

WE NOW PROCEED

(Six Studies in Christian Living)

By Basil Lazer, 1964

What I have said so far, though, is addressed only to our rational thought. In order to present the matter to sensory observation, I should like to add some experiences that may serve to illustrate and support the claims that first, we are our love or intention after death; second, we remain the same forever in regard to our volition or dominant love; third, we come into heaven if our love is heavenly and spiritual, and into hell if our love is carnal and worldly without any heavenly and spiritual dimension; fourth, our faith does not stay with us unless it comes from a heavenly love; and fifth, love in action, and therefore our life, is what remains.

HH 472

Love and intent are the very soul of the deed or work. It forms its own body in the honest and fair things that we do. This is the sole source of our spiritual body, the body of our spirit; that is, our spiritual body is formed entirely from what we have done out of love or intent. In a word, everything of our character and our spirit is [embodied] in our works or deeds.

HH 475

People who do not love their neighbour cannot have the least faith. Love for others, or charity, is the actual base on which faith is planted. Charity is its heart, the source of its existence and life. As a result, the ancients compared love and charity to a heart, and faith to lungs, both of which reside in the chest. Charity and faith actually resemble the heart and lungs, too, because to imagine a life of faith without charity is like imagining we can live by our lungs alone, without our hearts. Anyone can see it is impossible. So the ancients called every impulse of charity a gesture of the heart, and every word of faith lacking in charity they called lip service, or a product of the lungs (by way of the breath that flows into speech). That is how they developed the habit of talking about goodness and truth as something that ought to "come from the heart."

AC 1843

ABBREVIATIONS

ARCANA COELESTIA, AC
APOCALYPSE EXPLAINED, AE
APOCALYPSE REVEALED, AR
CONJUGIAL LOVE, CL
DOCTRINE OF LIFE, D of LIFE
DOCTRINE OF THE LORD, DL
DIVINE LOVE & WISDOM, DLW
DIVINE PROVIDENCE, DP
HEAVEN & HELL, HH
NEW JERUSALEM & ITS HEAVENLY DOCTRINE, NJHD
TRUE CHRISTIAN RELIGION, TCR

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INTRODUCTION

In this booklet you will find six studies based on the Writings. These Writings are from the pen of Emanuel Swedenborg (1688 - 1772) the great Swedish philosopher, scientist, inventor, astronomer, mathematician, chemist, mineralogist and geologist. However, the greatest contribution to the world by this unique genius has been through a series of remarkable books known as "The Writings", or "The Heavenly Doctrines". After many years of careful preparation he was chosen by the Lord as His revelator and by direct instruction from the Lord when studying His Word was given the internal or spiritual meaning of the literal sense of the Word. For many years he was permitted by the Lord to see and describe in great detail the life after death and what actually occurs in the world of spirits and heaven and hell.

These profound and eternal revelations, as well as many practical, sublime and authentic teachings are all preserved for us today in the Writings. This has resulted in the formation of a New Church, new in every respect; presenting to the world for the first time a new spiritual philosophy, a new conception of Christianity and all it stands for, a new understanding and appreciation of the Lord and His great love and provision for all His creation, as well as the way (through self-examination, repentance, reformation and regeneration) to an eternal heavenly life after we have left this world.

It is not possible in a small booklet to do full justice to a great man like Swedenborg, but for those interested, "Swedenborg, Life and Teaching" by George Trobridge is recommended. In it is set out the story of Swedenborg's life and how he was prepared step by step by the Lord to ultimately produce the Writings. After reading the story of his life, one has a greater appreciation of the all-important work for mankind inspired and directed by the Lord, through this great genius. Another helpful book which is strongly recommended is "An Introduction to Swedenborg's Religious Thought" by J.H. Spalding.

Sometimes a newcomer to the Writings is able to see facets of their great truths from a different viewpoint to those who are familiar with them. The impact of these tremendous revelations on one reading them for the first time can be very great indeed. Although it is now many years since I first began to study the Writings, such was my experience, and although I have studied them a great deal since that time, they still have this effect on me. I found it all so new and refreshingly different from anything which had come my way. Nurtured in many false beliefs concerning God and religion, I had much to discard before I could be prepared to receive these astounding disclosures and grasp their true significance. It was only after I had gradually been able to do this, that the Lord in His great love and mercy, was able to open my perception to a degree where I was able to grasp and appreciate many things which hitherto had been completely unknown to me, thus enabling me to receive to a much greater extent what the Writings had to offer.

These studies have been written with the object of presenting some of the wonderful truths of the Writings in a more personal manner, which can be related to the circumstances and experiences of daily life. One important fact stressed in the Writings is the need to proceed, or go forward in our spiritual life and not slacken our efforts or permit ourselves to grow apathetic. The Writings show that we can't afford to "let up" in our daily battles against evils, but must maintain a constant vigilance against the powers of hell. If we do this, we will proceed from victory to victory through the power of the Lord, whose one aim is to lead us eventually into heavenly life.

We each have our own particular part to play in the great "drama" of life and the Lord has given us the freewill to do this either according to His precepts, or after the dictates of self love. No one can step aside or ask to be excused from taking part in this living "drama". We are all in it, whether we like it or not, and we have to make our choice now, in this life, for good or evil. On this will depend our entry into either heaven or hell. That is why it is of such vital importance for us to have a regular spiritual "stock take", as it were, to see where we stand. All the regrets and remorse after we enter the realm of spirits, will never compensate for our failure to come to grips in this life with the evils to which we are prone.

The Writings point out that our internal man is really a complete representation of all we have thought, said and done in this life. After death, when the external man is removed, the internal man cannot be changed, but remains in that particular mould for all eternity. "The life of man cannot be changed after death. It remains such as it has been, nor can the life of hell be transferred into the life of heaven, because they are opposites. It is therefore evident that those who come into hell, remain there forever and that those who come into heaven remain there forever."

In these studies I have endeavoured to present some of the wonderful truths of the Writings and trust that readers will find something here to help them to proceed more victoriously toward the Divine goal for all mankind - eternal heavenly life. However, I would like to point out that nothing can replace a regular personal study of the Writings, as in this way we begin to experience the Second Coming of the Lord in our own personal lives.

Each book of the Writings is divided into numbered portions and, the relevant number of the respective portion is given beside each particular book quoted. A list of the main books of the Writings will also be found at the end of this booklet.

WORTHY RECEPTACLES

Self dies very hard in us. We like to think ourselves capable of doing all good in our own power and tend to take a great pride in our achievements. When we are praised for some good we have done, we get a glow of self-satisfaction and often graciously accept such praise as our due. But the humbling lesson we have to learn is that we, in ourselves, are nothing but evil and any good we accomplish is done, not by us, but by the Lord working through us as His instruments. This New Church teaching goes right against the grain of the natural man, who can think of himself only as a self-contained unit, with the ability to do everything in his own power; whereas the truth is, that all good comes from the Lord alone, Who said: "*Without Me, you can do nothing.*" John 15:5

We are told that the angels abhor the very idea of their goodness coming from themselves and continually acknowledge that all good is from the Lord and that it is His good (or love) which flows from them to others, according to the extent to which they are able to receive it: It must be known, however, that the angels have no power whatever of themselves, but that all their power is from the Lord; and that they are powers only so far as they acknowledge this. Whoever among them believes that he has power of himself instantly becomes so weak as not to be able to resist even a single evil spirit. For this reason angels ascribe no merit whatever to themselves, and are averse to all praise and glory on account of anything they do, ascribing it to the Lord.

HH 230 See also HH 218, and 232

This idea of self is very hard to eradicate, as we are confronted with it on all sides. It is particularly emphasised in modern thinking, where man's petty achievements are broadcast far and wide; any possibility of them originating from the Lord, being ridiculed and rejected as sheer nonsense. It is considered childish and out of date to speak of the Lord as being the only Source of all knowledge. He is relegated to a position of no importance (even when He is vaguely acknowledged in a nominal sort of way). Today, all the emphasis is placed on the cleverness and brilliance of man as an individual in his own right; the master of every situation; the genius who is going to conquer the world and outer space; the inventor of all kinds of mechanical and scientific devices; the big I AM, for whom nothing is impossible. "Another great achievement!" scream the headlines. "Another milestone in human endeavour. Aren't we wonderful!" So the human ego is continually glorified and man becomes puffed up with his own importance. We have been conditioned to this type of thinking for so long, that even when we know the truth as revealed in the Writings, we are still inclined to believe that what we do comes entirely from ourselves. We speak of our knowledge, our ability, our accomplishments, forgetting that we owe them all to the Lord, Who created the very brains with which we think and is the only Source of love, wisdom, truth and power.

But with all our frailties and conceits, it is good to know that the Lord, in His great love and mercy, has taken even our egoism into account in His work of regeneration and, at first, permits us to believe that the good we do is from ourselves, until He is able to lead us to the perception that all good and truth are from Him alone. We read this description of the first state of those who are reformed and become spiritual: 'The first state is that they imagine that they can do good and think truth on their own, autonomously. At that point they do not know otherwise at all. When you tell them that everything good and true comes from the Lord, they do not actually reject the idea, but they do not acknowledge it in their hearts. They do not sense and are unable to perceive inwardly that anything does flow into them from any source but themselves. Since all who are reforming first go through this phase, the Lord leaves them to their sense of independence but still leads them by means of it without their knowledge.'

