

"Thou shalt have no other Gods before My Faces."

We read that, "Thou shalt have no other Gods before My Faces, signifies that Trues must not be thought of from any other source than out of the Lord."

"I am Jehovah thy God, signifies the Divine Human universally reigning in all and single things of the good and the true."

The opening of the Ten Commandments is an affirmative statement, namely that the Divine Human of the Lord is to universally rule in all things of the good and true with man and thus in all things of his life. The remainder of the first commandment treats of those things which prevent the Lord universally reigning in man. But seen in a broader series, all of the Ten Commandments, must be seen as treating of the evils which prevent the universal ruling presence of the Lord's Divine Human with man.

The evils treated of in the Ten Commandments must be shunned by man, as if from himself, in order that the Divine Human of the Lord may universally reign in him. If the evils treated of in the Ten Commandments are shunned for any other reason, they are not shunned as sins against the Lord, and therefore the internal evil remains, no matter how much man may appear to have repented

We are told that the first thing said reigns universally in what follows. The first thing said in the Ten Commandments is I am Jehovah thy God, that is, the Divine Human of the Lord is to universally reign in all things with man. This affirmative thought must be present in all things of the Commandments, otherwise the Commandments which commence with the negative "Thou shalt not," remain negative and lead nowhere.

The question therefore is do we desire with all our hearts that the Divine Human of the Lord shall universally reign in all things of our life, and are we willing to shun the evils forbidden in the Decalogue with all our might in order that the Divine Human of the Lord may so rule in us. Each of the Commandments must be seen as an evil which is opposed to the universal rule of the Lord in our lives. If the evils treated of in the Decalogue are not seen as those things which prevent the Lord's reigning in all and single things, any shunning of these evils is from man and not from the Lord; and what is shunned from man and not from the Lord is shunned only in appearance.

In our last sermon we spoke of what the Divine Human of the Lord is, and we shall now consider this subject further, for it is the subject that should be the uppermost in our minds.

It was said that the Divine Human of the Lord can only be seen out of a genuine or regenerated human with man, and never out of the human which a man has from heredity.

The thought of the Lord as to His Divine Human or the thought of the Lord as a Divine Man, prior to regeneration is merely a representative idea, and is not a seeing of the Divine Human Itself; for before regeneration the idea of man or of what is human comes from without, that is from appearances of what is human. While the genuine human, the genuine man, is solely from the Lord through the internal and thence through the external of the Word. Man is truly man, truly human, when his loves, his thoughts and his life, have been formed by the Lord through the internal and external of the Word. Such a human is entirely different from what the world calls human. A man does not come into such a human unless he has obeyed the Words of the Lord: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily, and follow me." (Luke 9:23). And again: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it." (Matt. 17:25).

Such an actual giving up of one's life by which one comes for the first time to see the Lord in His Divine Human, actually, and not merely representatively, only comes by means of severe spiritual temptations such as are described in The Word Explained in these words: "As further concerning temptations.....they are diverse. In general, a distinction must be made between those, which they underwent, who were of the representative Church, and those which they underwent, who were of the New Church. The former were mainly external, such as war, famine, pestilence, being punishments of the body. Yet they passed over to the interiors, that is to a kind of anguish, especially because of the evil things which happened to them and their descendents. The representative Church carried this with it. But the temptations which those underwent who were of the New Church were deeper. They were not temptations of the body, or because of themselves and the world, inasmuch as these loves were cast off and they held earthly things in contempt. The temptations was an anxiety of the natural mind, where is the beginning, together with a sense of great pain in the viscera. But this penetrates to the more interior parts, that is to say to the human mind, in that the man sees himself cursed to hell, and so despairs concerning salvation, and is therefore in anguish. In this anguish, however, he is

sustained by God Messiah alone and in various ways is raised up and sometimes so exhilarated that he can bare continual temptations. There are still deeper temptations, in that evil spirits stir up evils which have been implanted by actuality and heredity, and many other things which are scientific, and in this way strive wholly to take away faith in God Messiah and to reduce man to despair. This also happens when every love, which is man's life, is taken away. But I cannot well describe any specimen of this temptation in respect to its nature. Whether they occur manifestly to others save those to whom it has been granted to speak with spirits and who are thus acted upon by God Messiah in a manifest way, this I do not as yet know. These temptations are such that they can hardly be described. They do not touch the external man, for the external man is then dead. Thus nothing of the temptation appears in the bodily face to make it manifest.

But as concerns the Messiah's temptations, it is clear they were inmost temptations and so far ineffable that no mind can ever think of them as to their nature. Thus they can never be described, not even any part of them. They were inmost temptations because thus the Human Essence of God Messiah was united to the Divine Essence so that they constituted one." 824.2 (Ad. IV p. 218).

As Swedenborg represented the New Church, in the description of the deepest temptations are described the temptations which prepares the Church to actually see the Divine Human of the Lord.

Do we actually feel that the life or death of the Church and the man of the Church depends on losing of our former life so that the Lord's Divine Human can rule in all and every single thing of our life? And do we see that the Ten Commandments in their internal and external senses are the only means of removing the evils which stand in the way of the Lord so ruling. If we perceive this we will perceive why the Ten Commandments are the most holy thing of the Church, and will long with all our hearts to have them written on our hearts. The understanding of, and the living according to the Ten Commandments will then be the sole concern of our lives, all other things being of relatively no importance.

