

THE LORD'S ADVENT

Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6).

These inspired words are remarkable for the fact that they state so plainly that it was the Father Himself who would come into the world, who would be born among people, and who, even during His time on the earth, would still bear the government of the universe.

In Isaiah's vision, he saw that long after he was dead a Child would be born—a holy Child, a wonderful Child, a Child who would fulfill all the hope of the ages, a Child who would combine in One Person the omnipotence of God and the approachability of man.

When this Child was finally born into the world, His Advent was noticed first by the wondering shepherds, to whom the angel said, "Do not be afraid, for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10-11). Later this Child would be recognized and honored by costly gifts from the hands of the wise men of the East.

People have often wondered and been confused about the divinity of Christ. Mary herself, in the presence of the radiant angel Gabriel, was the first to ask the question: "How can this be?" And she was the first also to receive the Divine answer: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35).

If those who followed after Mary had not become blinded and confused by separating God into three Divine Persons, they would have been able to understand how this thing could be, from the prophecy of Isaiah. For he meant the Lord Jesus Christ when he spoke of the Child who was to be born. Isaiah goes on to name the qualities of this Divine Child, this Son. First, he calls Him a wonder Child—Wonderful; then a friend of those who are inquiring and restless—the wise Counselor; next a support in the combats that bow the human soul, when our own powers seem utterly futile and we long for someone who is mightier and greater than we—the Mighty God. Some people have thought that when the Lord on earth prayed to His Father, He was praying to another person. But if we ponder the words of Isaiah we will realize that this Christ Child, the Baby of Bethlehem, would also be called the Everlasting Father and the Prince of Peace to eternity.

In the New Church, Christmas is a time to reaffirm our absolute belief in the One God in One Person, who is the Lord Jesus Christ. His coming into the world at Christmas time was the manifestation, in this world, of a power which had always been here. For God was always present in Bethlehem. He was there when it was David's home a thousand years before the wise men arrived from the East. And He is there today, for He is the ever-present Soul of the universe. But on that first Christmas Day the Lord God willed that His invisible Divine Life should take on a human form and substance, so that people might see and know Him more completely, love and worship Him, teach His Gospel and even be willing to give their lives for Him.

Each person's body reveals the soul, the character, the spirit, the personality within him. It is by the acts and deeds of the body that we show forth a kindly spirit or else withhold our love. So it was according to order that God Himself should also assume a body of His own, that He might lead and teach humankind. And once the Human touchability of God had been revealed, it could never be taken away.

And so as the meaning of the Lord's coming becomes ever clearer to us, as the clouds of doubt and misunderstanding are dispelled from our minds at this glad season, we may exclaim with the angelic hosts: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men!"