

P.H.O.
General Doctrinal Class

by the Rt. Rev. Philip N. Odhner
January 29, 1970
Bryn Athyn, Penna.

ON THE READING OF THE WORD

"He who believes that the Word is Divine and spiritual everywhere, ought by all means, to believe that there lies hidden in the single things there an arcanum of heaven; but that hitherto it has not been known where this arcanum lies hid, is because it has not been known that the internal sense which is spiritual and Divine is in the single things there, and that there **are angels** with each man who perceive his thoughts and who grasp the Word spiritually when it is read by man; and that through them from the Lord the holy then inflows and thus that through them there is conjunction of Heaven with man, and thence the conjunction of the Lord through Heaven with man. For this cause such a Word has been to man, through which it can thus be provided for his salvation by the Lord; and not otherwise." (Arcana Coelestia 10137.)

"By revelation is meant illustration when the Word is read, and perception then; for they who are in good and desire the true, they are so taught out of the Word. But they who are not in good cannot be taught out of the Word, but can only be confirmed in such things in which they have been instructed from infancy, whether these are true or false. The cause that there is revelation to those who are in good, and no revelation to those in evil, is that all and single things in the Word in the internal sense treat of the Lord and His Kingdom, and the angels who are with man perceive the Word according to the internal sense. This is communicated to the man who is in good and who reads the Word and desires the True out of affection. Thence he has illustration and perception; for with those who are in good and thence in the affection of the true, the intellectual of the mind has been opened to heaven, and their soul, that is, their internal man, is in consort with angels." (Arcana Coelestia 8694.)

"The Word in the letter is like a casket, in which in order lie precious stones, pearls and diamonds. The man who holds the Word holy and reads it for the sake of uses of life, the thoughts of his mind are comparatively as one who holds such a casket in his hand and sends it toward Heaven; and this, in its ascent is opened, and the precious things therein come to the angels who are deeply delighted out of the sight and exploration of them. Their delight is communicated with man, and makes consociation, and also communication of perceptions. For the sake of this consociation with the angels and at the same time conjunction with the Lord, the Holy Supper has been instituted, in which the Bread in Heaven is the Divine Good, and the Wine the Divine True, both from the Lord. Such correspondence is out of Creation to the end that the Angelic Heaven might make one with the Church in the lands, and in general the Spiritual World with the natural world, and the Lord conjoin Himself with each at the same time." (True Christian Religion 238. See also A.E. 1067:3)

In any real reading of the Word there is a circle of life in which the Lord's life is given to man. In a mind which is not closed to Heaven, the sense of the letter is taken up from the Word, and then it ascends into Heaven, being seen as to its celestial and spiritual things by the angels who are with the man who is reading. Their delights and their perceptions are then communicated to the man, according to the state of the affection with which he reads. This is the circle by which the Lord's life is given through Heaven to the man of the Church. In this circle is the real function of the Word of the Lord in providing the salvation of man, the salvation of the Church, and the salvation

of the human race. Outside of this circle all reading of the Word is of no use, and indeed is an abuse of the Word. This circle of life through the reading of the Word can be with a man whether he knows of it or not, whether he is in any way conscious of it or not, provided his mind is in any way open to Heaven. But for those of this Church this order, this circle, should be acknowledged, because in the acknowledgment of it there is protection against many evil and false things.

The Word is Divine, celestial and spiritual. And in acknowledging the circle of life within it, we can acknowledge that the celestial and spiritual, the Heaven within the Word, is its real life, and that if man does not in some way receive of that Heaven in the Word, he not only receives nothing good and true from it, but is in some way abusing it.

You have all heard the expression "Spiritual out of Celestial origin," in relation to the Doctrine of the Church. Perhaps that expression has been vague as to its meaning in your mind. Inmosty, everything that comes down out of Heaven in the circle of life in the Word is spiritual out of celestial origin. It is out of Heaven, and what is out of Heaven has this in it. But in the beginning that which comes down out of Heaven to a man in the Word has not its own form. It has to descend more remotely into representative and significative forms, and work there with men. Only after much formation and development with man can that which comes down out of Heaven be in him in its own form in its effigy. That is when the man is in the internal sense of the Word, in Doctrine spiritual out of celestial origin. But we must acknowledge that all life to the man of the Church is out of the celestial and spiritual in the Word no matter what state of the Church a man is in, and no matter how lowly the form in which it is received with man.

From this we must come to the first law for the reading of the Word for the man of this Church: That he read the Word for the sake of its conjunction with Heaven and the Lord, for the sake of the Lord's life that can come down to him out of Heaven. All our reading, our hard work in studying, our sweating to understand, our reasoning, produce nothing at all of themselves unless that end is ruling. What comes to you by the Word is a Divine miracle. A man must read, study, think, even reason, but if within it there is not that sending of the sense of the letter up to Heaven, and the communication of the delights and perceptions of Heaven out of the internal sense of the Word, all the study, reasoning, understanding of the sense of the letter is worse than useless. Some filthy end of the proprium dominates in it, which holds the Word to self, and misuses everything of it.

