view the Word is in that case opened up, for all the Law

and all the Prophets, that is, the whole of the Word, hangs on them, as does everything from them, and so everything has reference to them. And being in that case governed by the primary teachings concerning truth and good people receive light in each particular thing they see in the Word. For the Lord is present with them at that time by means of angels and is teaching them even though they are not directly aware of it, and is also guiding them into the life of truth and good (*Arcana Coelestia* 3773).

Those are enlightened who are governed by heavenly loves; for heavenly loves receive and like sponges soak up heaven's truths.... On the other hand those are blinded who are ruled by worldly loves, since these loves receive and like sponges soak up falsities (*Arcana Coelestia* 9382:2).

As all things of the Word both in general and in particular treat of the Lord and as the Word, being the Divine truth, is the Lord, it is evident why it is said, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory;" and also why it is said, "While ye have the light, believe in the light, that ye may be sons of light: I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth in Me should not abide in the darkness." The "light" is the Divine truth, thus the Word. This is why, even at this day, every one who, while reading the Word, approaches the Lord alone, and prays to Him, is enlightened in the Word (*Doctrine of the Lord* 2).

The Word Gives Us the Divine Truths Necessary for Regeneration

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 (*Apocalypse Explained* 724:8).

The Lord said, "Blessed are they who hear the Word of God and keep it" which describes the regeneration effected by means of truths from the Word, and by a life according to them. To hear the Word of God means to learn truths from the Word, and to keep it means to live according to them (*Apocalypse Explained* 710:9).

The natural person can know and also perceive what good and truth are, but only the natural and social variety of good and truth. Spiritual good and truth he cannot know or perceive. Knowledge of these has to come from revelation, and so from the Word. For example, from the rational present in everyone a person may know that he ought to love his neighbor and to worship God. But how he ought to love his neighbor and worship God, and so what constitutes spiritual good and truth, he cannot know except from the Word (*Arcana Coelestia* 3768:2).

The Meaning of the Stairway in Jacob's Dream

By "steps" in the Word is meant going up to higher that is, more internal levels, as in Amos: "The Lord Jehovah Zebaoth builds His steps in the heavens" (9:6) (*Arcana Coelestia* 8945:6).

We say that a person climbs up, but it must be understood that it is God who lifts him up. A person has a free choice in acquiring knowledge. And he seems to get this for himself from the Word by means of the understanding, and thus smooths the path for God to come down and lift him up. The pieces of knowledge which enable the human understanding to climb, while God holds it in His hand and guides it, can be compared to the steps of the ladder seen by Jacob (*True Christian Religion* 24:2).

When a person who has been regenerated or born anew has come this far [in the process of regeneration by means of truth and good] the Lord manifests Himself to him, for he has by now risen up from the lowest step, as if by a stairway, to the one where the Lord is. This stepping up is also meant by the stairway seen in a dream by Jacob which was set up on the earth, a stairway whose top reached to heaven, and on which the angels of God were going up and coming down, with Jehovah or the Lord standing above it (*Arcana Coelestia* 3882:1,2).