The Lord does not compel us to acknowledge that all good and truth are from Him alone, but gradually leads us (in freedom) to this realisation, according to our willingness to be so led. We must, of our own free-will, learn to say "No" to self and "Yes" to the Lord. And yet, even our free-will is a gift from the Lord: All of our freedom has our life at its centre, because it has our love at its centre. Whatever we do out of love seems free to us. Heavenly love is present within that freedom when we force ourselves to resist evil and falsity and to do good. At such a time, heavenly love is what the Lord introduces into us and uses to create a sense of autonomy in us. As a result, the Lord wants it to appear to us as if we have true self-determination, even though we do not. In the other world, the Lord takes this autonomy that we have acquired through apparent self-compulsion during the life of the body and fills it full of pleasure and happiness without limit. We also receive greater and greater enlightenment. In fact, we come to believe firmly in the truth of the idea that we have not really compelled ourselves at all, but that even the very smallest efforts of our will came from the Lord. It becomes clear to us that the purpose of our apparent independence was to enable us to receive a new will from the Lord as our own and in this way adopt a life of heavenly love. The Lord wants to share what is his - and therefore what is heavenly - with every single person. He wants it to feel as if it belongs to us and resides in us, even though it does not. Angels have this sense of ownership. The more sure they are of the truth that everything good and true comes from the Lord, the more pleasure and happiness they gain from this sense of ownership. AC 1937-6

This wonderful gift of free-will and its importance to man, in the reciprocal conjunction between himself and the Lord, is further demonstrated in the following passage from AE 1138(3-6) where it is clearly shown why the Lord has granted this great privilege and how He works through it, so that man may come to love Him in return: "Freedom makes one with life; for without freedom man could not feel and perceive that he has life as it were in himself, this being felt and perceived from freedom. For it appears to a man from freedom, that every action of his life is his own and proper to him, freedom being the power of thinking, willing, speaking and acting from himself, in this case, as if from himself. And it is chiefly the power of willing; for a man says, I have the power to do what I will, and I have the will for what I have the power, that is, I am in freedom. Who again, from freedom cannot think that one thing is good and another evil; or that one thing is true and another false? Together with life man was therefore endowed with freedom, nor is it ever taken away from him; for in the measure that it is taken away or lessened, a man feels and perceives that he does not himself live, but another in him, and so far the delight of everything pertaining to his life is taken away and diminished, for he becomes a slave."

"That man from sensation and perception, has no other idea than that life is in himself, that it is thus as it were his own, needs no other confirmation than that of experience itself. For who has any other feeling or perception than that when he thinks, he does so from himself, and likewise when he wills, speaks and acts? But it is from a law of Divine Providence that man should not know otherwise, since without such feeling and perception, he could not receive, or appropriate anything to himself, or produce anything from himself, thus he would not be a recipient and an agent of life from the Lord. He would be like an automaton, or an image without understanding and will, standing with hands hanging down, in expectation of influx, which would not be imparted; for life, in consequence of non-reception and non-appropriation on man's part, would not be retained, but would pass through, whence man, from being alive, would become as it were dead, and from being a rational soul would become irrational, thus either a brute or a stock. For he would be without the delight of life, the delight which everyone has from receiving, appropriating, and producing as if from himself; and yet delight and life act in unity, for take away all the delight of life and you will become cold and die."

"If it were not from a law of Divine Providence that man should feel and perceive as if life and everything pertaining to it were in himself and he were merely to acknowledge that good and truth are not from himself, but from the Lord, nothing would be imputed to him - neither good nor truth, thus neither love nor faith. And if nothing were to be imputed, the Lord would not have commanded in the Word, that man should do good and shun evil, and that if he did good, heaven would be his inheritance, but if evil, his lot would be hell; in fact, there would be neither heaven nor hell, since, without the perception, man would not be man, thus he would not be the habitation of the Lord. For the Lord desires to be loved by man as if it were from man himself; thus the Lord dwells with him in what is man's own, which He has given to him

for the sake of this end, that He may be loved in return. For the Divine love consists in this, that it desires that what belongs to itself should belong to man, and this would not be the case unless man felt and perceived that what is from the Lord is, as it were, his own."

"When a man acknowledges that all things belonging to his life are from the Lord, He imparts the delight and blessedness of His love, so far as a man makes this acknowledgement and performs uses. Thus while man by acknowledgement and faith from love as from himself, ascribes to the Lord everything belonging to his life, the Lord, on the other hand, ascribes to man the good of his life, which is attended with every satisfaction and blessedness. The Lord also permits him from what is interior to have an exquisite feeling and perception of this good in himself as though it were his own, and the more exquisite in proportion as he wills from the heart what he acknowledges in faith. Perception is then reciprocal; for it is pleasing to the Lord that He is in man, and man in Him; and is attended with satisfaction for man that he is in the Lord, and the Lord in him. Such is the union of the Lord with man, and of man with the Lord, by means of love.

It should be our aim to become worthy receptacles to receive into our mind - which is the will and understanding - the love, good and truth which the Lord is continually pouring out from His spiritual Sun, or the Divine Proceeding. DLW 146 (See especially AC 9199, where it is shown that by means of the Holy Spirit, or the Divine Proceeding, the Lord continually instructs us in all things). But, before we can become worthy receptacles, we have to become clean receptacles - or suitable vessels for the use of the Lord - and this can be done only as we shun evils as sins and conquer them through the power of the Lord. This is the first step, and its importance is strongly emphasised in Matt 23 and TCR 591 to 593

It is also well to remember that we should not do good with the object of obtaining heavenly rewards; nor can our good works in themselves, earn us eternal life. TCR 439 All good is from the Lord. We are merely the channels — according to our reception of this goodness - through whom He works to bless others. Of ourselves we can do nothing; but when we are fully surrendered to Him (after the loves of self and the world have been vanquished) His love, truth, wisdom and grace can then flow through us to others. By way of comparison, take a water channel - after the accumulation of silt and filth have been removed, the pure water is able to flow through it freely, without becoming contaminated in the process. Similarly, the "living waters" of the Lord are able to flow through us to others in all their life-giving purity, when we become cleansed channels for His use. "The internal man has been formed to receive life from the Lord, and is nothing else than an organ of His life. Consequently, it is formed to serve the Lord for all the uses that love to Him and charity toward the neighbour demand, first in the natural world and afterwards in the spiritual world." AC 5947 See also TCR 435

It can therefore, be seen that our good works should never be a cause for boasting or vainglory, but should at all times be done with the knowledge that it is the Lord Himself working through us, Who accomplishes the good we do. Not that He needs us to do His work (He could accomplish it far more efficiently without us) but because, in His love and mercy, He gives us some of His work to do, that we might be usefully employed in service to others. AC 8719 Thus He uses us as His instruments. In this regard, we are reminded that Emanuel Swedenborg — perhaps the most worthy "receptacle" and "channel" ever to be used by the Lord — described himself as the servant of the Lord Jesus Christ.

TOLERANCE

Tolerance is a difficult, but essential lesson we all have to learn. We are all too prone to cast others into the same mould, or pattern, as ourselves and then, when they don't fall in with our ideas and think as we do, to brand them as peculiar, or stupid. Do you ever feel that way about people? You know the sort of thing: A certain book, a piece of music, a point of view, a game of some kind, or a film appeals to you very much and you are full of enthusiasm for it. Then, when others fail to see these things in the same light as yourself and do not endorse your impressions, you get hurt and disappointed and may even turn against them in anger, or lose all further interest in them, because they have not agreed with you. Many of us behave in this intolerant way toward others - even if we don't actually voice our disapproval, we condemn them in our hearts just the same and show our hostility at the first opportunity, because our pride has been hurt. A little self examination on our part should reveal how often we tend to treat others in this way, when their opinions differ from ours.

We become so wrapped up in our own little world, or way of life, thinking along certain lines, acting in a certain manner, liking this and disliking that, and so on, that we forget there are other people who feel and act quite differently and that no two people are exactly alike physically, mentally or spiritually. This is pointed out quite definitely in many places in the Writings and, the more we understand these important truths, the more tolerant we will become. We have only to consider the infinite variety of the Lord's creation to appreciate this. We find not only continuous diversity in the human race, but also among animals, birds, insects and plants — no two of which are ever created exactly alike. This infinite variety of the Lord's creation extends even to snowflakes and grains of sand, where each tiny unit is different from the rest.

In DP 56 we read: "An image of what is infinite and eternal in the variety of everything in the fact that nothing is exactly like anything else and nothing can be to eternity. We can see this in the faces of all the people there have been since the beginning of creation, and from their characters as well, which are reflected in their faces. We can see it from their feelings, perceptions, and thoughts, too, since these are elements of their character. This is why there are no two identical angels or spirits in all of heaven and never will be to eternity. It is the same for everything we can see in both worlds, the physical and the spiritual. This shows that the variety is infinite and eternal.

And in AC 7236-2: "From the fact that all in the heavens are distinguished according to goods, it may appear how manifold and how various good is; so various is it, that there is no instance of one being in the same good as another; nay, if myriads of myriads should be multiplied to eternity, the good of one would not be like that of another; just as the face of one is not like the face of another; in the heavens also, good forms the faces of the angels. The reason why there is a perpetual variety is, that every form consists of various distinct forms, for if two were exactly alike, they could not be two but one. Hence also it is, that in nature there is no instance of one thing being in every respect like another." See also HH 405 and especially TCR 32

So, let us see people in their right perspective and become more tolerant in our dealings with them, realising that the Lord is constantly at work in every life, leading each one closer to Himself, according to that person's capacity and willingness to shun evils as sins, overcome self-love and obey His precepts in a spirit of love and humility. Let us also understand that the reception of the Divine Good and Truth differs with each individual and what, perhaps, is clear to one, may be quite obscure to another. We can't all think exactly alike, but we can be more tolerant, patient and loving toward one another.

In this way, we will achieve far more in our efforts to help others see the truth, as everyone tends to reflect back what they sense are our feelings toward them. If we try to force our opinions on others and brush their protests aside as of no consequence, their immediate reaction toward us will be one of hostility and resentment and, no matter how true our facts may be, they will fall on deaf ears. On the other hand, if we bear in mind what the Writings teach — that no two people are in the same degree of truth and understanding — we will try to adapt ourselves to the trend of their thinking and their capacity to receive truth, tempering our discourse accordingly. AC 2533 In other words, we will put ourselves in their place and endeavour to present what we have to offer in a manner acceptable to them, without "riding roughshod" over their cherished ideals — even if they happen to be wrong. See AC 9213-5 & 6 for a description of the communication of thoughts between those of similar and dissimilar ideas.

Each person is an individual, a separate entity for the reception of thoughts, feelings and emotions, upon whom the Lord has given the stamp of a distinct personality. We have to understand this in our contacts with others and not expect everyone to see things in the same light as ourselves. We will then learn when to speak, what to say and how to say it and, perhaps most important of all, when to hold our tongue and say nothing, as the Lord increases our tolerance, patience and grace toward others. See the Lord's own example in Luke: 23:6-11 and Matt. 27:12-14

"All the people who have acquired intelligence and wisdom in the world are received in heaven and become angels, according to the quality and amount of their individual intelligence and wisdom. Whatever we have acquired in this world stays with us. We take it with us after death, where it is increased and filled out, all within the level of our own affection and desire for what is true and good, and not beyond that

level. People who have had little affection and desire accept little, but still as much as they can accept on their own level. People who have had great affection and desire accept much. The actual level of affection and desire is like a measure that is filled to the brim. This means more for people whose measure is great and less for people whose measure is small. This is because the love to which affection and desire belong accepts everything that suits it, so the amount of love determines the amount of receptivity. This is the meaning of the Lord's words, "To all who have, it will be given, and they will have more abundantly" [Matthew 13:12; 25:29](#); "Into your lap will be given a good measure, pressed down, shaken, and overflowing" [Luke 6:38](#). From HH 349

"A man who is in goodness of life does not condemn another who holds a different opinion, but leaves the matter to his faith and conscience and this even in the case of those who are outside the church; for he says in his heart that ignorance cannot condemn any who live in innocence and mutual love, as do little children, who also are in ignorance when they die." AC 4468

'Truth inflows with all, but it is varied with every one according to the state and quality of his life.' AC 7343

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." Matt. 5:7.

