

Week Five Readings: Becoming an Angel

Heaven and Hell 533. We can now see that it is not so hard to lead the life of heaven as people think, because it is simply a matter of recognizing, when something attractive comes up that we know is dishonest or unfair, that this is not to be done because it is against the divine commandments. If we get used to thinking like this, and from this familiarity form a habit, then we are gradually united to heaven. To the extent that we are united to heaven, the higher levels of our minds are opened, and to the extent that they are opened, we see what is dishonest and unfair; and to the extent that we see this, these qualities can be dispelled. For no evil can be banished until it has been seen. This is a state we can enter because of our freedom, since everyone is free to think in this way. However, once the process has started, the Lord works his wonders within us, and causes us not only to see evils but to refuse them and eventually to turn away from them. This is the meaning of the Lord's words, "My yoke is easy and my burden light" (Matt 11:30).

It is important to realize, though, that the difficulty of thinking like this and also of resisting evils increases to the extent that we deliberately do evil things - in fact, to that extent we become used to doing them until ultimately we no longer see them. Then we come to love them and to excuse them to gratify our love and to rationalize them with all kinds of self-deceptions and call them permissible and good. This happens, though, to people who in early adulthood plunge into all kinds of evil without restraint and at the same time at heart reject everything divine.

Divine Providence 60 [4] There is a clear image of what is infinite and eternal in the angelic heaven. The angelic heaven is also one of the things we need to know about. Every religious person thinks about it and wants to go there. Heaven, though, is granted only to people who know the path to it and follow that path. We can know the path to heaven to some extent simply by considering what the people who make up heaven are like, realizing that no one can become an angel or get to heaven unless he or she arrives bringing along some angelic quality from the world. Inherent in that angelic quality is a knowing of the path from having walked it and a walking in the path from the knowing of it.

There really are paths in the spiritual world, paths that lead to each community of heaven and to each community of hell. We all see our own paths, spontaneously, it seems. We see them because the paths there are for the loves of each individual. Love opens the paths and leads us to our kindred spirits. No one sees any paths except those of her or his love.

True Christianity 69 [3] Every person, as long as he lives in the world, treads a path mid-way between heaven and hell; and he is in equilibrium, that is, he has free will to look up to God or down to hell. If he looks up to God, he acknowledges that all wisdom comes from God, and his spirit is really present among the angels in heaven. The

person who looks down, as everyone does whose evil puts him under the power of falsities, is in his spirit really among the devils in hell.

True Christianity 401 [5] Our inner and outer selves.

(a) We have been created to be in the spiritual world and the physical world at the same time. The spiritual world is where angels are. The physical world is where people are. Because we have been created that way, we have been given an inner and an outer level: an inner level so we can be in the spiritual world and an outer level so we can be in the physical world. The inner level is called our inner self, and the outer level is called our outer self.

[2] (b) Everyone has an inner and an outer self, but they are different in good people than in evil people. The inner level of good people is in heaven and its light. Their outer level is in the world and its light; and the light of heaven within them illumines the light of the world. Their inner and outer levels are united like cause and effect or like something prior and something subsequent. With evil people, however, their inner level is in hell and its light. Compared to heavens light, the light of hell is pitch darkness. The outer level of evil people can be in the same light that good people are in. Therefore they are upside-down. This explains how evil people are capable of speaking and teaching about faith, goodwill, and God, but not from faith, goodwill, and God the way good people can.

[3] (c) Our inner self is called our spiritual self because it is in the light of heaven, a light that is spiritual. Our outer self is called our earthly self because it is in the light of the world, a light that is earthly. People whose inner level is in the light of heaven and whose outer level is in the light of the world are spiritual on both levels, since spiritual light from within enlightens their earthly light and makes it its own. The reverse is true for evil people.

[4] (d) The inner self that is spiritual is actually an angel of heaven. Even while it is alive in our body, it is in a community with angels, although it does not realize that. After it is released from the body, it comes to live among those angels. The inner self among evil people, however, is a satan. Even while it is living in our body, it is in a community with satans. After it is released from the body, it comes to live among those satans.