After the statement, "I am Jehovah thy God," that is, the Lord's Divine Human must rule in all things with man, the command follows, "Thou shalt have no other gods before My faces. That this signifies that trues must not be thought of from any other source than out of the Lord."

How apt is man to think of what is true from some other source than from the Lord in His Word.

If man consults his rational the Doctrine becomes null and empty and man sees the Word solely in the light of the world. When reading the Word, if one reflects, one can observe a tendency to deny this or that, or to interpret it in such a way as to make it lose its force or strength or to make it favor one's own thinking which has been formed by reading, and education in the things of the world.

Still more does one discover, if one will examine and reflect on one's affections and loves, and observe that instead of permitting those to be led by the Lord in the reading of the Word, self love leads; indeed instead of letting one's loves and affections be created, formed and made by the Lord out of the Word, one reads the Word out of one's natural affections, and loves; and when it is perceived that the teaching of the Word is not in agreement with one's loves and affections, one denies at heart the teaching of the Word, or interprets it in such a way as to agree with one's own loves and affections; thus one thinks of truth from some other source than out of the Lord, and when one does this he has other gods before the Lord's faces. With others the natural loves and affections draw them away from the regular daily reading and meditating on the Word; as long as this state continues nothing of genuine life can commence.

That the man of the Church is withheld from entering into spiritual life by his unregenerate loves and affections is an obvious thing; wherever we look, if in ourselves, or if we listen to others, we observe trues being thought of from some other source than out of the Divine Human of the Lord. That this should be so is, however, not the most serious thing; the thing which is so exceedingly sad is that there is no grief that this is so, that its seriousness is so little realized; that there is so little sorrow at these other gods before the faces of the Lord, that the men of the Church are not broken at such a thought. Those in the Church grieve about many things, - they grieve about the state of the world, they grieve about many personal things, in relation to themselves and their families, but on account of the greatest sorrow of all, that there are other gods before the faces of the Lord, that is, that they think of trues from some other source than the Lord, they seldom grieve; or the sorrow, when there is such sorrow, appears not so great. If the man of the Church could feel this sorrow in its true proportion, all other griefs and sorrows would appear minor and relatively insignificant.

We often hear of human sorrow, but if the sorrow that there are other gods before the faces of the Lord is not the sorrow of sorrows, all other sorrows are not truly human, but animal sorrow.

The faces of the Lord signify His love and mercy. The saying that the sorrow of sorrows is the grief that trues are thought of from some other source than the Divine Human of the Lord and that all other sorrows are relatively minor appears like a hard saying to the natural man, and yet this true is a true of the Lord's love and mercy; and to deny this true is to place other gods before the faces of the Lord.

Concerning trues which are from the Lord, we read: "That they are always trues from the Lord in the internal form; and trues which are not from the Lord appear as trues in the external form only, but not in the internal form; for within they are either empty, or false and evil. In order for the true to be true there must be life in it; for the true without life is not the true of faith with man; and life is from no other source than good, that is through good from the Lord. If therefore the Lord is not in the true, it is the true without life, thus it is not the true; but if the false is in it, or evil, the true itself in man is false or evil; for that within makes the essence, and also in the other life shines through to the outside. From this it can now be seen how it is to be understood that trues must not be thought of from any other source than the Lord." (A.C. 8868).

The good from the Lord which is within the true from the Lord is the love of the salvation of the human race, thus it is the good which looks to what is eternal.

The number continues: "As few know how the case is with trues which in the internal form are trues, thus which live from the Lord, something shall be said about those from experience. In the other life it is openly perceived from everyone who speaks there what lies hidden within the words of his speech, as to whether it is closed within, or whether it is open, also what kind of affection there is therein. If the affection of good is within, it is inwardly soft; if the affection of evil, it is inwardly hard. With the angels of heaven all things of their speech are open even into the Lord; and this is both clearly perceived and also heard from the softness and quality of this. From this also it is known what lies hidden within, whether the Lord or not. Trues in which the Lord is are trues which are alive, but trues in which the Lord is not are not alive. Those which are alive are trues of faith from love into the Lord and from charity towards the neighbor. Those which are not alive are not trues, because within them are the love of self and the love of the world.....every one has trues according to his life, that is, according to that which universally reigns with him." (A.C. 8868).

If those of the Church examine themselves, they will observe pride, vanity, sentimentality, the despidal of others in comparison with themselves, solicitude about the future and the love of possession. These are the chief things which make the trues with them unacceptable and prevent the Lord from universally reigning with them. Insofar as these evils are shunned the trues with them can become living.

It may at first appear strange why the first warning is, Thou shalt have no other gods before My faces. That is that trues must not be thought of from any source than from the Lord; and why the first warning is not that goods are not to be done from any source than from the Lord.

The reason for this is that it is the spiritual Church and not the celestial Church, which is being addressed; for we read: "The subject treated of in the internal sense is the trues Divine which are to be implanted in the good with those who are of the Lord's spiritual Church." (A.C. 8859).

In the spiritual Church the first thing is to shun the evils which prevent the Lord's universally reigning in the true with man. If the Lord universally reigns in the true with the man of the spiritual Church, then he can be brought to genuine good in which the Lord can universally reign also; but until the man of the spiritual Church is in the genuine true in which the Lord universally reigns he cannot be brought to genuine good.

AMEN

Readings: Exodus 20:1-23
Luke 11:1-13
A.C. 8867-8