USE - OR SERVICE TO OTHERS

There are many ways in which we can perform uses and be of service to others, but many people are too preoccupied with themselves and their own affairs, to give the matter a thought. Everything they do is centred around themselves and those they call their own. Their main objective in life is to obtain more worldly gains and benefits, and they don't mind who they use in the process. The Writings show that the love of the world is in a man when, in what he thinks and does, he regards and seeks nothing but gain, quite regardless of whether others suffer in consequence. The love of self and the love of the world are diametrically opposite to heaven and make hell with a man; for in hell these two loves reign. AC 7373 and 7376

But what is the result of all this selfishness and cupidity? When their earthly body dies and such people re-awaken in the spiritual world, they find they are spiritually bankrupt, and all those things they had spent their life in acquiring (often at the expense of others) are utterly worthless. All their scheming, planning and cunning have, in the end, come to nothing and, when their external man is removed and their internal man revealed, they are shown themselves as they really are — bereft of the very things necessary for heavenly life. AC 10720, HH 462-b. There is only one place to which they can go and they cast themselves headlong into it. H H 510, AC 6203

The Lord warned us against this attitude when He said: *"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. "The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money."* Matt. 6:19-24

In many cases, a person's use is completely lost or nullified by selfishness, greed, pride or intolerance, which means that particular person has failed to fulfil the service the Lord would have used him to perform. Thus he turns the goodness which flows in from the Lord into its opposite evil. Such a man cannot produce anything good or fruitful and, when he enters the spiritual world is deprived of any good he has received from the Lord.

This is typified in the Parables of The Talents Matt. 25:14-30; The Pounds Luke 19:12-27 and The Unfruitful Fig Tree Matt. 21:18-19

Fortunately for mankind, there are also those who are concerned about others and have a sincere desire to be of service to them. In John 13:12-15, we find the following passage: *"After the Lord had washed his disciples' feet and taken his garments and was set down again, He said unto them: Know you what I have*

done to you? You call me Master and Lord and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example that you should do as I have done to you." Here we have a wonderful example of how the Lord demonstrated the importance of performing uses and serving others. The internal meaning of these words is given in AC 3147-8, where we read: "washing other people's feet was a sign of neighbourly love, which said, "I will not meditate on your faults." It was also a sign of humility, which said, "I will clean away your faults like dirt." Before they could do this, however, it was necessary for the Lord to wash their feet in order that they should be cleansed of evils and falsities, that they might receive spiritual influx from Him and so become fit servants to perform uses to others.

In AC 3147-7 we read: "Good deeds are evil deeds if impulses of self-love and materialism are not removed. When we do good deeds before removing those impulses, the deeds do look good on the outside, but they are evil on the inside. We do them for the sake of reputation, or material advantage, or position, or to be repaid, so they are either self-righteous or hypocritical. The urges of self-love and materialism make them so. When these evils are removed, however, the deeds become good. Then they are the goodness of charity. No consideration of self, worldly advantages, reputation, or reward enters into them, so they are not self-righteous or hypocritical. Heavenly love and spiritual love then flow from the Lord into the deeds and cause them to be love and charity in action."

This makes it quite clear that, before we can perform good works for others, we ourselves have to be cleansed from the love of self and the world and must always examine our hidden motives to make sure our good works are not done for the sake of reward or reputation. (Well defined in AC 3796). Having done this, the question then arises: "How can I be of service to others and what are the best uses I can perform?" The answer, will, of course, be different in every case, as no two people are exactly alike; but the Lord has so arranged matters that no one is born into the world without some useful potential. This is pointed out in AE 1226-5-6 which reads: — "If the life of man is regarded from the creation of all things existing in him, no part will be found which is not adapted to use, not a fibre or minute vessel in the brains, in the organs of the senses, in the muscles, or in any one of the viscera of the thorax or abdomen, or in any of the rest, which does not exist for the sake of use generally and individually, thus not for its own sake, but for the sake of the whole and the co-ordination of the parts. Even the larger forms, which are called members, sensories, muscles, and viscera, woven together and organised from fibres and vessels, are all formed from use, in use, and for the purpose of use, so much so, that they may be simply called, the uses out of which the whole man is built up and formed, it being clearly evident that they have no other origin or end but use. That every man is in a similar manner created and born for use, is plain from the use of all things in him, and from his state after death, which is such, that, if he does not perform any use, he is considered so worthless that he is cast into infernal prisons, or into desert places. His life also indicates plainly that he was born to be useful: for the man whose life consists in the love of use, is entirely different from one whose life consists in the love of idleness, by which is meant a life devoted merely to company, festivity and amusements."

"The life of the love of use is a life of the love both of the public good and of the neighbour. It is moreover a life of the love of the Lord; for the Lord performs uses to man by the agency of man. A life of the love of use is therefore a spiritual Divine life, and therefore every man who loves a good use, and performs it from the love of it, is loved by the Lord and received with joy by the angels in heaven. But a life of the love of idleness is a life of the love of self and of the love of the world; and consequently it is a merely natural life, which does not keep the thoughts of man together, but scatters them upon every vanity, turning them away by this means from the delights of wisdom, and plunging him into those of the body and the world alone, with which evils are in close connection. After death therefore, such a man is sent down to the infernal society to which he had attached himself in the world, and there, by force of hunger and the want of food, he is compelled to work. By uses in the heavens and on earth are meant the callings, functions and pursuits of life, various kinds of work, service and labour, and consequently all that is opposite to idleness and sloth."

In the new heavens we will each have our own particular use to perform and in this regard, no two uses will be identical, but each will have the stamp of our own individuality. This means that the Lord will allocate a certain use especially suitable to our own special talents, which we alone will be able to carry out. We can perhaps get some idea of the tremendous diversity of these uses when we appreciate the fact that the new heavens are populated by countless millions of angels, each of whom has a personal part to play in the perfection and delight of the new heavens. What a wonderful goal this is to aim at, when we view our work in this life as a preparation for this heavenly use awaiting us when we leave this limited material body and enter the next life in our new eternal spiritual body!

These things are pointed out in HH 405, where we read: "Useful activities in the heavens occur in similar variety and diversity. The function of one individual is never exactly the same as that of any other, so the delight of one is never the same as another's. Not only that, the delights of each function are countless, and these countless delights are equally varied, yet they are united in a design that enables them to focus on each other as do the functions of the individual members and organs and viscera in the human body; or even more, like the functions of every vessel and fibre in those members and organs and viscera. These are all interconnected in such a way that they focus on what they can contribute to the other and therefore to all, with all mindful of the individual members. They act as one because of this regard for the whole and for the individual."

One very important use we can all perform, when we have the opportunity is the introduction of others to the Writings. This is one of the greatest services we can render our fellows, as by this means, they can learn spiritual truths, which, if put into practice, could be the means of their ultimate entry into the new heavens. We are told that the poor, the maimed, the blind, the hungry, the afflicted and the naked are not only those in this external physical state, but more especially those who are internally so, and, to give them spiritual food is to love them as neighbour. AC 3419. A good definition of these people is also given in AC 9209.

Many people in these "enlightened" days are floundering in a "sea" of false teachings, which can lead only to spiritual chaos. Look at all the "isms" there are today; the numerous sects and cults, each one claiming to have all the truth, and many with thousands of followers. Why is this so? Why this frantic search for something in which to believe? These are days of fear, dread and confusion for many people, who have no spiritual "compass" by which to steer their lives. They see no hope for the world — in which is centred all their interest — and are overwhelmed at the thought of what could happen if man's great scientific knowledge were unleashed for purposes of destruction. They are being compelled to think in terms of death and annihilation and the great question they are asking is, 'What then?' The Writings have the answer, but how many people know about them? How many people are aware of the amazing revelations these great books contain, and that they hold the key to eternal life, for those who heed what they teach? Many are so desperate, that they will clutch at any straw in the hope of gaining a little comfort. So they wander in a maze from one deception to another. Ask the average person what they know about God, His Word and eternal life and you will soon see the tragic state of their ignorance.

The world is crying out for spiritual enlightenment. The Lord said: "*You ought to wash one another's feet,*" and we saw that, in the internal sense, this meant that we should not dwell upon other people's evils, but as an act of charity, should cleanse them from their evils. What better method could we use for this purpose, than an introduction to the Writings, and then a willingness to help the people concerned to understand and apply what the Writings have to teach? (See also AC 9256, where it is shown why a New Church is always formed from among the Gentiles, or those outside the established Church. This is because these people receive the truths of faith and accept and worship the Lord, as the one God under a Human form, much more readily than do those who are steeped in false beliefs regarding Christianity). In this way, we will not only spread the Lord's New Church on earth, but also increase the angelic population of the new heavens. TCR 108

In addition to the foregoing, there are also many other uses we can perform. It is for us to ascertain the particular use (or uses) to which we are adapted and see how these can be put into operation for the benefit of others. Our daily occupations can become a means of charity toward the neighbour, if carried

out justly and sincerely. Some have a particular talent for the ministry, while others find their abilities lie in the fields of teaching or writing. Then again, there are those who are especially gifted in other directions, such as: oratory, music, science, cookery, organisation, mechanisation, research, medicine, farming, etc. Some may have a special understanding for the problems of individuals, or an ability to get things done quickly, without fuss or delay, or a good sense of humour, or the capacity to make people feel at home, relaxed and receptive. There are, of course, numerous other gifts, and, if we are sincere about it, we will see just where our own particular talents lie. It is when we, of our own free will, allow the Lord to flow into these special talents He has entrusted to us, putting them to the best neighbourly use that we can begin to produce "fruit" for Him. We should also remember that no talent is too humble to be of use — the tiny blood vessels are just as necessary for the proper functioning of the body, as are the brain, heart and lungs.

