

SERMON ON EXODUS 20:7 by Rev. Theodore Pitcairn
(Second sermon on text)

January 2, 1949

"Thou shalt not take the name of Jehovah thy God in vain; for Jehovah will not hold him guiltless who taketh his name in vain."

We read: "By taking the name of Jehovah thy God in vain is properly signified to turn the true into evil; that is to believe that it is true, and nevertheless to live in evil; and it is also to turn evil into the false, that is to live holily, and yet not believe." (A.C. 8882).

In the celestial Church the essential is in the will, and the love of the will is love into the Lord, while its external is mutual love. In the spiritual Church, the internal is faith in the things of the Lord, and Charity which is formed in such a faith.

The first in time with the spiritual Church is faith in the trues of faith. These trues are the Divine trues by which a man is reformed and regenerated, such trues are the good of these trues are in the rational mind.

In the natural mind the human with its loves resides. This human, in a likeness of the Lord, consists of two humans, the human which can be regenerated and the human which cannot be regenerated. These two humans appear as if they were mixed together and at first cannot be distinguished by man. Regeneration consists in the separation of these two humans, and when separated the subjugation of the one and the conjunction of the other with the Divine trues. The whole life of regeneration consists in this, and is a long process.

Let us illustrate: Everyone to begin with loves others; a man who did not love others would be utterly inhuman. This love of others is however a very mixed thing, and during regeneration two kinds of love have to be separated. The merely personal love of others must be removed and subjugated, while the genuine love of others must be separated and conjoined with the trues of faith and thus become genuine charity, - which is called "the good of faith." (A.C. 2967).

When the love of others is separated from the natural love of ones fellow man and is conjoined with the trues of faith, it is elevated out of the natural and becomes spiritual charity. We read: "Regarded in itself charity is a spiritual affection; but charity alone is a natural affection; for charity itself, which is a spiritual affection, is formed through trues from the Word, and in proportion as it is formed through them it is spiritual; but charity alone, which is a natural affection, is not formed from any trues from the Word; but it comes forth with man from the hearing of preaching without his attending to the trues. Thus charity alone is devoid of faith." (A.E. 232).

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Charity itself which is a spiritual affection looks to what is eternal and never to temporal things except in so far as they serve eternal ends. Thus spiritual charity always looks to the salvation of souls and thus to the Lord's kingdom. We read: "Charity is the affection of doing what is good to our neighbor for the sake of God, salvation, and eternal life." (A.R. 387). And again: "They who are solely in the doctrine of faith know of nothing being charity towards the neighbor, except giving to others, and pitying every one; for they say every one is the neighbor without distinction; when yet charity is all good whatever with man, in his affection, in his zeal, and thence in his life; and the neighbor is all the good in others by which he is affected, consequently is all who are in good; and this with every distinction. For example he is in charity and mercy who exercises justice and judgment punishing the evil and rewarding the good. In punishing the evil there is charity for he is thus carried along by zeal to emend him and at the same time to protect others. Lest evil should come to them from that source." (A.C. 2417).

It would not appear to the natural man that the doctrine of faith alone involves, giving to others without distinction, and pitying every one, while the doctrine of charity involves the exercise of justice and judgment including punishment, and yet it is true.

We read further: "Those, who are by nature compassionate, and do not make their natural compassion spiritual by putting it in practice in accordance with genuine charity, believe that charity consists in giving to every poor person, and relieving every one who is in want, without first inquiring whether the poor, or needy person, is good or bad; for they say it is not necessary for God regards only the aid and the aims. But after death these are clearly distinguished and set apart from those who have done the beneficent works of charity from prudence; for those who have done them from that blind idea of charity, then do good to the good and the bad alike, and, with the aid of what is done for them, the wicked do evil and thereby injure the good. Such benefactors are partly to blame for the injury done to the good. For doing good to the evil is like giving bread to the devil, which he turns into poison."

Giving to the evil in the broader natural sense, includes the giving of sympathy, affection, friendship, all of which, if given without prudence, is turned into evil and strengthens the evil. It also involves giving a position or occupation without prudence. How many churches and kingdoms, have been harmed or destroyed by giving positions, or occupations from natural affections to the sons of leading men or rulers without prudence.

