

SERMON ON A. E. 1148
 Lessons: Jer.7:1-11;
 Rev.11:1-14; A.R.531

Rev. Theodore Pitcairn
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"Such as hatreds, revenges, cunnings, deceits, as a serpent breathes in poisons."

Hatreds, revenges, cunnings, deceits, describe the internal and external evils in relation to the will and the understanding.

Hatred, is of the will, and revenges are the acts which proceed from the will. Cunning is of the understanding and deceits, are the acts which come forth from this cunning.

To view these evils we must see them as the opposites of goods. Hatreds are the opposite of loves; revenges are the opposite of showing mercies, and doing good; cunning is the opposite of innocence; and deceit is the opposite of acting sincerely.

Every one has a natural idea of these goods and their opposite evils. But such goods and such evils in the natural man do not differ much from such loves and acts with animals. What such evils are in the internal sense is hidden in the internal sense of the Word.

While the evils spoken of in the external sense of the Word are natural evils, this does not mean that this sense is not important to us. In the early states of reformation these are the only evils we see, and if in such states we do not combat and overcome them, we can never come to more interior states in which we must see and combat against more interior evils.

One who does not combat against natural hatred, can never be brought to see what interior hatred is; one who does not combat against natural revenge, can never come to see what interior revenge is; one who does not combat against natural cunnings and deceits, can never come to recognize interior cunnings and deceits. We must first come to recognize these natural evils in ourselves, and come to have a horror of them; and thus be brought to the goods of the natural to which these evils are opposed.

Any one who reflects can easily observe how, when one opposes him, or resists him, particularly in relation to his ruling loves, or ignores him, or fails to respect or honor him, or even pays insufficient attention to him; how he tends to become angry with such a one, and tends to take revenge, by hurting him or by speaking ill of him.

One can also easily observe, if he reflects, how he cunningly strives to accomplish his own ends, how he puts on appearances to persuade others, how he says things which are not exactly true, or gives a twist to things to take advantage of others.

There is nothing more important to begin with, than by shunning cunning and deceits to come to a natural innocence, and sincerity in all things of our natural life. This first natural innocence and sincerity is not however, natural innocence and sincerity itself. It is only after shunning interior cunning and deceit, and thereby coming to an interior innocence and sincerity, that a new natural can come into existence in which there is natural innocence and sincerity itself out of the Divine Human of the Lord, who is innocence itself.

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The genuine natural corresponds to the internal. Before the coming of the Lord the churches were representative churches, that is they were in representatives of the Lord who was to come. In so far as there was innocence in these things of representative worship, they lived by means of communication with the heavens; but when hatred and revenge, cunning and deceit destroyed love, and mercy, innocence and sincerity the representative worship became dead and a total damnation stood at the door and threatened; and this total damnation could only be taken away by the Lord coming on earth, and, later on, again, by His Second Coming.

It is the same with the New Church and the man of the New Church, when the first living representative love, mercy, innocence, and sincerity are destroyed the Lord must come to save him. The first representative goods and truths which a man is in, are from an influx out of heaven into the loves man has from birth, that is into the things of his natural disposition, and are there representatives of the things of the Lord. But as evils increase innocence departs, until, if there were not a coming of the Lord Himself, all would be over with the Church and the man of the Church.

Before the coming of the Lord the primary representative of the Lord was the burnt offering of a lamb upon the altar.

Animals in the other world are external representations of the affections of the angels; and so our natural affections, which we have in common with animals, should be representative of our internal affections. Man's worship of the Lord before His coming to him, is primarily the burnt offering of a lamb upon an altar, that is it is the natural innocence inspired out of heaven into his natural disposition. But when this innocence fails then the Lord who is innocence itself comes to him, and gives him innocence proper which is the Lord Himself with man.

If we look at the Church we can see how hatreds, revenges, cunning and deceits, have tended to destroy, love, mercy, innocence and sincerity. We can thus perceive that if the Lord does not come to save us we are in danger of a total damnation. If there is no perception of this there is no possibility of a coming of the Lord; for the Lord can only come where there are some remains of a longing for Him to come and save us from damnation.

This attitude was represented by Simeon of whom we read: "And the same man was just and devout waiting for the consolation of Israel." (Luke 2:25) And in Micah: "I will wait for the God of my salvation." (7:7)

The time of the coming of the Lord no man can know of himself; for we read:

"But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only." (Matt. 24:36)

"Watch therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come." (Matt. 24:42)

In the internal sense hatreds, revenges, cunning and deceits are against the internal sense of the Word, and thence against those who are in it, and inmosty they are against the Lord Himself. This is evident from the life of the Lord on earth, for the Jewish Church treated the Lord as they already had treated the internal of their Word.

