

Week Three Readings: When Angels Feel Absent to Us

All readings from the book *Secrets of Heaven*, unless otherwise indicated

5978. The reason two angels are present with each person is that there are also two kinds of angels; one kind acts on the desires in a person's will, the other on the thoughts in his understanding. Those acting on the desires in a person will act on his loves and ends in view, consequently on his good intentions, whereas those acting on the thoughts in his understanding act on his faith and principal convictions, consequently on the true ideas he has. Those two kinds also are utterly distinct and separate. Those who act on the desires of a person's will are called celestial, while those who act on the thoughts in his understanding are called spiritual.

3402[2] ...For goodness and truth, as stated and shown several times already, are such that when present with a person they retreat to an internal position that is determined by the amount of evil and falsity also present in him. Consequently insofar as the angels present with him from heaven depart, the devil-spirits present with him from hell draw near, and vice versa. To one in whom evil and falsity are present, the removal of good and truth, and consequently of angels, is not apparent, for at that time he is convinced that evil is good, and falsity is truth. This conviction arises from his affection for them and from the resulting delight. And when this is his state he is quite incapable of recognizing that goodness and truth have been removed from him. Goodness and truth - or angels - are said to be removed from a person when he has no affection for them, that is, when he no longer takes any delight in them, and instead his affection is for the things that go with self-love and love of the world, that is, when he takes delight wholly in these.

2121...And in addition the spirits who are present with a person - for everyone is governed by the Lord by means of spirits and angels - are stirred more than ever before to afflict him with wicked suggestions, doing so to such an extent that the angels present with him can scarcely ward them off, but are compelled to flow into that person from further away.

7298:2 In addition it should be recognized that it is in accordance with the laws of order that no one should become convinced of the truth instantaneously, that is, should instantaneously be made so sure of the truth that he is left in no doubt at all about it. The reason for this is that when truth is impressed on a person in that kind of way, he becomes so fully convinced of it that it cannot be broadened in any way or qualified in any way. Truth like this is represented in the next life as that which is hard, not allowing good into itself to make it pliable. This goes to explain why in the next life as soon as some truth is presented through plain experience to good spirits, some opposing idea

giving rise to doubt is presented. In this way they are led to think and ponder over whether it is indeed a truth, gather reasons in support of it, and so introduce that truth into their minds by the use of reason. This enables their spiritual vision in respect of that truth to be broadened, seeing even into the ideas that are opposed to it. They therefore see and perceive with their understanding every characteristic of the truth, and from this are able to let in the influences coming from heaven as the situation demands; for truths take varying forms as dictated by circumstances. This is also the reason why the magicians were allowed to do the same as Aaron had done; for in that way a miracle performed among the children of Israel was placed in doubt as to whether it was Divine, and that gave them the opportunity to think and ponder over whether it was Divine before at length assuring themselves that it was.

761. It has been stated already that spiritual temptation when it takes place in someone is a conflict between the evil spirits and the angels residing with that person, and that he ordinarily feels that conflict in his conscience. As regards such conflict it should be recognized in addition that the angels are protecting man constantly and are warding off the evils that evil spirits direct against him. They protect even the falsities and the evils with a person, for they are fully aware of where the person's falsities and evils come from - from evil spirits and genii. Man in no sense produces any falsity and evil from himself. Instead it is the evil spirits residing with him who produce them, and as they do so they also convince him that these originate in himself. Such is the nature of their wickedness. And what is more, the moment they instill this into him and convince him, they also accuse and condemn him. This I can confirm from a multitude of experiences. Anyone who has no faith in the Lord is incapable of being enlightened in the matter; he inevitably believes that an evil is from himself. Consequently he makes the evil his own and becomes like those evil spirits residing with him. Such is the situation with man. And as the angels are aware of it they protect even a person's falsities and evils while he is undergoing the temptations that are part of regeneration. Otherwise he would go under, for with man there is nothing but evil and derivative falsity, so that he is just a heap and conglomeration of evils and derivative falsities.

5036. But first of all something must be said about temptations. At the present day scarcely anyone in the Christian world knows where temptations originate. Those who undergo them do not believe them to be anything more than the feelings of anguish which creep in because of the evils residing inwardly with a person, which first make him uneasy, then fill him with anxiety, and finally torment him. But he is totally unaware of the fact that they are the work of the evil spirits present with him. The reason he is unaware that this is so is that he does not believe he is in the company of spirits while he is living in the world; indeed he has scarcely any belief that any spirit at all is present with him, when in fact a person, so far as his interiors are concerned, exists in constant association with spirits and angels.

