

“Inner Peace: The Wolf Will Dwell with the Lamb”

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The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb,
The leopard shall lie down with the young goat,
The calf and the young lion and the fatling together;
And a little child shall lead them. (Isaiah 11:6)

Picture the scene spoken of in this prophecy. A wolf and lamb living together with the lamb at times playfully jumping around and the wolf peacefully looking on. A leopard with a young goat nestled against it. A lion, a young calf and even a perfect, fat, grown cow likewise peacefully co-existing. Even the images of safety involving an infant playing at a cobra's hole or a young child reaching into a viper's den. These peaceful scenes are not the way things work in the natural world. As observed in the *True Christian Religion*:

As everyone knows, a lamb can only behave like a lamb. A sheep can only behave like a sheep. By the same token, a wolf can only behave like a wolf, and a tiger can only behave like a tiger. If all these animals are put in the same space, surely the wolf will devour the lamb and the tiger will devour the sheep. That is why there are shepherds to guard the flock. (*True Christian Religion* 653)

This prophecy, one of the prophecies about the Lord's advent, is describing a spiritual reality that can be accomplished when the Lord is born into our lives.

If we are paying attention our natural mind is not a safe environment. A relatively small inconvenience can bring a rush of angry thoughts. A clumsy comment by someone can have us feeling indignant and thinking of retaliation. Someone else's leisure while we are working hard can nettle us with envy or discontent. Something or someone attractive can catch our eye and the initial thoughts that jump to mind may be far from heavenly. When a more substantial problem or loss occurs anger at others even God can come to mind or we can sink into a dark pool of discouragement and depression. No our minds are too often not a safe environment.

The Lord was born into the world to guarantee that if we seek His help we will have the capability of turning away from destructive thoughts and motives the hells seek to inspire in us. He was born to ensure that we can live in spiritual freedom. The following passage describes what the Lord accomplished through being born on this earth and fighting against the hells.

When He was in the world the Lord fought against all the hells and completely subdued them, as a result of which also He became Righteousness. By doing that He has rescued from damnation those who receive Divine Good and Truth from Him. If the Lord had not done so no person could have been saved, for the hells are unceasingly present with a person, exercising control over him to the extent that the Lord does not shift them away. And He shifts them away to the extent that the person refrains from evils. (*Arcana Caelestia* 9937:3)

This idea is a fundamental cornerstone of New Church teachings. The infinite God would not choose to fight the hells by directly drawing near with His infinite love and wisdom. The approach of the infinite God would have destroyed not only the evil spirits but far more. The Lord became our Savior and Redeemer by being born into the world, taking on the flaws and limitations of a natural mind. These flaws and limitations allowed the hells to attack Him. Through winning in His battles of temptation the Lord took on a power that allows Him to help us each moment of our lives. The passage continues:

He who is victorious once over the hells is victorious forever over them; and to achieve this the Lord made Divine His Human. The One therefore who alone fights for a person against the hells - or what amounts to the same thing, against evil loves and false ideas, since they arise from the hells - is said to bear sins; for He bears that burden, alone. The reason why 'bearing sins' also means moving evil loves and false ideas away from those who are governed by good is that this is the consequence. For the more remote the hells are from a person, the more remote evil loves and false ideas are, since these things come, as has been stated, from the hells - evil loves and false ideas being sins and iniquities. (*Arcana Caelestia* 9937:3)

The Lord wants to protect us from evil loves and false ideas. Each of the gentle animals represent qualities of innocence or love. Sometimes people define innocence as meaning the quality of not having much experience of life and not knowing about the bad things that can happen. This is not the meaning of this word in the teachings for the New Church.

The good things of innocence consist in acknowledging that all true ideas and forms of good come from the Lord and none at all from the human self or proprium; thus it consists in wishing to be led by the Lord and not by self. From this it is evident that the more a person trusts and believes in himself, thus the more he is ruled by self-love, the less the good of innocence is present in him. This is why a person cannot be purified from evil loves unless the good qualities of innocence are present in him. For if these good qualities are not present that person is led not by the Lord but by self; and anyone who is led by self is led by hell. (*Arcana Caelestia* 10210)

Innocence is a desire to be led by the Lord. This innocence can exist on more internal and more external parts of our minds. So we are taught: "Inmost good things of innocence are meant by 'the lamb', interior good things of innocence by 'the kid', and exterior good things of innocence by 'the calf'" (*Arcana Caelestia* 10132:2). A willingness to be led by the Lord can exist as a deep core of a person's life and it can also exist within a simple serenity experienced in external things. The "little child," the "nursing infant" and the "weaned infant" similarly represent three levels of innocence possible in us.

Each of the fierce animals listed in this prophecy represent a threat to our spiritual life. For example, the wolf stands for evil spirits who are opposed to innocence (*Arcana Caelestia* 3994:3) and the leopard means the false ideas that are the opposite of innocence and work through rationalizations to lead us away from living a life of charity or wise kindness (*Apocalypse Explained* 780:6)

One passage in the teachings for the New Church cites the text for this sermon and then directly connects it to the presence of the Lord in a person's life that makes for this state of safety.

The wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the kid, the calf also and the young lion and the sheep together; and a little child will lead them. This refers to the Lord's kingdom and to the state there in which people have no fear of evil, that is, no dread of hell, because they are with the Lord. 'The lamb' and 'the kid' stand for people who have innocence within them, and who, being the most secure of all, are mentioned first. (*Arcana Caelestia* 3519:4)

In heavenly life, the Lord's presence with a single individual is more powerful than a huge army of evil spirits (*Apocalypse Explained* 1086e). In that life there is no need for fear of evil. Sadly, few, if any of us, are in this state of safety now. At times people reading of prophecies like this have tried to live a lamb-like state in this world in the sense of always being gentle and opposing nothing. At times people have so emphasized the Lord's apparent passivity on Good Friday, not resisting the horrendous mistreatment of Him and have thought of Him as the "lamb of God" in His lack of resistance. The teachings for the New Church make it clear that while the Lord was not trying to fight the religious leaders or taunts and abuses of the Roman soldiers, He was involved in a more intense spiritual battle than we could possibly imagine. We are told that the Lord's work of redeeming each of us:

. . . could be illustrated by comparison with a battle against the armies of every nation in the entire world, armed with spears, shields, swords, guns, and cannons, under generals and officers who are cunning, experienced strategists. . . The Lord's battle with hell can also be compared, although inadequately, with someone fighting against all the wild animals in the world, slaughtering or taming them until not one animal would dare to go out and attack any human being who is with the Lord. Then if any wild animal so much as put on a menacing look, it would suddenly stop itself as if it felt a vulture deep inside its chest trying to pierce it to the very heart. (*True Christian Religion* 123:3-4)

The battle continues today with the Lord's presence with us as described in the end of the passage just quoted.

The Lord uses the same divine power today to fight against hell in every one of us who is being regenerated. Hell attacks us all with diabolical fury. If the Lord did not counter hell and control it, we could not help succumbing. Hell is like one monstrous human being or a massive lion; in fact, it is compared to a lion in the Word. The Lord has to chain the forelegs and shackle the hind legs of that lion, that monster. Otherwise the only possible outcome would be that once we were rescued from one evil we would spontaneously fall into the next, and in fact into many others. (*True Christian Religion* 123:6)

As we enter into the Christmas season with hopes for times of great joy, wonderful celebration and quiet contemplation may we remember the heavenly peace and safety from evil that the Lord wants to bring to our lives. May we seek to follow the Lord and pray for the innocence that allows Him to bring us that peace and safety. AMEN.

Lessons: Isaiah 11:1-10, *Arcana Caelestia* 3696:1-2

Isaiah 11:1-10

¹ There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, And a Branch shall grow out of his roots.

² The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD. ³ His delight *is* in the fear of the LORD, And He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, Nor decide by the hearing of His ears; ⁴ But with righteousness He shall judge the poor, And decide with equity for the meek of the earth; He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, And with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked.

⁵ Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins, And faithfulness the belt of His waist.

⁶ "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, The leopard shall lie down with the young goat, The calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little child shall lead them. ⁷ The cow and the bear shall graze; Their young ones shall lie down together; And the lion shall eat straw like the ox. ⁸ The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, And the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den. ⁹ They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD As the waters cover the sea. ¹⁰ "And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, Who shall stand as a banner to the people; For the Gentiles shall seek Him, And His resting place shall be glorious."

Arcana Caelestia 3696:1-2

'And lay down in that place' means the serenity of that state . . . lying down or sleeping is nothing else . . . In the case of those who are to undergo regeneration, . . . they are first of all in a state of serenity or external peace, for external peace or peace experienced in external things is called serenity. Indeed it is a product of the Divine state of peace which exists inmosty and which manifests itself in external things through the removal of evil desires and false ideas; for it is these that cause all unrest. Furthermore everyone at the start of his life, that is, in early childhood, is in a state of calm, but as one advances in years or grows up he moves away from that state, for he gives himself up to worldly concerns and consequent anxious cares caused by the desires of self-love and of love of the world, and by false ideas that spring from these.

Something very similar to this occurs with the new life with one who is being regenerated. At first he experiences a state of serenity, but as he moves on into the new life so he moves into a state that is not serene. For evil loves and false ideas which he has taken into himself previously now emerge and show themselves, and these trouble him, so much so at length that he undergoes temptations and trials from the devil's crew who try all the time to destroy his state of new life. But despite this a state of peace exists with him inmosty. But for its presence inmosty he would not put up any fight at all, for in all the conflicts he experiences he sees that state as the end in view. If that end were not in view he would never have the power and strength to fight. And this is also what enables him to overcome. And since it is the end in view he also enters that state once conflict or temptations are past. It is like the state of spring which follows that of autumn and winter, or like the state of dawn following evening and night.