The Writings show us how to do good to others in the right way, by pointing out how charity should be exercised. Otherwise, if charity is shown without distinction to good and evil alike, the evil derive benefits at the expense of the good and are assisted and encouraged in their evils. AC 6703 to 6705. We are taught to use discernment in our services to others, in order that the maximum benefit may result. In this regard, the following points are worth noting:

"A person is the neighbour in the measure Lord resides with him, since nobody receives the Lord, that is, the good which comes from Him, in the same way as another, no one person is therefore the neighbour in the same way as another, no one person is therefore the neighbour in the same way as another." AC 6706

"There is no good which is not of love, from which all good comes forth and achieves its quality. Everyone should be regarded as neighbour according to the quality of his love to the Lord." AC 6709-6712

"The descending degrees of the neighbour: 1. The Lord Himself. 2. The Lord's Kingdom. 3. The Church. 4. One's country. 5. A greater or lesser society. 6. Individuals. These are the neighbours toward whom good should be done from charity. (AC 6819) These degrees are degrees in successive order, in which a prior or higher degree is always to be preferred to one that is posterior, or lower." AC 6824

"Genuine charity involves acting circumspectly and with the end in view that good may result. Anybody who gives help to some poor or needy person who is a wrong-doer does ill to the neighbour through him, for through the help he gives that wrong-doer he strengthens him in evil and supplies him the wherewithal to do ill to others. It is different with one who supplies help to the good." AC 8120

"Charity towards the neighbour involves doing what is right in every task, and doing what is required in any official position." AC 8121

Here we are shown what the Lord would have us do for others and how best we can contribute to the welfare of our neighbour. The rest is up to us. "Charity is an internal affection which consists in a man willing from the heart and finding the delight of his life in doing good to the neighbour and this without any reward." AC 8033 "The very joy which is inherent in the love of doing good without reward as an end, is a recompense which remains to eternity." AC 9984

"Love and wisdom without use are not anything; they are only ideal entities; nor do they become real until they are in use. Love, wisdom and use are three things which cannot be separated; for if they are separated, they do not amount to anything. Love is not anything without wisdom, but in wisdom it is formed for something. This something is use; therefore when love by wisdom is in use, then it is something, indeed, it then first exists. They are thus precisely like end, cause and effect." AR 875. In other words they are like objective, means and result.

EXPERIENCE

"And your ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying: This is the way, walk you in it, when you turn to the right hand and when you turn to the left." Isaiah 30:21.

The Lord is always willing to teach us, if we are willing to learn and profit by His instruction, and one of His methods is to use the experiences of daily life. In His great love and mercy the Lord is continually endeavouring to lead us from evil to good. AC 2406 With infinite patience and understanding He will "speak to our hearts" when we turn away from Him, show us the danger which lies ahead and point the

way back to the path we have forsaken. If we heed His warnings and obey His "voice," then He can lead us ever nearer to Himself and away from the evils toward which we are prone. He knows exactly where we stand and is continually foreseeing and providing for our eternal life.

When a little child, either through ignorance or disobedience, falls over and hurts itself, or gets into trouble in some other way, it rushes to its mother for help and when, out of a loving heart, the mother bestows soothing attention, the little one is comforted and stops crying. Then the mother, if she is wise, will warn the child to take more care in future and so avoid a repetition of the pain and distress. Thus the child gradually learns what not to do. If a mother is able to do this for her child, how much more so must the Lord (Whose love for us is infinitely greater than that of a mother) be able to help us, when we turn to Him after a distressing or unpleasant experience? He will always bestow loving comfort and help, if we are really sincere in our desire to go His way. He will not only show us the way, but will teach us how to avoid a repetition of our error. He will then strengthen and support us as we go forward and give us a new determination and hope. No one knows us better than our Creator -- or loves us more. He said: "*Come unto Me, all you that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and you shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.*" Matt. 12:28-30

We should all try to learn from our experiences. Good experience is always costly. It has to be, otherwise we would not value it. If you get something for nothing, you take it for granted and think little of it, whereas if you have to pay a high price, you will value it and treat it with respect. Such is our human nature. Some people have to be practically "pulverised" and brought to the very lowest extremity, to make them take notice and heed the warning, before it is too late. Others have to be shown only once or twice, before they "catch on", as it were, and take care lest they fall into the same error again.

Have you ever found yourself in this position: You are tempted to do something you know to be wrong and which could have disastrous consequences for you. Well, you not only give way to the temptation, but allow yourself to be deluded into thinking that what you are doing is quite alright. It may be harmful for others of weaker calibre, but it will be quite in order for you. So, you go ahead and do it. Then, after you have succumbed to the temptation you see that once again you have allowed yourself to be led astray by evil forces, which have been permitted to draw out your tendency toward a certain evil. Then you hate yourself for what you have done and could kick yourself for being a fool. When this happens, the main thing is not to despair, or give up the fight, as so many tend to do; but to take heed of the warning the Lord has given you through this experience. Then, next time a similar assault is made (as it will be) you will be on your guard and will fight against it, asking the Lord to win the victory for you, as you fight. And He will not only conquer on your behalf, but will fortify you for any future "battles" of a similar nature, until that particular evil has been overcome and expelled. AC 1661, AC 2768

Perhaps, at the place where you work, they are in the habit of talking scandal and deriding people behind their backs. Almost imperceptibly, you find yourself drawn into their conversation and add your bit of poison to what is being said about another, although you know that by so doing you are aligning yourself with the evil powers of hell, who gloat over the faults of others and magnify them as much as possible. Later, when the person against whom you spoke is told what you said (by the very people who encouraged such talk) and confronts you with it, how embarrassed and sorry you feel! Here, again, is a nasty experience, and if you are wise, you won't forget it. But it will not be wasted if you firmly decide that, in future, you will hold your tongue and refuse to be caught in a similar web of intrigue. Then, instead of looking for people's faults, you will try to find something in their favour - even as the angels do. AC 1079; AC 1088

Or, you may know you have a certain weakness, which, in the past has caused you a lot of trouble. It could be that you are a garrulous talker who likes to monopolise conversations, or you may be tactless or self-opiniated. Perhaps you are inclined to overeat to the detriment of your health. You may have a certain fear which comes upon you at the most awkward times, or you may be unpunctual, or untruthful in small matters, or inclined to exaggeration. These weaknesses could be enlarged to cover such things as pride, intemperance, jealousy, bad temper, intolerance, impatience, thoughtlessness, selfishness, greed, revenge,

and, for some of us, a general lack of self control when things are not to our liking. Now, at some time or other, any one of these (or other weaknesses) will be the subject of an experience and you will find yourself at a disadvantage because of them. If you are frank with yourself, you will see these weaknesses as evils —weights which are dragging you toward hell and away from the Lord. You must then decide whether you are going to take a firm stand against them, or let them get the better of you. If you are willing to stand firm, when the next experience comes up, you will recall the trouble your weakness has caused you and fight and overcome it through the power of the Lord.

These are just a few examples of experiences which contain lessons to be learned, so that when similar situations occur, we will not make the same mistake again. But we don't always see our experiences in that light, do we? When we are faced with the results of our mistakes, or sins, we are often inclined to resent what has happened and to say: "Why should this have to happen to me? What have I done to deserve it? There are plenty of others who act far more wickedly and get away with it." (Do they?) "But I have to be humiliated. I have to be hurt. I have to lose money over it. Why?"

When we adopt such attitudes we forget that the Lord wants us to learn from these experiences and has a purpose in permitting them. His object is to show us ourselves as we really are, so that we may shun such evils in future and overcome them through His power. The Writings give us detailed reasons for the truth that "Evils cannot be set aside unless they come to light." DP 278 "unless evils were allowed to surface, we would not see them and therefore would not admit to them; so we could not be induced to resist them. That is why evils cannot be suppressed by some exercise of divine providence. If they were, they would stay closed in, and like the diseases called cancer and gangrene, would spread and devour everything that is alive and human." DP 251

Thus we can see that our painful experiences are permitted for good reasons. They enable us to see specific evils, so that we may shun them. We can't afford to ignore this. Isn't it better to be shown such evils in this life, while we still have the opportunity of fighting them (and conquering them through the power of the Lord) rather than wait till we reach the world of spirits, when it will be too late to rectify our evil tendencies and we will find ourselves burdened with them for all eternity? The tree lies where it falls and nothing can ever change it. So it is with us, when we leave this world. Our habits or tendencies remain with us for good or ill.

This is clearly stated in DP 277-b, where we read: "No explanation is necessary to see that we need to be led away from our evils in order to be reformed, since if we are given to evil in this world, we will be given to evil after we leave this world. This means that if our evil is not set aside in this world, it cannot be set aside afterwards. The tree lies where it falls; and so too our life retains its basic quality when we die. We are all judged according to our deeds. It is not that these deeds are tallied up but that we return to them and behave the same. Death is a continuation of life, with the difference that then we cannot be reformed.

All our reformation is thorough--that is, it includes both things first and things last. The last things are reformed in this world in harmony with the first ones. They cannot be reformed afterwards, because the outermost things of our lives that we take with us after death become dormant and simply cooperate or act in unison with the inner ones."

Here we have a very strong warning of what to expect if we fail to check our evils in this life. How grateful we should be to the Lord for showing us these things so plainly in the Writings, and how fortunate we are to be living at a time when these truths are available! Think of the millions who have lived and died without knowing these vital truths. What a difference it could have made to some of their lives, had they been forewarned as we are! So, with grateful and humble hearts, let us see that these Divine revelations apply to us personally, and pray to the Lord to help us discern our evils that we may act against them while there is yet time.

The Divine objective always has our eternal good in view, in all the experiences which befall us. There is no such thing as chance, but everything is foreseen and provided for by the Lord. This does not mean that we are to remain dormant and let the evils get the upper hand in our lives. The Lord expects us to be up and

doing at all times and to co-operate with Him by fighting our evil desires in order that He might win the victory over them, as only He can do. This is pointed out in D of Life 96:

"A man who fights against evils cannot but do so as of himself, for one who does not fight as of himself does not do so at all, but stands like an automaton that sees nothing and does nothing, and from evil he is continually thinking in favour of evil, and not against it. But be it well known that it is the Lord alone who fights in a man against his evils, and that it only appears to the man that he fights of himself, and also that the Lord wills that it should so appear to him, because without this appearance no combat takes place and therefore no reformation."

