

Know Thyself: Cultivating and Intentional Spiritual Practice

AC 2131. People who are admitted are received by angelic communities with inmost charity and its joy, and they are shown all love and friendship. But when they are no longer content to remain in the communities they have come to first, they are received by other communities, and this process is repeated again and again until they reach that community with which they accord so far as the life of mutual love with them is concerned, There they remain until, having become more perfect, they leave, and from there are raised and lifted up into greater happiness, which in the Lord's mercy happens to them to the extent that the life of love and charity which they have received in the world exists with them. But their transference from one community to another is never a matter of their being rejected by the community where they are. It takes place because they themselves wish to go, a wish that is in accordance with an urgent desire instilled in them by the Lord. And because that transference is in keeping with their desires there is nothing which is not done in freedom.

AC 150. The state of a person when caught up in the proprium, that is, when he imagines that he lives from himself, is compared to a deep sleep. Indeed the ancients actually called it 'a deep sleep' while the Word speaks of people having 'the spirit of deep sleep poured out on them, and of their sleeping a perpetual sleep. The fact that man's proprium is in itself dead, that is, that nobody possesses any life from himself, has been demonstrated in the world of spirits so completely that evil spirits who love nothing except the proprium, and insist stubbornly that they do live from themselves, have been convinced by means of living experience, and have admitted that they do not live from themselves. With regard to the human proprium I have for several years now been given a unique opportunity to know about it - in particular that not a trace of my thinking began in myself. I have also been allowed to perceive clearly that every idea constituting my thought flowed in [from somewhere], and sometimes how it flowed in, and where from. Consequently anyone who imagines that he lives from himself is in error. And in believing that he does live from himself he takes to himself everything evil and false, which he would never do if what he believed and what is actually the case were in agreement.

AC 3742. The truth that there is but one life alone and that this flows from the only Lord, and the truth that angels, spirits, and men are merely recipients of that life, I have been made to know from so much experience that not even the smallest shadow of doubt has remained. Heaven itself sees with perception that these things are so, insomuch that the angels have a clear perception of that life flowing in and also of the way in which it flows in, as well as a perception of the extent and the nature of their reception of it. When their state of reception is more complete they enjoy the peace and happiness that is theirs - otherwise their state is one of unrest and of some anxiety. But to so great an extent do they make the Lord's life their own that they perceive themselves to be living seemingly of themselves, even though they know that they do not live of themselves. They make the Lord's life their own because His love and mercy towards the entire human race desire it; that is to say, He wishes to impart Himself and what is His own to everyone, and in actual fact does so insofar as they are receptive of Him, that is, insofar as they are His likenesses and

images in whom the life of good and the life of truth are present. And because such Divine endeavour proceeds from the Lord unceasingly, His life, as has been stated, is made their own.

AC 1936 ...no man, spirit, or angel, lives from himself, but the Lord only; and that the life of a man, spirit, or angel is an appearance of life in him; this is repugnant to the rational, which judges from fallacies, but still it is to be believed because it is the truth.

AE 585 [2] In respect to man's self it is to be known that it is nothing but evil and falsity therefrom; the voluntary self [will] is evil, and the intellectual self therefrom [understanding] is falsity. This self man derives mainly from parents, grandfathers, and great-grandfathers, in a long series back, so that at length the hereditary, which is his self, is nothing but evil gradually heaped up and condensed. For every man is born into two diabolical loves, the love of self and the love of the world, from which loves all evils and all falsities therefrom pour forth as from their own fountains; and as man is born into these loves he is also born into evils of every kind (respecting which more may be seen in the New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine, n. 65-83).

[3] Because man, in respect to his self is such, means have been given by the Divine mercy of the Lord, by which man can be withdrawn from his self; these means are given in the Word; and when man cooperates with these means, that is, when he thinks and speaks, wills and acts, from the Divine Word, he is kept by the Lord in things Divine, and is thus withheld from self; and when this continues there is formed with man by the Lord as it were a new self, both voluntary and intellectual, which is wholly separated from man's self; thus man becomes as it were created anew, and this is what is called his reformation and regeneration by truths from the Word, and by a life according to them. (Respecting this see also the New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine, in the article on Remission of Sins, n. 159-172; and on Regeneration, n. 173-186.) To repent is to actually turn oneself away from evils, because every man is such as his life is, and the life of man consists mainly in willing and consequent doing; and from this it follows that repentance which is merely of the thought and of the lips, and not at the same time of the will and of action therefrom, is not repentance, for then the life remains the same afterwards as it was before. This makes evident that to repent is to actually turn oneself away from evils, and to enter upon a new life (on this see the New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine, n. 159-172).