And the same is true of lesser families where sons and daughters are given places in the family which they have not earned and do not deserve.

It is indeed true that if a wayward son repents of his waywardness it is right that the parents rejoice and they should do what they can to turn him from his waywardness. But as long as there is no sign of repentance, the parents must be prudent in their relation to the children. It is a common thing in the world of spirits where two of one family or two intimate friends are bound together by a strong natural affection, while one is good and the other is evil that such can only be separated with great suffering by the one who is good because he resists the necessary separation.

In the spiritual sense, giving to the poor without prudence, refers to giving spiritual goods and trues to others without prudence, which the Lord calls, "casting pearls before swine."

Returning now to the text: "Thou shalt not take the name of Jehovah thy God in vain," which signifies "to believe in the true and live in evil, or to live holily and yet not believe," we can see that this is illustrated in what we have said above.

All who know the Latin Word and the Doctrine of charity thence and yet act out of natural compassion and do not make their natural compassion spiritual by putting it in practice in accordance with genuine charity that is with justice, judgment and prudence, live holily but they do not believe.

On the other hand those who believe the trues and yet live evilly are those who know the essential laws of regeneration and yet do not live according to them. As we have seen the essential law of regeneration, is that the human which can be regenerated, must be separated from the human which cannot be regenerated, it must be elevated by means of the trues of faith, so that it becomes spiritual and is conjoined with the interior trues of the Word. The danger is that in becoming absorbed in the wonderful laws of regeneration the love or charity itself becomes lost. In separating the mere human which should be separated, from the human which should be regenerated there is danger that the genuine human may be lost also, in which case man loses his spiritual life.

Concerning such a man we read: "When the unclean spirit hath gone out of a man, he goeth through dry places, seeking rest; and findeth none, he saith, I will return into my house whence I came out. And if on coming he findeth it swept and garnished he goeth away and taketh seven other spirits worse than himself; and they enter in and dwell there; and the man's last things become worse than the first." (Luke 11:24-26).

The unclean spirit going out, signifies the acknowledgment of the trues of faith by which man is to be regenerated, his being out of the house signifies that he leaves the things of his old will with its loves to be in the trues of faith. His going through dry places, (that is his being in a desert) signifies that he lacks the genuine love, in the understanding by which spiritual things could grow. His seeking rest and not finding it, signifies that he finds no quietness or peace in the new trues of faith he has come into, but instead he is wearied, for he lacks the love and actual desire to change his will and his life so that they may conform to the new trues of faith which he has acknowledged.

Thus being deprived of life he returns to his house, that is to his old will and its loves, thus to a life contrary to the trues he has acknowledged. His finding it swept and garnished, signifies that such a life is delightful to him, and appears good and true, because the external evils have become internal, and their remains a hypocritical appearance of the good and the true in the external. He goeth away and taketh seven other spirits worse than himself, - signifies a profane state of life in which the trues of faith are comingled with the proprial will. "And the last things become worse than the first," signifies that the state is far worse than if the man had never acknowledged the interior trues of faith.

Taking the name of Jehovah thy God in vain we are also told is meant by the Words of the Lord:

"All sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy of the spirit shall not be forgiven unto men. If any one shall say a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but he who shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this age nor in that which is to come." (Matt. 12:31,32). The blasphemy of the spirit which shall not be forgiven is a life contrary to the interior things of the Word and the interior things of the trues of the Church which man has interiorly entered and acknowledged in spirit. "A word against the Son of Man which shall be forgiven" is a denial of a true or a doctrinal of the Church which a man does not see or acknowledge, from various causes; this is forgiven a man provided he acknowledges that the Word is the source of all the Divine True in the Church, and desires to enter into the spirit of the Word, and provided he acknowledges that the Holy Spirit is from the Word in the Church.