It is by putting this precept into practice that we are able to abide in the stream of the Divine Providence, as it were, because in this way, the Lord can gradually bend us from evil to good and thus prepare a place for us in His new heavens. The Divine Providence can be likened to a deep swiftly flowing river, which carries everything with it to the sea. In a similar way, when we abide in the Lord, His overwhelming power carries us over every evil obstacle to the boundless joys and felicities of eternal life. See Matt. 17:20

In the following passages from "Arcana Coelestia," we are shown something of the operation and significance of the Divine Providence in each of our lives:

"The nature of the Lord's Providence is such that it is linked together with Foresight; the one does not exist without the other. For evil things are foreseen, but good ones are provided; and the evils things that are foreseen are constantly being turned towards what is good by means of the Lord's provident arrangement, since the Divine end, which has good in view, governs everything. Nothing is therefore allowed to happen except to the end that something good may come out of it. But because a person possesses freedom that enables him to be reformed, he is turned from evil towards good so far as he freely allows himself to be turned." AC 6489

"Furthermore the Lord's Divine Providence is present within the smallest details of a person's life; for there is only one source of life, namely the Lord, from whom we derive our being, life, and action." AC 10774

"Those whose thought about Divine Providence stems from worldly considerations conclude on the basis of these that it operates in merely a general way and that details are left to the individual. But they do not know the arcana of heaven; for nothing other than self-love and love of the world, and the pleasures associated with these, govern them in the conclusions they draw. Consequently when they see bad people rather than good being raised to important positions and acquiring wealth, and also see that the designs of bad people meet with success, they say in their heart that none of this would happen if Divine Providence were in fact present within every single thing. But they do not take into consideration the truth that Divine Providence does not regard that which is brief and transient and comes to an end with a person's life in the world; rather it regards that which remains forever and so does not come to an end. That which does not come to an end has real existence, whereas that which does come to an end, in comparison, lacks it." AC 10775

Experience is costly, but necessary, and we can profit by it only if we do not look upon it as an unjust and painful burden which has to be borne. If we view our experiences in the right light, we will see that the Lord has a purpose in what He permits to befall us and we will try to understand just where this fits in as a pointer to greater progress in a certain direction, in which He is leading us. Then, when we are again faced with a similar situation, we will know how to act and not have to be taught the same lesson all over again. We will then be able to look back over our past experiences and see how the Lord, in His great love and providence, has been leading and bending us from evil to good, and how many hellish assaults He has enabled us to withstand. Where would we be without Him? He never tires, never falters, - this merciful Redeemer, Whose greatest joy is to lead us to heaven with infinite patience and love; there to bestow upon us continual blessings for all eternity.

"Glorify the LORD with me; let us exalt his name together. I sought the LORD, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears. Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame. This poor man called, and the LORD heard him; he saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them. Taste and see that the LORD is good;

blessed is the one who takes refuge in him. Fear the LORD, you his holy people, for those who fear him lack nothing. The lions may grow weak and hungry, but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing. Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD. Whoever of you loves life and desires to see many good days, keep your tongue from evil and your lips from telling lies. Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it. The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are attentive to their cry; but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil, to blot out their name from the earth. The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles. The Lord is close to the broken hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. The righteous person may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all; he protects all his bones, not one of them will be broken. Evil will slay the wicked; the foes of the righteous will be condemned. The Lord will rescue his servants; no one who takes refuge in him will be condemned.

From Psalm 34

"DO YOU LOVE ME?"

"do you love me more than these?" John 21:15

This question is continually being asked by the Lord of each one of us, concerning our attitudes toward evil. Do we love the Lord more than we love the evils we have permitted to come into our lives? Do we love Him more than we love ourselves? Does the Lord mean more to us than the subtle, inherent delights of our evil inclinations? It does not take much heart searching to find the answer, which, for many of us, will be that self comes first and the Lord second, in what we think, plan and do. We are born with the love of evil, which comes to us in many attractive guises. It, therefore, appears to be the most natural thing in the world for us to give way to these evil tendencies. It is so easy to be deceived by evil and to become blind to the dreadful havoc it works in our lives. This is stressed in the following passage:

"Evil and false things are absolutely opposed to good and true things because evil and false things are demonic and hellish, while good and true things are divine and heavenly. On first hearing, everyone will admit that evil and good are opposites, and that the distortions of evil are opposite to the truth of what is good. However, the whole feeling and consequent sense of people who are engaged in evil pursuits is that evil is good. Evil gratifies their senses, especially sight and hearing, and therefore it also gratifies their thoughts and consequently their perceptions. Because of this, while they do recognize that evil and good are opposites, as long as they are engaged in evil they call evil good and good evil because of their delight.

For instance, if we use our freedom wrongly to think and do evil, we call it freedom; and the opposite, which is thinking what is intrinsically good, we call slavery. Yet this latter is true freedom, and the former is slavery."

"People who love adultery call adultery freedom, and they call it slavery to be restrained from adultery. They find delight in lasciviousness and discomfort in chastity. People who love power for selfish reasons feel a living delight in that love, a delight that surpasses any other kind of delight. So they call everything associated with that love good and everything that conflicts with it bad, when in fact the opposite is true.

It is the same with every other evil; so even though everyone does admit that evil and good are opposites, people who are engaged in evil pursuits have an opposite picture of this opposition. Only people who are engaged in good pursuits have a fair picture. While involved in evil, no one can see what is good, but people who are involved in something good can see what is evil. It is as though evil were down below in a cave, and good up above on a mountain."

DLW 271

We have to face up to the fact that there is a continuous battle going on in our lives - the good and truth of the Lord, against the evil and falsity of hell. We may say we love the Lord, but actions speak louder than words and, unless we give the Lord first place in our lives over evil, we do not love Him, no matter how much we think we do. And until these evils are recognised, fought and overcome, we will go on deceiving ourselves in this regard. Have you noticed how blind we can be, when it comes to acknowledging certain delights as evils? We make all kinds of excuses for ourselves - circumstances, environment, discouragement, disappointments, loneliness, hereditary, injustice, misfortune, illness, repressions ... and so on. But what we have to continually bear in mind, is that the Lord is fully aware of these difficulties and, in His Divine Providence, allows them to be there so that we may overcome them in freedom, through

Him, but "as of ourselves." Nothing worthwhile is achieved without a struggle. The Lord knows how much we tend toward evil and the conditions into which we were born; but He wants us, of our own freewill to love Him more than we love our evils. He shows us His great love and understanding in the Word, especially the Writings, which exemplify Him in a most glorious and wonderful way. Not that He wishes to accentuate His own greatness and power, but because in the acknowledgement of this, we see ourselves as utterly perverse and the Lord as all-loving and merciful. This brings us to the place, where, in deep humility, love and gratitude, we are willing to turn away from evil, because it separates us from Him. In this way, our regeneration becomes possible and we are rendered useful vessels in His service. All the merit for this belongs to the Lord alone. (See AC 9715 which explains the glorification of the Lord's Human from His own power - which also is His merit and justice - for through it, man is saved and the hells forever kept in subjection).

In the following passage, we are shown how man is led in freedom by the Lord and what is meant by foresight and providence: "As regards foresight and providence in general, foresight has reference more to man, providence more to the Lord. The Lord foresaw from eternity what the human race was going to be like in the future and what every member of it was going to be like, and that evil was going to increase all the time, so that at length man, of himself, would rush headlong into hell. That being so, the Lord has provided not only the means by which He makes it possible for him to be diverted from hell and led towards heaven, but also does in His providence divert and lead him all the time. The Lord also foresaw that it would be impossible for any good to take root in man except in his freedom, for that which does not take root in freedom is dispelled at the first sign of evil and of temptation. This the Lord foresaw, as well as the fact that of himself, that is, from his own freedom, man would be inclined towards the deepest hell. That being so, the Lord provided that if he would not allow himself to be led in freedom towards heaven he could still be diverted towards a milder hell; but if he would allow himself to be led in freedom towards good then he could be diverted towards heaven. From these considerations one may see what foresight is and what providence is, and that appropriate provisions are made for things that are foreseen.

From this it may be seen how far someone errs who believes that the Lord has not foreseen and does not see the smallest individual thing with man, or that within the smallest individual thing He does not foresee and lead, when in fact the Lord's foresight and providence are present within the tiniest details of all the smallest individual things with him, and in details so tiny that it is impossible to comprehend in any manner of thought one in many millions of them. For every smallest fraction of a moment of a person's life entails a chain of consequences extending into eternity. Indeed everyone is like a new beginning to those that follow, and so every single moment of the life both of his understanding and of his will is a new beginning. And since the Lord foresaw from eternity what man was going to be like in the future and even into eternity it is clear that providence is present in the smallest individual things, and, as has been stated, is governing him and diverting him so that he may be such, this being achieved by constant re-shaping of his freedom. "

AC 3854

Gold in its raw state, when the ore is first taken out of the ground, is covered with dirt, grime and other substances, which adhere to every part of it. In this state, it is quite useless; but after it has been pounded and refined under terrific heat and processed in other ways, the pure gold emerges from the dross and can be put to many valuable uses. So it is with us. We, too, are covered with the grime and dross of evil, which clings to every part of us and we cannot perform good uses for the Lord until those evils are removed. This has to be done by degrees, until the dross of self and its attendant evils has been removed by the Lord, layer by layer, as it were, after which we are given a new will, which is capable of receiving influx from the Lord and can be directed by Him into channels of good. This can be a very painful and stubborn process, according to the extent to which we have permitted evils to gain dominion over us; but if we really love the Lord, we will co-operate with Him in His work of regeneration and not seek to find excuses for the evils which are estranging us from Him and nullifying the good He wishes to do through us. (See 'The New Birth' TCR 574 to 578 and "The Life that leads to Heaven" HH 533 to 534)

Having begun to cooperate with the Lord in these ways, we must not permit ourselves to slacken and fall back, but must proceed from one victory to another, right up to the time we leave this world. How easy it

is, when we get to a certain stage, to declare that we have now spiritually "arrived" and can afford to sit back and do nothing. What fools we are to allow the evils of smugness and pride to get the upper hand in our lives. When we permit this to happen, what is the result? We soon become self-righteous and hard to get on with. Nothing pleases us and, while accomplishing little ourselves, we are always ready to criticize others. It is astonishing how quick we are to judge an honest effort and point out its defects. We become great fault-finders, forever wagging the finger at the errors of others; but little realizing how much spiritual ground we ourselves have lost and that the road back can be very steep and thorny. Yes, we need to take a good, frank look at ourselves. We see everyone's faults, but our own and will go to no end of trouble to point out the "Small splinter" in another person's eye, while blithely ignoring the "huge plank" in our own. All of which goes to show that we must maintain a constant vigilance against evils right through our lives, and not delude ourselves into thinking that we can lower our defences against hell, because when we do that, we are heading straight for spiritual death. This was what the Lord meant when He said: "*the one who stands firm to the end will be saved*" Matt. 24:13

Another deadly trap waiting for the unwary, is spiritual superiority. When we fall into this state we begin to pride ourselves on our knowledge of spiritual truths, and when confronted with such vital teachings as we have been discussing, to say: "I knew all that before and have known it for many years. What has all this to do with me? Let others be told these rudimentary truths. I have outgrown them long ago." And so, with high indignation at the thought of anyone suggesting that we are in need of such "simple" teachings, we return to our lofty perch of spiritual pride and superiority and preen ourselves in smug self-satisfaction. But when we start thinking in this way, we need to remind ourselves of the Pharisees of old. They knew all the answers — or thought they did — yet the Lord said they were more deserving of hell than the harlots. (Matt. 21:31). These self righteous men, who were perfect in their own eyes, could reel off chapter after chapter of the Scriptures from memory. They knew all about the law and could spend hours "splitting hairs" over one tiny point of it. And yet with all their great book knowledge, they ignored the very teachings they could recite so mechanically and did nothing to fight their own evils. Their hypocrisy has become a by-word for all time. The Lord called them whited sepulchres - good on the outside, but rotten within. Matt. 23:27.

