

"Thou shalt not bow down to them, nor serve them; for I Jehovah thy God am a zealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers, upon the thirds and upon the fourths of them that hate Me: And doing mercy to thousands of them that love Me and keep My Commandments."

When the Lord as to the Divine Human does not universally reign in the good and true with man, he worships other gods; the reason of this is that when the Lord does not reign then proprial intelligence reigns, and then man does not think the true from the Lord but from himself: and what is from self is from evil, thus from hell.

The commencement of the first Commandment is in the affirmative, I am Jehovah thy God, signifying the Lord as to His Divine Human universally reigning. But man cannot cause the Lord to reign universally with him, this belongs to the Lord alone, all man can do is to shun, as if of himself, the evils and falsities which prevent the Lord universally reigning. The primary evil is thinking the true from some other source than from the Lord in His Word; and a man shuns this when he shuns his proprial intelligence.

It may appear strange that the first command, which must reign universally in all the commandments, is the command not to think trues from elsewhere than the Divine Human of the Lord. For it would appear to man that there were many other evils that are more important and which have to be shunned first. And yet if this evil is not looked upon as the most important and is not shunned first, all other keeping of the Ten Commandments is in vain. This is the true order and any breaking of this order leads to all disorder, no matter how orderly a man's life may be in appearance.

The reason for this is that man from himself can never see the essential of evil, and therefore can never shun it. He can indeed from his own intelligence see the appearance of evil and shun these, but as he does this from self and not from the Lord, evil and not good is in his apparent shunning of evil. Wherefore if he does not shun thinking the true from his own intelligence in order that the Lord in His Word may universally reign in the good and true with him, there is no commencement of regeneration.

To shun ones own, or proprial, intelligence in order not to think the true from elsewhere than out of the Divine Human of the Lord is a great work requiring much time, and hard struggles, for the love of ones proprial intelligence is very strong, and powerfully resists such a removal. If a man will pray to the Lord and examine

himself, he will observe how stubborn his love of his own intelligence is, and how when he appears to have shunned it, it comes back many many times. The proprium of man tends to turn man from this primary struggle to the shunning of other evils, and if man lets himself be so turned; the root of all evil remains, no matter how he may appear to perfect his life, and this root springs up into more interior, and worse evils, although these latter evils are often more hidden. In the letter of the Old Testament, not to have other gods before the faces of Jehovah, not to make a graven image and a likeness, not to bow down, and serve them, is a command against a thing which would obviously destroy all spiritual life. But in the internal sense, namely; To think the true from elsewhere than out of the Divine Human of the Lord, thus to think trues from ones own intelligence, does not appear so serious; and yet it is more serious, more destructive than the idolatry expressed in the letter of the first of the Ten Commandments.

If we realize the great importance of this we will realize the great importance of reading regularly, and meditating on the Word; for if one does not read and meditate on the Word he necessarily thinks trues from his own intelligence and not from the Divine Human of the Lord.

But it involves more than reading and meditating on the Word, for a man can also read and meditate on the Word from his proprial intelligence. It involves reading and meditating on the Word, with a great humiliation of self; a reading and meditating on the Word with a broken heart and contrite spirit. If a man does not regularly read the Word with such a broken heart and contrite spirit then he bows down and serves other gods, other idols, that is other things which he sets up as ideals; Ideals of doctrinal things, ideals of church life, of social life, ideals of family and married life, ideals of politics, ideals of art and science, of philosophy, even ideals of natural and therefore of a personal love of the Lord all of which ideals are from his own intelligence. Such ideals are therefore sculptured images and, as they are according to the desires of his own heart they are also molten images. Do we not see such idolatry every where both with ourselves and with others. Until such idolatry is shunned, the shunning of the evils spoken of in the other commandments is in vain; for if one does not shun ones own intelligence and ones own will one thinks out of proprial intelligence, and, if one thinks out of proprial intelligence about evils which are to be shunned, one shuns them from self; and thus self and hell is in the very shunning of evil.

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"For I Jehovah thy God am a zealous God." This signifies the Lord's love and mercy, and thence His Divine will to reign universally in all and every single thing of the good and true with man, thus, in everything of man's affection and thought. And on the other hand how this love, mercy, and will on the part of the Lord, appears as anger and punishment, thus as some thing evil and false, to those who are in evil. For the Lord comes to man to take away apparent life and to give real life, but to the man who turns his back to the Lord, this taking away of his apparent life appears like a destroying of life, as if the Lord were jealous and did not wish man to have his own life, and as if the Lord punished him for desiring to have his own life. To the evil it therefore appears that the Lord wished man to worship the Lord because the Lord was jealous from self love and from the desire of being worshiped and loved. And such an appearance is in the letter of the Old Testament on account of the evil state of the Jews through whom the Old Testament was given.

Human zealousness or jealousy is out of the love of self, and has in it the love of self; human jealousy demands love, because it wishes to be loved from the love of self, and, if it does not receive love and honor, it becomes angry and punishes those who do not give it love, and of this with every means in its power. It is according to this appearance of human zeal or jealousy that the letter of the Old Testament is written, but in the internal sense it is the opposite; for in the Lord there is no love of self, no demand that man love the Lord for the Lord's sake, no anger or punishment on the part of the Lord if man does not love Him; not even any command that the man should love the Lord in the external meaning of the word command. The reason of this is that the Lord from His love desires to gently lead him in freedom, and He does not desire any love which is not freely given from love. Nor does the Lord desire man's love for His own sake, but for the sake of man and in order that he may bless man.

Thus the Lord does not desire to rule in all and every thing of the good and true with man for His own sake, but in order that man may receive Divine blessings, and if man turns away from the Lord to the things of his own intelligence and his own loves, the Lord's love and mercy still goes forth to him to bring him back if possible, and if not possible to give him every thing that is possible in the state that he is in.