From what has been said in this series of sermons it can now be seen that the internal of the Ten Commandments has been given for the sake of the Lord's New Church, which is Nova Hierosolyma. The internal obedience to the Commandments was not possible in the Christian Church, - was not possible because they did not understand them, and the same is even true of the

General Church, for the sermons written on the Ten Commandments in the General Church clearly show that there was no understanding of their internal sense in application to the state of the New Church itself. For example if a man does not know the internal laws of regeneration and does not believe that these can be seen in actual application to the lives of the members of the Church. That is if he does not believe that the states of actual regeneration can be known he is in no danger of taking the name of Jehovah in vain, in the internal sense of the Word, for he does not know the trues and goods of faith by which regeneration takes place, and therefore cannot profane them.

The interior trues of the Word are a great blessing, for they open up possibilities that have never existed in the history of the human race, but like every blessing they involve a danger and the greater the blessing the greater the danger if the things given are misused.

In the Providence of the Lord there has been given to The Lord's New Church which is Nova Hierosolyma the most precious gift ever given to the human race, but with this gift goes the possibility of internally profaning the name of the Lord; concerning which we read: "For Jehovah will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain. That this signifies that these things cannot be forgiven." (A.C.8883)

Let us accept with all our hearts the great gift, although we are aware of the great dangers involved; a man who is unwilling to accept with all his heart the priceless gift, because it involves great dangers, has nothing heroic in him and is of little use.

If we view the Church from a human standpoint it appears like a little handful of weak men and women, and yet we know from the Word that the welfare and salvation of the human race depends upon the Lord's New Church. At present we, in the Providence of the Lord have been called to be in the function of the Church specific with its great responsibilities, and when the Lord calls men to such a function He also gives the power and ability to fulfill the responsibility, provided man will cooperate as if of himself. It is true that the Lord needs no particular group of men and that if we should fail He will raise up others who will not fail, for we know for certain that the Lord will instaurate His New Church. Nevertheless this does not take away from the great responsibility that has been conferred upon us.

When men are chosen for functions of great responsibility, if they are indifferent to the great responsibility which has been conferred upon them, and fail in their task, they are held sevenfold guilty. To illustrate if these are soldiers specially chosen to guard a king, if due to their negligence or indifference the king is assassinated they are held more guilty than any one in the kingdom.

Again, if a few soldiers are specially chosen and sent to guard a narrow pass, the taking of which would open the country to the inroads of the enemy, if from cowardliness or lack of diligence they let the enemy pass, they cannot be forgiven.

The few members of the Lord's New Church have been called and given a responsibility that is far greater than that of any king or ruler. How do we accept that responsibility? Do we accept it with all our hearts, with a serious sense of the responsibility assumed? When one accepts a high office such as a kingly office one necessarily gives up a merely personal freedom. A king's words and deeds are never merely personal for they affect and influence all in the kingdom. If a king loves the function of his office he gives up his merely private personal life, in so far as such a life does not serve the function of his exalted office. In the same way, only more so, every genuine member of the Lord's New Church, must give up his merely personal private life in so far as it does not serve the welfare of the Church and thus the welfare of the whole human race. All things of the life of the man of the Church are not merely personal things, but affect the Church, and what affects the Church affects the Church universal, that is the good in the whole human race, for the Church specific is the heart and lungs of the Church universal.

If a man or a woman is not willing to accept the great responsibility that goes with being a member of the specific Church, - The Lord's New Church which is Nova Hierosolyma, he is not a genuine member thereof. If a man does accept the responsibility he realizes that he cannot put his heart in many things that others put their heart in, even in good things, for his duties and responsibilities are too great and he cannot afford to disperse his energies. He must confine his energies to these things involved in the responsibilities he has assumed. For example he cannot give his energy and force to the external betterment and reforms of the world, for his duty to the world is through the instauration of the Church and having assumed this responsibility he cannot divide his energy; and if he does, he does both things badly.

A man indeed must perform his external function in the world sincerely and faithfully, but even in doing this he regards it as an external and necessary basis for his spiritual use.

Viewed in another way; taking the name of the Lord in vain is a dividing of the two great commandments: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself." (Luke 10:27) for those who believe the trues of faith appear to love the Lord; but if they do not actually love the neighbor they live in evil. While those who live holily appear to love the neighbor, but if they do not believe the trues of faith, so that the trues of faith change their will and understanding and thence their whole life they do not love the Lord.

AMEN

Readings: I Lev. 26:1-21
 II Luke 22:31-46
 III A.C. 8958-8969