We can learn a salutary lesson from those Pharisees, in that there is always a danger of falling into spiritual complacency and becoming so familiar with simple truths, that they cease to mean anything to us. This is one of the most significant things taught in the Writings and we ignore it at our peril. In AC 9192 we are given a very solemn warning concerning the fate of those who are well acquainted with the truths of the Word, but have failed to apply those truths to their own lives. Among other things, this number states: "In hell have been seen those who were more learned than others in truths from the Word and from the doctrine of their church, both dignitaries in the Church and others. The cause of this was that they were indeed in truths as to doctrine, but in evils as to life. Such persons are still in the falsities of their own evil and when left to themselves, they think from evil in opposition to truths with which they had been acquainted and had professed." We can become so puffed up with our own spiritual superiority that the simple down to earth teachings of love, charity, tolerance, self-examination, repentance, regeneration, humility and the purpose of temptation, are completely ignored, or contemptuously brushed aside as "suitable only for beginners."

Superficial external piety often goes hand in hand with meanness and avarice. We often find this in people who make a great show of being religious and well acquainted with church doctrine. They will fight tooth and nail over some minor point in the running of a church and hold themselves up as "defenders of the faith", if anyone dares to oppose their views. Yet these same people in their private lives can be hard, merciless, loveless, utterly selfish and ruthless in their attitude toward others. Woe betide any poor individual who comes to them for help in time of trouble or distress. He will find himself up against a stone wall of indifference and inhumanity. Nevertheless these are the people who profess to great spiritual knowledge and can often quote reams of doctrine etc., to show their own (so called) enlightenment. Such self-righteous, overweening pride and self-conceit is meant by these words of the Lord: — "*Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name*

and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'" Matt. 7:21-23

The importance of charity is also stressed in AC 344: "What purpose is there to faith, or to the facts, insights, and teachings of faith, except that we may become what faith teaches us to be? And the primary thing it teaches is charity." See Mark 12:28-34 and Matt. 22:34-40. This is the objective of all it has in view, and if this is not attained, what is all knowledge or doctrine but a mere empty nothing."

We live in a realistic age where slothfulness, apathy, muddle and complacency are not tolerated. Let us take care lest these evils creep into our spiritual thinking and we ignore the things that really count. The Lord is asking us today and every day: "*do you love me more than these?*" Why? Because He wants us to love Him more than we love our evils, His objective being our eternal good, as in this way He can prepare us to become angels in His New Heavens. TCR 580. The Lord does this purely out of love and mercy, not because we deserve it, or have any right to demand it. But let us remember that He only stands at the door (of our hearts) and knocks. Rev. 3:20-2. He does not break it down, or force His way in. If we wish, we can "bolt the door" and ignore His knock. On the other hand, we can open it wide and receive Him with love, repentance and humility. The choice is ours. But on that choice will depend our eternal residence in either heaven or hell.

"Sinning' is doing and thinking what is evil and false intentionally and willingly, for things done intentionally and willingly are such as come out of the heart and render a person unclean, [Matthew 15:11, 17-19](#), and consequently such as wipe out spiritual life with him, see above in [8910](#). Regarding holy fear, meant by 'the fear of God' in the Word, it should be recognized that this fear is love. That is, it is the kind of love young children feel towards parents, parents towards young children, married couples for each other, who fear to do whatever is displeasing, thus whatever injures love in any way. A fear like this is instilled into a person's love when he is being regenerated. And since this fear accords with his love, and can exist within his love, and does in actual fact exist within or united to his love, it is called holy fear; and it is a fear of sinning or acting contrary to the Commandments, thus contrary to the Lord. But this fear is different with each individual person, being determined by what his love is like and how much he has." AC 8925

MOMENT OF TRUTH

What is our moment of truth? It comes to each one of us when we enter the world of spirits after the death of our earthly body. This is the great sorting house, as it were, when each individual is revealed for what he really is. There can be no counterfeit in the world of spirits, as is possible in this world. Here, in our earthly body we can deceive others by assuming a pleasant or even pious personality. A man can speak lofty thoughts and quote from Scripture and other great books. He can develop a reputation for generosity, sincerity, justice, tolerance, love and mercy, while all the time fostering an interior of hatred, greed, bitterness, cynicism, adultery, murder and rapacity. No one knows about this while he is in the world because he keeps it well hidden, as on the surface he appears to be good, noble, kind and decent.

However, when he enters the world of spirits, all this is changed and his true nature is disclosed for all to see. This is what happens when the external man is removed and the internal man revealed. No deception is permitted and each individual is exposed as either good or evil, according to his ruling love. This is the moment of truth which we will all have to face and nothing we can do will ever change it, once we enter the world of spirits. This is why it is so important for us to examine ourselves regularly in this life to ascertain our evil tendencies and to shun them as sins against the Lord, entreating Him to win the victory for us as we fight them as of ourselves. Here are two quotations from the Writings which demonstrate what happens when we enter the world of spirits after the death of our material body on this earth:

"When the spirit of man first enters the world of spirits, which takes place shortly after his resuscitation, his face and tone of voice resemble those he had in the world, because he is then in the state of his exteriors and his interiors are not yet uncovered. This is man's first state after death. But subsequently his face is changed and becomes entirely different, resembling his ruling affection or ruling love, in conformity with which the interiors of his mind had been while he was in the world and his spirit while it was in the body. For the face of a man's spirit differs greatly from the face of his body. The face of his body is from his

parents, but the face of his spirit is from his affection and is an image of it. The spirit comes into this affection after life in the body and then exterior things are done away with and interior things are uncovered. This is man's second state."

"I (Emanuel Swedenborg) have seen some who have recently arrived from the world, and have recognized them from their face and speech; but seeing them afterwards I did not recognize them. Those who had been in good affections appeared with beautiful faces; but those who had been in evil affections with misshapen faces; for man's spirit, viewed in itself, is nothing but his affection; and the face is its outward form. Another reason why faces are changed is that in the other life no one is permitted to counterfeit affections that are not his own, and thus assume looks that are contrary to his love. All in the other life are brought into such a state as to speak as they think, and to manifest in their looks and gestures the inclinations of their will. And because of this the faces of all become forms and images of their affections; and in consequence all who have known each other in the world know each other in the world of spirits, but not in heaven nor in hell."

HH 457

"I can testify on the grounds of abundant experience that it is impossible to grant the life of heaven to people who have led lives opposed to it in the world. There have actually been people who believed that they would readily accept divine truths after death when they heard them from angels, that they would become believers and lead different lives, so that they could be accepted into heaven. However, this has been tried with any number of individuals (though only with people who shared this same kind of belief), granted them so that they could learn that there is no repentance after death. Some of them did understand truths and seemed to accept them; but the moment they turned back to the life of their own love they rejected them and even argued against them. Some rejected them on the spot, unwilling even to listen to them. Some wanted the life of the love they had acquired in the world to be taken away from them and an angelic life or the life of heaven poured in to replace it. Permission was given for even this to be done for them; but once the life of their own love was taken away, they lay there like corpses, with no control over themselves.

These and other similar kinds of experience teach simple good people that there is no way to change anyone's life after death, no way to rewrite an evil life into a good one or a hellish life into an angelic one. This is because the nature of every spirit from head to toe is determined by his or her love and consequently by his or her life. To change this into its opposite would mean the total destruction of the spirit. Angels insist that it is easier to change one owl into a dove or another into a bird of paradise than to change a hellish spirit into an angel of heaven."

HH 527

Prior to the publication of the Writings, all this was entirely unknown.

We could have had no conception of this as it could be revealed only by the Lord and He has done this through the Writings of His faithful servant, Emanuel Swedenborg. Never before in the world's history have such vital facts been known to mankind. Our moment of truth is well illustrated by such revelations and as we read them, let us picture ourselves in these situations and, after contemplating them, ask ourselves into what particular category we could be brought, or classified, were we to be called from the world at this moment. It will take courage to do this, but such a self examination will be well worth our while.

This is because the evils which will thus be disclosed to us - if we are frank and truthful with ourselves - can be dealt with here and now, when we can do something about them; but once our material body dies and we find ourselves in our spiritual body, it will be too late to take steps to shun them and obtain the victory over them through the power of the Lord, who can and will conquer them on our behalf if we are willing to co-operate with Him. This is why He has permitted these disclosures to be made to us now, not that we should just read and appreciate them and leave it at that, but in order that we can take the necessary action here on this earth to come to grips with our own particular evils and have the eternal satisfaction and joy of conquering them through the Lord. He has told us that this can be done as, during His life on earth in the human form, He conquered the hells for all eternity and that includes every evil with which they torment us. He did this out of His great love and mercy for us and has thus made it possible so that we might have eternal life in the new heavens and not infernal death in the hells. So, as we study these

passages, may their message sink in and may we be able to grasp their true significance and the purpose of the Lord in disclosing them to us.

In the following passage from TCR, we are given an actual account of some of the false ideas and muddled thinking of many people when they entered the world of spirits and how these views were corrected by the angels with whom they conversed: "After they die, all people become aware that they are still alive but are in another world. They hear that above them lies heaven where there are eternal joys, and below them lies hell where there is eternal suffering. Next, they are put back into the outer selves they had while they were still in the physical world. At that point they believe that they are definitely going to heaven. They speak intelligently and act prudently.