In such matters we are very apt to deceive ourselves. The high priests, the scribes, the pharisees, and the elders of the church undoubtedly did not appear to live a life of hatred, and revenge, cunning and deceit, many of them undoubtedly appeared to have a sincere love of God and the Word; they appeared friendly, kindly, and charitable. It was only when the Lord appeared, and seemed to threaten their position, and authority, that they broke out in violent hatred, revenge, cunning and deceit. This is according to the Lord's words:

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"If I had not come and spoken unto them they had not sinned; but now they have no cloke for their sin." (John 15:22)

We can readily comprehend, how, to many of the Jews, it appeared as if the Lord acted from hatred and revenge when he called the most respected leaders of the Jews, a generation of vipers, having the devil for their father, whited sepulchers full of dead men's bones; and who therefore thought the Lord was receiving His just desert in being crucified.

We also are apt to react in a similar manner when the Lord comes in the Divine Truth and manifests our interiors.

The evil as well as the good, and even more so, may think they love the Lord, the Word and the Church; but with the evil such things are an imaginary heaven; and when the Lord comes in the Divine True of the internal sense of the Word and manifests the internal of our imaginary heaven; although we appear for the most part friendly, and charitable, we may find ourselves burning with hatred revenge, cunning and deceit against the truths, which expose our internal and against those who are in such truths. We may cover over a too obvious display of such hatred, anger and revenge, so as not to appear to be in these before others; but internally such things rankle within.

We are taught that many in the spiritual world who have worked in the Church with the greatest zeal, and who imagine themselves to have the greatest love for the Lord, for the Word and the Church; when they see that the Lord manifests their interiors by the internal sense of the Word, and thus threatens their position, their authority, and their standing, turn with the greatest hatred against the Lord and against the interiors of the Word, and against those who are in the interiors of the Word.

In our third lesson we read how Swedenborg was treated in the spiritual world by the clergy and laity of the protestant church. Let us not think pharisaically that we are ⁱⁿ such danger of treating the interiors of the Word and those who are in them in the same way, for in so far as we are not in essential repentance, and in so far as we do not regenerate every one of us treats the internal of the Word, which appears in the genuine Doctrine of the Church and manifests our internals in a similar way; and this no matter how kindly, friendly, and charitably we appear in ordinary daily life.

The evils we are speaking about are said to be breathed in, or inspired as a serpent breathes in or inspires poison. A serpent represents the sensual and scientific, particularly when opposed to the spiritual and celestial. It is particularly the sensual and scientific appearances of the literal sense of the Word, with us, particularly the sensual and scientific appearances of the Third Testament, which we can readily turn to favor the beautiful appearances of our imaginary heaven, against the genuine heaven of the internal sense. The appearances of our beautiful imaginary heaven confirmed by the external appearances of the literal sense of the Third Testament are very pleasing to the proprium. While the internal sense as it removes these appearances and shows man's ugly internal is more than displeasing to the proprium. Wherefore, inspired by the poison of the serpent we would of ourselves always choose the unopened letter as over against the genuine internal sense. It is only by acknowledging this, and from such acknowledgment praying to the Lord, that the Lord can give us to choose the genuine, and turn away from the false interpretation of the Word; for as, we have said, the false interpretation appears more beautiful, more full of love and mercy, to the proprium than does the genuine internal sense. For the internal sense causes the proprium which is so dear to us to die, while the falsified literal sense flatters our proprium.

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Every thing seen from the proprium appears upside down, as when looking at things at a distance through a magnifying glass. Thus those who are in genuine love, mercy, innocence, and sincerity appear as being in hatred, revenge, cunning and deceit; while those who are internally in hatred, revenge, cunning and deceit appear as being in love, mercy, innocence and sincerity. If you will only believe this, you can be brought into genuine humility, in which you can acknowledge from the heart that of yourself you do not know what internal love and charity are; and in such a state you can pray to the Lord from the heart:

"Teach, enlighten and lead us, since of ourselves we can do nothing of good. And give us that we may live; that the devil may not seduce and put evils into our hearts; knowing that while we are not led by Thee, O Lord, he leads and breathes in evils of every kind, such as hatreds, revenges, cunnings, deceits, as a serpent breathes in poisons."

AMEN