The Lord's love is a love of protection, but as the evil rush in to destroy those things which the Lord wills to protect they bring evil upon themselves, with its torments, and they then attribute their punishments and torments to the Lord.

"Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the sons, upon the thirds and the fourths. That this signifies the consequent proliferation of falsity from evil." (A.C. 8876). That thinking trues from ones own intelligence has such consequences, that it leads to an ever increasing mass of falsity out of pride, is hard to believe, for it is difficult for a man to conceive how he can think the true apart from his proprial intelligence, and he may be aware of the fact that his own intelligence plays a prominent part in all his thinking. How then is he to think of the true from no other source than out of the Divine Human of the Lord? How is the Divine Human to rule universally in all and every single thing? Such a teaching at first brings a man into obscurity rather than into light. And the way to light in regard to this matter is long and strait; and yet he must go in this way; for if he does not take this way, not only are falsities from evil multiplied in himself, but they are hereditarily passed on to children.

"Upon the thirds and upon the fourths. That this signifies in a long series and the conjunction of them, is evident from the signification of three as being what is full from beginning to end, thus what is in a long series, and from four as being conjunction, in like manner as two." (A.C. 8877).

When a man thinks from his proprial intelligence, not only are falsities increased in a long series, but they also support one another, and thus gain strength, and take on a great persuasive appearance of being true.

"Of them that hate Me. That this signifies who absolutely reject the Divine of the Lord, is evident from the signification of them that hate God, as being those who are in evil and thence in falsity, for these are they who reject the Divine of the Lord; and so far as they are in evil and thence in falsity, so far they not only reject it, but also hold it in hatred. That it is the Divine of the Lord which they reject, is because they who are in evil are not in celestial light, but in natural light, and finally in sensual light which is from the bodily. From this light they cannot possibly see the human of the Lord otherwise than as human, for they cannot perceive what the Divine Human is, because they have an idea about the Divine that is utterly empty and worthless." (A.C. 8878).

If a man trusts in his proprial intelligence, if he does not repent of and shun his own intelligence, and if he does not desire to think the true from no where else than out of the Divine Human of the Lord, he is finally led to this end that he hates the Lord, no matter how much he may think that he loves Him. This explains why in the New Church, so called, so few love the Lord; for men cling to their own intelligence, their own understanding, and are not willing to give it up in order to receive a new intelligence and new understanding and finally a new will from the Lord.

"And doing mercy unto thousands. That this signifies the good and the true unto them perpetually, is evident from the signification of mercy, as being the influx of the good and the true from the Lord and consequent spiritual life, which is given by regeneration, for the Lord out of mercy gives such things, which are of eternal life and happiness, and from the signification of a thousand, as being very much, and when it is said of the Divine Mercy, as being perpetually." (A.C.8879).

If a man gives up the old life, of his own intelligence and will, the Lord from His mercy gives man genuine intelligence which is full of goods and trues with their delights which increase immensely, and in each, of the good and true things, the Lord is present and gives them life, and this perpetually out of His love and mercy. If man only had faith in the Lord how gladly he would give up the things of his own intelligence and his own will to receive this blessing. But the sad thing is that faith is so little and so weak.

"Of those that love Me. That this signifies who receive the good of love.....for they who love the Lord do not love out of themselves, but from the Lord, for all the good inflows from Him, and those love who desist from evil, for evil stands in the way and rejects the influx of good from the Lord. Wherefore when evil has been removed, good is received, which is continually present and endeavors to enter." (A.C. 8880)

Man by nature and habit is indeed willing to love the Lord from himself, but such love has self in it, and is therefore later turned into hatred. The genuine love, is love from the Lord into the Lord, but such love, is not possible until man's own or his proprial intelligence and his own love have been shunned; for the proprial will and the proprial understanding can never receive love from the Lord, and can therefore never genuinely love the Lord, for the Lord can only dwell in His own with-man.

"And keep My Commandments. That this signifies who receive the trues of faith. That to keep these is to receive, is because in order that the trues which are called the trues of faith may be of faith and may be living with a man, these also flow in from the Lord. They are indeed learned by the man, and are stored up in the memory, but as long as a man does not will them, and consequently does not do them, they do not become living. But when they are brought forth from the memory, and are insinuated through the intellectual into the will, that is through the thought into the affections, and thence into act, they then become living, and are trues of faith. This is effected by the Lord when the man desists from evil." (A.C.8881).

As long as the Commandments remain external commands and a man obeys them from fear, they are only in the external. In this state the Lord is as it were outside of man. But when man shuns his proprial intelligence and will, then the Commandments inflow from the Lord as the trues of faith. The Lord is then present with man continually in His True which is given continually. Man then does not obey them as external commands from natural fear, but he obeys the true of faith from the holy fear of love, that is from the holy fear lest he might act contrary to the Lord, or contrary to the good and true which he loves, and which he fears might be injured.

Never-the-less in the first states, when man has not as yet come to love the good and the true with all his heart, and therefore cannot act out of a holy fear of doing harm to the true of faith; he must obey the Commandments as external and binding commands which he fears to break. If a man is not first in the external fear of breaking the commandments, he can never come to the genuine true of faith, which he can love, and which he obeys out of the holy love of fear lest the good and true of the Lord be injured.

The end or purpose of the first of the Commandments is that the Lord may do mercy upon thousands of them that love Him and keep His Commandments, that is, that the good and true is given to them perpetually, who are willing to receive the good of love and the trues of faith, and thus all blessings; the Lord's love and mercy operates powerfully with every one to this end, provided man trusts in the Lord, and cooperates with Him.

Give us O Lord faith and a willing heart.

AMEN

Readings: I Is. 53
 II John 6:1-14
 III A.C. 8878-80