[2] As for temptations themselves, they are going on while a person is in the actual process of being regenerated, for no one can be regenerated unless he also undergoes temptations; and the evil spirits around him are the means through which those temptations are brought about. In temptation the person is brought into a state in which

the evil that possesses him, that is, possesses his own essential self, is dominant. Once he enters this state evil and hellish spirits surround him, and when they realize that inwardly he is protected by angels those evil spirits reactivate the false ideas he has previously contemplated and the evil deeds he has committed. But the angels defend him from within. This conflict is what the person experiences as temptation, yet the experience is so vague that he is aware of it as scarcely anything more than a feeling of anxiety. For a person, especially one who has no belief at all in influx, dwells in a state of complete obscurity and discerns scarcely the smallest fraction of the things over which evil spirits and angels are engaged in conflict. Yet a battle is taking place at such a time over that person and his eternal salvation, with both sides using what is within him; for both draw on what resides with the person and engage in conflict over it. The truth of this I have been led most certainly to know. I have heard such conflict going on, I have perceived the influx taking place, and I have seen the spirits and the angels, to whom I spoke at the time and subsequently about what was happening.

[3] As stated, temptations arise primarily when a person is becoming spiritual, for at that time he is gaining a spiritual understanding of the truths of doctrine. The person himself is often unaware that this is happening; even so, the angels present with him see spiritual concerns within his natural ones since his interiors at this time are open towards heaven. (This also explains why, after living in the world, a person who has been regenerated is among angels, where he both sees and perceives the spiritual concerns which had previously appeared to him as natural ones.) When therefore a person is such as this, it is possible for the angels to defend him in temptation when he is assailed by evil spirits; for the angels then have a place that has been established in him into which they can operate; that is, they can flow into the spiritual level established in him, and through this into that which is natural.

[5] Take another example. Because a person, once he has become spiritual, no longer believes it to be a holy and godly act to give to monasteries or even churches where great wealth exists, and because prior to his becoming spiritual he had thought it a holy and godly thing to do, those spirits accuse him of falsity. They reactivate all the thoughts he had cherished previously about such holy and godly giving, as well as all his actual deeds resulting from that way of thinking. Those spirits make similar accusations in countless other instances which these examples serve merely to illustrate somewhat. In particular those spirits enter the affections which the person possessed previously and reactivate these, reactivating also the falsities and evils which he had thought and committed, and in this way they fill him with anxiety and quite often with doubt extending to the point of despair.

[6] Such then is the origin of spiritual kinds of anxiety and of those feelings called the pangs of conscience. What makes these appear to exist essentially within himself is influx and communication. Anyone who knows and believes this may be compared to a person who sees himself in a mirror but knows that it is not he himself who appears in the mirror or on the other side of it, only his image, whereas anyone who does not know and believe this may be compared to a person who sees himself in the mirror and supposes that he himself, not his image, appears there.

6213. ...But if the angels are to be able to ward off influences coming from hell, the truths of faith, joined to the good of life, into which they can flow must exist with the person. Those truths must serve as a base laid down for angels to operate into. But if the person does not possess truths joined to good he is brought away from hell, and then by means of angels the Lord governs him externally through what are called external restraints. These restraints involve the person's own prudence, which he exercises so that he may be seen, so far as outward appearances go, to be one who loves his neighbour and country, even though he is motivated by thoughts of his own position, his own gain, reputation on account of these, and by fear of legal penalties, including death. These are the external restraints that are used to govern a person when internal ones, which are those of conscience, do not exist. But those external restraints do nothing in the next life, for they are taken away from a person; and once they have been taken away, what he has been like internally is seen.

2338. That 'he urged them strongly' means a state of temptation when a person overcomes does not become clear except to those who have experienced temptations. As has been stated, temptations involve feelings of doubt regarding the Lord's presence and mercy, and also regarding His salvation. The evil spirits who are present with man at such times and who are the cause of temptation do all they can to infuse a negative outlook, but good spirits and angels from the Lord in every way disperse that doubting attitude, all the time preserving a feeling of hope and in the end strengthening an affirmative outlook. Consequently a person undergoing temptation hangs between a negative outlook and an affirmative outlook. Anyone who gives way in temptation remains in a doubting, and sinks into a negative, frame of mind, whereas one who overcomes still experiences feelings of doubt; yet he who allows himself to be filled with hope remains steadfastly in an affirmative outlook. Because man seems during such conflict to urge the Lord, especially through prayers, to be at hand, to take pity, to bring help, and to free from condemnation, this is described at this point where the temptation of those who are becoming members of the Church is the subject...

4249[2] The things that occur among the spirits and angels present with a person are perceived by him purely as things going on within himself. For while he lives in the body and does not believe that everything within him flows in from somewhere other than himself, he imagines that the causes of the things that go on within him do not lie outside himself but that all causes lie within him and are his own - which is not in fact the case. For whatever a person thinks and what he wills, that is, all his thought and all his affection, originate either in hell or in heaven. When he thinks and wills anything evil and as a consequence takes delight in falsities, let him realize that his thoughts and affections originate in hell; but when he thinks and wills anything good and as a consequence takes delight in truths, let him realize that these originate in heaven, that is, in the Lord by way of heaven. But the person's thoughts and affections more often than not take on a different outward appearance. A conflict between evil spirits and angels, for example, arising from the things in one who is to be regenerated, takes on the different outward appearance of fear and distress, and of temptation.