Some of them say, "We have lived moral lives. We have had honourable pursuits. We have not done evil deliberately. "

Others say, "We have attended church regularly. We have heard Mass. We have kissed holy statues. We have poured forth prayers on our knees. "

Some say, "We have given to the poor. We have helped the needy. We have read religious literature, including the Word," and more of that nature.

Nevertheless, after they have said that, angels appear and say, "All the things you mentioned, you did in your outer selves, but you are still unaware of what you are like in your inner selves. You are now spirits in a substantial body. Your spirit is your inner self. This is the part in you that thinks about what it wants and wants what it loves; what it loves is the delight of your life.

"From early childhood we all begin our lives in our outer selves. We learn to behave morally and speak intelligently. When we have formed some idea of heaven and its blessedness, we begin to pray, to go to church, and to attend the customary religious rituals. Meanwhile when evils rise up from their native source, we begin hiding them deep within our mind and also cleverly covering them with a veil of reasonings based on mistaken ideas, to the point where we do not know that evil is evil. Then, because those evils have been covered over and buried in the dirt, so to speak, we no longer reflect on them; we just take care that they do not appear before the world. We practice a moral life only in outward ways. Therefore we become a dual person - a sheep on the outside but a wolf on the inside. We are like a golden box that contains poison; like people with disgusting breath who keep something sweet-smelling in their mouths so that others nearby cannot tell; and like a rat's skin that smells of balsam.

"You have asserted that you lived moral lives and pursued religious practices. Let me ask, however, did you ever examine your inner selves? Did you become aware of any desire for revenge, even to the point of committing murder? Any desire to indulge lust, even to the point of committing adultery? Any desire to commit fraud, even to the point of committing theft? Any desire to lie, even to the point of bearing false witness? Four of the Ten Commandments say, 'You are not to do these things,' and the last two say, 'You are not to desire to do these things. Is it your belief that your inner self was much like your outer self in these regards? If this is your belief, perhaps you are wrong. "

"What is our inner self?" they replied. "Isn't it the same as our outer self? We have heard from our ministers that our inner self is simply our faith, and that our devout words and moral lives are signs that we have faith, because they are our faith at work. "

"Faith that truly has power to save does indeed reside in the inner self, along with goodwill," the angels replied, "and these do lead to Christian faithfulness and morality in the outer self. If, however, desires for revenge, for committing fraud and theft, and for lying remain in your inner self (meaning your will and your thinking) and inwardly you love those desires (no matter what you say or do outwardly), then evil takes precedence over goodness, and goodness is less important to you than evil. In this case, no matter how much you speak as if you had understanding or act as if you had love, there is evil within you, and your words and actions just cover it up. Then you are like clever chimpanzees who can mimic human actions, although their heart is far different.

"You know nothing about your inner self, because you have not examined yourselves, and after self-examination have not practiced repentance. Soon, however, you will see exactly what it is like, when your outer self is taken off, and you are introduced into your inner self. When this happens, you will no longer be recognized by your companions or even by yourselves. I have seen evil people, who had been moral, become like predatory animals, looking at their neighbour with hostile eyes, burning with murderous hatred and uttering blasphemy against the God they had worshiped in their outer selves. "

When they heard that, they walked away. The angels then said to them, "After this you are going to see the outcome of your life. Soon your outer self will be taken away, and you will come into your inner self, which is now your spirit. "

TCR 578

Swedenborg was permitted by the Lord to witness many such disclosures in the world of spirits and they have all been faithfully recorded in the Writings. These things are revealed to us as warnings from the Lord and we would do well to take heed of them, even if it means facing up to some unpalatable truth about ourselves in order that it may be overcome and its place taken by its opposite good. This can only be done by us personally, as individuals. We ourselves know what really goes on in the secret places of our heart, so we should not fool ourselves by closing our eyes to the truth as it were, and ignoring the obvious. If we do, we may regret it for all eternity. So when our moment of truth comes, let us be prepared for it in this life and not just drift along hoping our defects and evils will remain hidden when we leave this world. They won't be, and the sooner we realize this, the better for ourselves and our eternal life.

There are many hypocrites in this world and a great number of people are deceived by them, but in the world of spirits their false mask is removed and they are shown up in their true light. All their eloquence, protestations and artificiality will then be useless to them as they are stripped of all outward veneer and stand exposed for all to see. There will be many surprises as their true nature is revealed and their ruling love made known. Some good examples of this are given in HH, where we read:

That when a man leaves the world he takes with him all his memory has been shown to me in many ways, and many of the things I have seen and heard are worthy of mention, some of which I wish to relate in order. There were some who denied their crimes and villainies which they had perpetrated in the world; and in consequence, that they might not be believed guiltless, all their deeds were disclosed and reviewed from their memory in order, from their earliest to their latest years; these were chiefly adulteries and whoredoms. There were some who had deceived others by wicked arts and had committed thefts. The deceits and thefts of these were also enumerated in detail, many of which had been known to scarcely any in the world except themselves. These deeds they confessed, because they were plainly set forth, with every thought, intention, pleasure and fear which occupied their minds at the time. There were others who had accepted bribes, and had rendered venal judgments, who were similarly explored from their memory, and from it everything they had done from the beginning to the end of their office was reviewed. Every detail in regard to what and how much they had received, as well as the time, and their state of mind and intention, were brought to their recollection and made visibly clear to the number of many hundreds. This was done with several, and what is wonderful, in some cases their memorandum-books, in which they had recorded these things, were opened and read before them page by page. Others who had enticed maidens to shame or had violated chastity were called to a like judgment; and the details of their crimes were drawn forth from their memory and reviewed. The very faces of the maidens and women were also exhibited as if present, with the places, words and intentions, and this as unexpectedly as when an apparition is seen. Sometimes these manifestations lasted for hours. There was one who had made light of slandering others; and I heard his slanders recounted in order, and his defamations, with the very words, and the persons about whom and before whom they were uttered; all of which were produced and presented to the very life, although while he lived in the world he had most carefully concealed everything. There was one who had deprived a relative of his inheritance under a fraudulent pretext, and he was in like manner convicted and judged; and what is wonderful, the letters and papers that passed between them were read in my hearing, and it was said that not a word was lacking. The same person shortly before his death had also secretly poisoned his neighbour. This was disclosed in this way. He appeared to be digging a trench under his feet, from which a man came forth as out of a grave, and cried out to him, "What have

you done to me?" Then everything was revealed, how the poisoner had talked with him in a friendly manner, and had held out the cup, also what he thought beforehand, and what happened afterwards. When all this had been disclosed he was sentenced to hell. In a word, to each evil spirit all his evils, villainies, robberies, artifices, and deceits are made clear, and are brought forth from the very memory of them, and his guilt is fully established; nor is there any possible room for denial, because all the circumstances are exhibited together. Moreover, I have learned from someone's memory, when it was seen and inspected by angels, what his thoughts had been for a month, one day after another, and this without mistake, the thoughts being recalled just as they arose from day to day. From these examples it can be established that man carries with him all of his memory, and that nothing can be so concealed in the world as not to be disclosed after death, which is done in the company of many, according to the Lord's words:

"There is nothing concealed that shall not be uncovered, and nothing secret that shall not be known; therefore what ye have spoken in the dark shall be heard in the light and what ye have spoken in the ear shall be proclaimed on the housetops."
HH 462

A very solemn lesson on repentance is given in NJHD and it is included here because of its great importance: "If all we do is make a blanket acknowledgment that we are sinners and declare ourselves guilty of all evils but without examining ourselves-that is, seeing our own particular evils-we are making some kind of confession, but not a confession that leads to repentance. Since we do not know what our evils are, we live the same way afterward as before.

If we are leading a life of caring and faith we repent every day. We reflect on the evils in ourselves, acknowledge them, take precautions against them, and pray to the Lord for help. You see, on our own we are constantly falling down, but the Lord is constantly raising us up and leading us toward goodness. This is our state if we devote our lives to doing good. If we spend our lives doing evil, then too we are constantly falling down and the Lord is constantly lifting us up, but the result is only that we are steered away from falling into those most serious evils to which we instinctively tend with all our might.

If we are practicing self-examination in order to repent, it is important that we examine our thoughts and the intentions of our will, and note what we would do if we could get away with it-that is, if we had no fear of the law or of losing our reputation, our job, or our wealth. Our evils live in our will; that is the source of all the evil things we do physically. Therefore if we do not search out evils in our thoughts and our will, we will be unable to repent, because afterward we will have the same thoughts and intentions as we had before; and intending evils is the same as doing them. This therefore is what self-examination entails.

Saying that we repent but not changing the way we live is no repentance at all. Our sins are not forgiven when we say we repent; they are forgiven when we change our lives. Our sins are of course constantly being forgiven by the Lord, because he is mercy itself. Nevertheless, despite what we may think about how our sins are forgiven, they actually still cling to us and are not put aside from us unless we live by the precepts of true faith. As we live by these precepts our sins are put aside, and as our sins are put aside they are forgiven.
NJHD 162-165

We have dealt at some length with what happens to hypocrites, deceivers, adulterers and others in all kinds of evils, we will now turn our attention to the lot of those who have sincerely loved the Lord and endeavoured to live His teachings. These are the people who have examined themselves, sought out their evils and repented of them, calling upon the Lord that He might overcome those evils and gain the victory over them on their behalf. These people need have no fears about their moment of truth, for they will become angels upon whom the Lord will bestow the joys and felicities of eternal life in the new heavens.

The beautiful passages which follow should encourage us in our aims to overcome our evils and look to the Lord for victory over them. The ineffable heavenly delights in store for those who do this are well worth our efforts in this regard, although it should be our main purpose to shun evils because they are sins against the Lord and on account of our love for Him. The rest will follow, as day follows night until ultimately we reach our appointed place and dwell in glorious light and peace for all eternity with other angels of a like mind. With that sublime thought before us, let us contemplate these inspiring passages.

"People who have loved divine truths and the Word from a deep affection, or from an affection for the truth itself, live in the light, in uplands that look like mountains, and are constantly bathed in the light of heaven there. They know nothing of the kind of darkness we have at night in the world, and they live in a springtime climate as well. Their scenery offers them views like fields ripe for harvest and vineyards. Everything in their houses gleams as though it were made of precious stones. Looking through their windows is like looking through pure crystal. These are their visual pleasures; but they are actually deeper pleasures because of their correspondence with divine heavenly qualities, since the truths from the Word that they have loved correspond to the harvest fields, vineyards, precious stones, windows, and crystals. ¹

People who have applied the teachings of the church from the Word directly to their lives are in the inmost heaven and more than anyone else are absorbed in the pleasures of wisdom. They see divine realities in particular objects. They actually do see the objects, but the corresponding divine realities flow directly into their minds and fill them with a sense of blessedness that affects all their sensory functions. As a result, everything they see seems to laugh and play and live.