[5] (e) In people who are spiritual, the inner parts of their mind are actually raised up toward heaven, because heaven is their predominant focus. In people who are merely earthly, however, the inner parts of their mind are turned away from heaven toward the world, because the world is their predominant focus.

[6] (f) People who have only a general concept of the inner and outer self believe that the inner self is the part that thinks and wills while the outer self is the part that speaks and acts, since thinking and willing are internal while speaking and acting are external. One thing is important to realize, however. When we are thinking and willing good

things in relation to the Lord and all that is the Lord's, and when we are thinking and willing them in relation to our neighbor and all that is our neighbor's, then our thinking and willing are coming from an inner self that is spiritual. This is so because they are coming from true faith and a love for what is good. On the other hand, when we have evil thoughts about the Lord and our neighbor and evil intentions toward them, then our thinking and willing are coming from an inner self that is hellish, because they are coming from a false faith and a love for what is evil. Briefly put, the more we focus on loving the Lord and our neighbor, the more spiritual our inner self is. From that inner self we think and will, and from it we even speak and act as well. On the other hand, the more we focus on loving ourselves and the world, the more our thinking and willing come from hell, although we speak and act otherwise.

[7] (g) The Lord has provided and arranged that the more our thinking and willing come from heaven, the more our spiritual self opens and adapts. This opening is an opening to heaven, all the way to the Lord; and this adaptation is an adaptation to things that are in heaven.

On the other hand, the more our thinking and willing come from the world, not heaven, the more our inner spiritual self closes and our outer self opens and adapts. This opening is an opening to the world and this adaptation is an adaptation to the things that are in hell.

[8] (h) People whose inner spiritual selves have opened to heaven and the Lord are in the light of heaven. They have enlightenment from the Lord and a resulting intelligence and wisdom. They see truth from the light of truth. They sense what is good from a love for what is good.

People whose inner spiritual selves have closed, however, do not know what the inner self is. They do not believe in the Word, life after death, or anything related to heaven or the church. Because they have a light that is merely earthly, they believe that nature arises from itself, not from God. They see what is false as true and sense what is evil as good.

[9] (i) The inner and outer levels discussed here are the inner and outer levels of our spirit. Our body is only an element added on the outside as a container for all the above. Our body does nothing on its own - it acts on behalf of the spirit that is inside it.

It is important to know that after our spirit parts company with our body, it still thinks, wills, speaks, and acts. Thinking and willing remain our inner level and speaking and acting then become our outer level.

Secrets of Heaven 8559...The life of heaven consists in being led by the Lord through good; and if a person is to attain that life, good must be implanted through truth, that is, charity through faith. As long as this is being done a person is on the road to heaven, but is not as yet in heaven. In order that the truths of faith may be corroborated and also linked to good, a person is pitched into temptations, for these

serve as the means by which goodness and truth are joined together. When therefore a person is governed by good, that is, by an affection for doing good for its own sake, and so for his neighbour's sake, he is raised into heaven, since the order of heaven governs him and he is being led by the Lord through good. All this makes clear what one should understand by the life of heaven.

Coronis 40 Who can deny that the universe was created for the sake of the human race, in order that from it should be formed an angelic heaven, wherein God might dwell in the dominion of His glory? To promote and accomplish this end, what mediate cause is there but religion? and what else is religion but a walking with God? Moreover, religion is like a seed producing just and true desires, and hence judgments and acts, in spiritual things, and by means of these in moral things, and by means of the latter and the former in civil things.

Secrets of Heaven 9079[2] The communities of heaven are arranged in this kind of order; so too are the truths and forms of good with a person who is being regenerated, which also is why he becomes a heaven in miniature. Furthermore, and this is an arcanum, the forms of good and the truths with a person love one another, and in accordance with that love they acknowledge one another, and accordingly exist in association with one another. This has its origin among angelic communities, in which angels love one another, acknowledge one another, and live in association with one another, depending on how similar and close together their forms of good are. And what is amazing, when people governed by a similar good come together, even if they have never seen one another before, it is as though they have seen one another since early childhood. It is from this origin that the forms of good and the truths present with a person link themselves to one another according to the form heaven takes, producing a likeness of heaven in him. But the Lord is the source of all this, both in heaven and in an angelic person, that is, in a person who is being regenerated and becoming an angel.