HH 302. I have talked with angels about the conjunction of heaven with the human race, saying that while the man of the church declares that all good is from God, and that angels are with man, yet few believe that angels are conjoined to man, still less that they are in his thought and affection. The angels replied that they knew that such a belief and such a mode of speaking still exist in the world, and especially, to their surprise, within the church, where the Word is present to teach men about heaven and its conjunction with man; nevertheless, there is such a conjunction that man is unable to think the least thing unless spirits are associated with him, and on this his spiritual life depends. They said that the cause of ignorance in this matter is man's belief that he lives from himself, and that he has no connection with the First Being [Esse] of life; together with his not knowing that this connection exists by means of the heavens; and yet if that connection were broken man would instantly fall dead. If man only believed, as is really true, that

all good is from the Lord and all evil from hell, he would neither make the good in him a matter of merit nor would evil be imputed to him; for he would then look to the Lord in all the good he thinks and does, and all the evil that flows in would be cast down to hell from which it comes. But because man does not believe that anything flows into him either from heaven or from hell, and therefore supposes that all things that he thinks and wills are in himself and therefore from himself, he appropriates the evil to himself, and the good that flows in he defiles with merit.

AE 1129 [3] That all things are from the life itself which is God, and which is wisdom and love, can also be made clear by reference to things created when they are viewed from order. For it is from order that the angelic heavens, consisting of thousands and thousands of societies, act as one through love to the Lord and through love towards the neighbor, and that they are kept in order through Divine truths which are the laws of order. Also it is from order that the hells beneath the heavens, which are also divided into thousands and thousands of congregations, are kept in order by means of judgments and punishments, so that they are unable to do the least harm to the heavens, although they are hatreds and insanities. It is also from order that between the heavens and the hells there is an equilibrium, in which is man in the world, and in which he is led to heaven if led by the Lord, and to hell if led by himself; for it is the law of order that man must do whatever he does from freedom according to reason.

DP 79. What a man does from freedom according to his thought is also said to remain with him, since nothing that a man has appropriated to himself can be eradicated; for it has come to be of his love and at the same time of his reason, that is, of his will and at the same time of his understanding, and consequently of his life. This can be removed indeed, but still it cannot be expelled; and when it is removed it is transferred as it were from the centre to the circumference, and there it stays. This is what is meant by its remaining. [2] For instance, if a man in his boyhood and youth has appropriated to himself a certain evil by doing it from the delight of his love, such as fraud, blasphemy, revenge or adultery; and if he has committed those evils from freedom according to thought, he has indeed appropriated them to himself; but if he afterwards repents, shuns them and regards them as sins that are to be abhorred, and so from freedom according to reason desists from them, then there are appropriated to him the good principles to which those evils are opposed. These good principles then constitute the centre, and they remove the evils towards the circumference further and further as he abhors and turns away from them. Still, however, they cannot be so expelled that they can be said to be extirpated, although by their removal they may appear to be extirpated. This results from man being withheld from evil and being held in good by the Lord. All man's hereditary evil as well as his actual evil may be treated in this way.

DP 259 [3] Yet it has been provided that everyone, no matter in what heresy he may be with respect to his understanding, may still be reformed and saved, if only he shuns evils as sins and does not confirm heretical falsities in himself. For by shunning evils as sins the will is reformed, and through the will the understanding, which then first emerges out of darkness into light. There are three essentials of the Church: an acknowledgment of the Divinity of the Lord, an acknowledgment of the holiness of the Word, and the life that is called charity. According to the

life which is charity is every man's faith; from the Word he has a rational perception of what the life should be; and from the Lord he has reformation and salvation. Had these three been held as essentials of the Church intellectual dissensions would not have divided but would have merely varied it, as light varies colours in beautiful objects, and as the various emblems of royalty constitute the beauty of a kingly crown.