If people have loved learning and have developed their rational ability accordingly and thereby gained intelligence, and if they have acknowledged the Divine Being at the same time, their delight in knowledge and pleasure in reasoning changes in the other life into a spiritual pleasure that is the delight of firsthand knowledge of what is good and true. They live in gardens where you can see flower beds and lawns beautifully marked off, surrounded by rows of trees with arcades and promenades. The trees and flowers change from day to day. Looking at all this brings pleasure to their minds generally, and the specific changes make it constantly new. Further, since all this corresponds to divine qualities, and since these people are drawn to their knowledge of correspondences, they are constantly being filled with new insights and thereby having their spiritual rational faculty perfected. They enjoy these pleasures because gardens, flower beds, lawns, and trees correspond to information, insights, and the intelligence that ensues.

If people have given the Divine credit for everything and regarded nature as relatively dead, simply subservient to spiritual concerns, and if they have convinced themselves of this, they are in heavenly light; and everything that presents itself to their eyes derives a kind of translucence from that light. In that translucency they see innumerable shadings of light that their inner sight seems to drink directly in. This is how they perceive deeper pleasures. The objects in their houses look like diamonds with similar variegations of light. I have been told that their walls look like crystal and are therefore also translucent, and that within them one can see what looks like fluid forms representative of heavenly things, again with constant variety. This is because this kind of translucence corresponds to an intellect that has been enlightened by the Lord, with the shadows that arise from faith in and love of natural things taken away. Things like this - and infinitely more - are what people who have been in heaven are talking about when they say that they have seen what the eye has never seen, and that from the grasp of divine things conveyed to them in this connection, they have heard what the ear has never heard.

If people have not acted covertly but have wanted everything they were thinking to be out in the open to the extent that civil law allows, then since they have thought nothing but what was honest and fair because of the Deity, in heaven their faces are radiant. Because of that radiance, the details of their thoughts and affections are visible in their faces as though presented in a form; and in both speech and action they are virtual images of their feelings. They are more beloved than others. When they are talking, their faces dim a little, but after they have spoken, then the very things they have said can be fully and plainly seen in their faces. Further, since everything around them answers to their deeper natures, everything takes on a countenance that enables others to see clearly what they represent and mean. Spirits who have found pleasure in covert activity get as far from them as they can, and seem to themselves to slither away from them like snakes.

People who have regarded adultery as unspeakable and have lived in chaste love of their marriage are more in the pattern and form of heaven than anyone else. This gives them a total beauty and a constant flower of youth. The pleasures of their love are indescribable, and increase to eternity. This is because all the joys and delights of heaven flow into that love; and this in turn is because that love comes down from

the Lord's union with heaven and with the church and in general from the union of the good and the true that is heaven in general and in every individual angel in particular. Their external pleasures are so wonderful that they cannot be described in human words.

Still, what I have said about the correspondences of pleasures for people who are involved in heavenly love is only a little." HH 489

"This enables us to know that after death our pleasures do change into corresponding ones, but that the love itself remains the same forever, especially marriage love, the love of what is fair, honest, good, and true, the love of information and insights, the love of intelligence and wisdom, and the rest. The things that flow from these loves like streams from their spring are pleasures that not only last but are raised to a higher level when they are changed from natural pleasures into spiritual ones. HH 490

"Each and every part of the human body cooperates with the others in both the overall functioning of the whole and the specific functioning of each part. It is the same in the Lord's kingdom, which is like a single human being and is also named the "universal human;" everyone there works together, whether at close quarters or more at a distance, and by many different means. This takes place in accord with the plan established and constantly reinforced by the Lord alone for the sake of everyone's happiness." AC 550

"The whole of heaven and its individual inhabitants without exception trace their origin to the Lord alone, in general and in the smallest particulars. This is the source of order, of unity, of mutual love, and of happiness, because this is what causes individuals to look to the health and happiness of all, and all to that of every individual. AC 551

" All the people in heaven are grouped according to spiritual affinities, which are matters of what is good and true in their pattern - the same way in the whole heaven as in each community and in each household. This is why angels who are involved in similar good and true activities recognize each other the way relatives and kindred spirits do on earth - just as though they had known each other from infancy.

The good and true elements that make up intelligence and wisdom are similarly arranged within each individual angel. They recognize each other in much the same way, and as they recognize each other, they unite. HH 205

"We may gather the magnitude of heaven's pleasure simply from the fact that for everyone there it is delightful to share their pleasure and bliss with someone else; and since everyone in the heavens is like this, we can see how immense heaven's pleasure is. There is in heaven a sharing by everyone with each individual, and by each individual with everyone. This kind of sharing flows from the two loves of heaven, which as noted are love for the Lord and love for our neighbor. These loves by nature want to share their pleasures. The reason love for the Lord is like this is that because the Lord's love is a love of sharing everything it has with everyone, it intends the happiness of everyone. Much the same love exists in individuals who love him, because the Lord is in them. So there is a mutual sharing of angels' pleasures with each other. We shall see later that love for our neighbor is like this as well. We may gather from all this that these loves by nature want to share their pleasures. " HH 399

"Those, however, who lived unmarried in the world putting all idea of marrying far from their minds, remain unmarried, if they are spiritual. But if they are natural they become fornicators. It is different if unmarried people have longed to get married, and even more so if they have kept seeking to get married without success. If such people are spiritual, blessed marriages are found for them, but not until they reach heaven." CL 54

"If they are able to live together, they remain a married couple. But if not they part, sometimes the husband leaving the wife, sometimes the wife leaving the husband, and sometimes each leaving by mutual agreement.

The reason for separations taking place after death is that the unions which happen on earth are rarely due to any inward perception of love, but to an outward perception which conceals the inward one. The outward perception of love is caused by and derived from considerations of love of the world and the body. Considerations of love of the world are chiefly wealth and possessions; of love of the body, rank and

honours. In addition to these there are various enticements, such as beauty and a pretence of good behaviour, in some cases even unchastity. Moreover, marriages are usually contracted within the district, city or town where the person is born and lives, where only restricted choice is possible, limited to the households of one's acquaintance, and to those among them of similar station to oneself. That is why most marriages contracted in the world are outward, and not inward ones at the same time. Yet it is inward union, the union of souls, which really makes a marriage. This union cannot be perceived before a person puts off the exterior and puts on the interior, and this happens after death. This then is the reason why separations take place at that time, followed by new unions with similar persons or of the same type, unless such a union had been provided on earth. This can happen in the case of those who from youth up have loved, wished for and begged the Lord for a lawful and agreeable match with one partner, rejecting and turning up their noses at shifting lusts.

CL 49

"In this case a man is given a suitable wife, and the woman likewise a husband.

This is because only those couples who have been or can be inwardly united to make one can be accepted into heaven to stay there. For in heaven a couple are not called two, but one angel. This is what is meant by the Lord's words, that they are no longer two, but one flesh. The reason why no other couples are accepted into heaven is that no other people can there live together, that is, in one house sharing a room and a bed. For it is the affinity and closeness of their love which determines everyone's associations in the heavens, and equally where they live. The spiritual world does not have space, but the appearance of space, and this appearance depends upon the way in which people live, which in turn depends upon the way they love. No one therefore can stay anywhere but in his own house, which is provided for him and allocated depending on the nature of his love. If he lives elsewhere, his chest feels tight and he has difficulty in breathing.

Two people cannot live together in the same house unless they are exactly alike; nor consequently can married couples, unless they have the same feelings towards each other. If the feelings are only outward and not at the same time inward, the house or the location itself parts them, rejecting them and driving them away. This is why those who are after preparation admitted to heaven have a marriage provided for them with a partner, whose soul is so strongly attracted to union with the other's, that they do not wish to have two lives, but one. It is for this reason that after parting a man is given a suitable wife and a woman likewise a suitable husband.

CL 50

" Married couples enjoy living together in the same way as in the world, but this is more pleasant and blessed. It does not, however, lead to the procreation of children, but their place is taken by spiritual offspring, love and wisdom.

Married couples enjoy living together in much the same way as they do in the world, because after death the male is male and the woman is female, each having from creation an innate tendency to union. This tendency in each person belongs to the spirit, from where it reaches the body. After death, therefore, when he becomes a spirit, the mutual tendency remains; and this is possible only when they live together in much the same way. For a person remains as much a person as before, and neither male nor female have anything less, having similar bodily form and equally similar affections and thoughts. How then can the result be anything but living together in the same way? And because conjugal love is chaste, pure and holy, how can their living together not be fully realised? Living together then is more pleasant and blessed, because, when a person becomes a spirit, that love becomes more inward, purer and so more deeply felt; and every pleasure increases the more deeply it is felt, to the point where its blessedness is noticeable in its pleasure.

CL 51

"The love of adultery is a fire enkindled from impurities, which soon burns out and is turned into cold and into an aversion corresponding to hatred. But it is quite different with the love of marriage. This is a fire enkindled from the love of good and truth, and from the delight of well-doing, thus from love to the Lord and love toward the neighbour. This fire, which is heavenly from its origin, is full of innumerable delights — as many as are the delights and blessings of heaven. It has been told me that the delights and pleasures of that love, which are alternately manifested, are so many and so great that they cannot be numbered and described. They are also multiplied and continually increased to eternity. Those delights originate from this

fact, that conjugal partners desire to become one as to their minds, and that heaven acts in such a union from the Lord there, from the marriage of good and truth."

"I will here relate some particulars concerning the marriages of angels in heaven. They say that they are in continual potency; that afterwards there is never any weariness, much less sadness, but alacrity (liveliness) and cheerfulness of mind. That conjugal partners mutually pass the night in each other's bosoms, as if they had been created as one; that effects (or fulfilments) are constantly open, so that they are never deficient where they desire, because without these their love would be as a fountain with the source stopped up. The effect opens that source and makes it continuous and also conjunctive, so that they may become as one flesh, as it were, for the vitality of the man adds itself to the vitality of the wife and causes union. The angels say that the delights arising from the effects cannot be described in any language in the natural world and can be thought only by means of spiritual ideas and even these cannot exhaust it." AE 992

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