Against this first law, and against all the laws of the reading of the Word holily, are the things that hold the Word own to self and the world in our minds, and prevent its rise to the angels of heaven. The things that hold the Word down in our minds are spoken of as follows: The lack of charity. (Cp. Arcana Coelestia 1776, 3428.) The denial of the internal sense. (3428.) The reading of it for the sake of self and the world. (A.C. 9188e.) The reading of it from self, and not from the Lord. (A.E. 1067:3.) They who read it for the glory of learning. (C.L. 128.) Those who read out of falses of doctrine. (T.C.R. 209.) They who read it to confirm falses of doctrine. (T.C.R. 258.) They who read it to acquire honors and riches and reputation. (A.C. 3428.) These things close the Word to Heaven.

In accord with this first law of reading the Word are the things which allow the Word in man to ascend to Heaven and enable a descending of the things out of Heaven to man: The Word is open to Heaven with those who love the Word and live in charity. (A.C. 1767.) With those who read the Word holily, or who are in a holy state. (A.C. 3316, 3304, 9280:3.) Those in the true of faith and in a life according to them. (A.C. 3480, 8971.) With those who are in externals and at the same time in internals. (A.C. 7012, 10400.) Those with whom the internal man is opened. (A.C. 10400.) Those who are in good. (A.C. 8694.) Those who are in affection of charity, and are delighted by interior things, and still more when they believe the holy to be in them, and still more when they grasp something of the internal sense. (A.C. 4027.) Those who acknowledge these three precepts, that there is no other God than the Lord, that from Him is all the good and true, and that salvation and eternal life are from Him, and who love that it is so. (A.C. 10638.) They who read the Word to become wise, and to form the Church with themselves. (C.L. 128.)

No doubt there are many things more said about the things that close the Word to Heaven when man reads it, or which open it to Heaven. And you can see just from those mentioned that everything that closes Heaven to your own mind will prevent the Word from rising in your mind to Heaven, and prevent the descent of anything from Heaven into you. The opening or closing of the Word to Heaven within you is not just a matter of your coming into a pious state at the moment of reading; it involves your whole life, your whole love, and the whole operation of the Lord in His Divine Providence to regenerate you.

How holy the reading of the Word can be is indicated by this, that the opening of Heaven and the reception of things out of Heaven in the reading of the Word is likened to the Holy Supper, and the Lord opening Heaven to those who approach it worthily. (T.C.R. 228, A.C. 3316.) In the holy reading there is indeed the actual giving of the food and drink of Heaven, the Body and Blood of the Lord to man.

The reading of the Word is different with men according to the state of the formation of the Church with them. In general it can be said of anything taught in the Word that the things said are first received in a most general way, as it were all jumbled together. If they are not seen in relation to the states of the Church with man there is the possibility that they are misunderstood, the man applying directly to himself things that only apply to a celestial man, or a spiritual man. As yet the Church is not in much light with regard to the states of the formation of the Church, and I will therefore limit this class to a consideration of the reading of the Word in the first state of the Church, and in the second or Noachic state of the Church, with a few things said about the reading in the state following the Advent of the Lord to a man.

The Lord, by His presence in His Divine Human in the inmost of the Word of the Third Testament, and by His presence in the soul of man, can bring man as it were above himself into the perception of the Divine in the Third Testament. This introduces man into his Adamic state, in which the Third Testament is as an open book to him, and he perceiving something of the Divine

in everything he reads in it. In the fullness of this state, because the man is in the acknowledgment of the Divine of the Lord in this Word, everything said, even about natural and worldly things, represents something of Heaven to him. It is a state of first love, with the tree of life in the center for the man. The man comes to the idea that this Word will indeed open up all things in him and all things of creation and of civilization to the Lord. This is an image of a celestial state, but it is not a celestial state, for the man is not regenerated. Heaven is open to the man in the Word right in the sense of the letter, and for a short time everything there, even the things said about history of the Churches, biological things, chemistry, different nations, all, reflect something of Heaven. But the state soon changes. Without the man's knowing it his old will begins to emerge and mix itself with all things of the Word. The tree of the science of good and evil comes to be the center, and not the tree of life. Heaven begins to depart from the man in that reading because he supposes that he can come into the celestial and spiritual things of the Word directly by his reasoning on the external or scientifics of the Word. So the man is left in his reading with the things meant by the curse on Adam and his wife, with the reading producing nothing out of Heaven, but from self the thorns and the thistles and the eating of bread in the sweat of the countenance, and the bringing forth with pain and sorrow.

In that first reading of the Word it is as if there were no laws for the reading, because everything on a certain sensual plane is open to Heaven. But in the following or Noachic state, in which man is rescued from the downfall of that first state, things are very different. For this state it is necessary to know and acknowledge that there is an internal in the Word, a Heaven in the Word, which is not open to man, and which can only be opened by the Coming of the Lord to man, that is, by the opening of a new internal, a spiritual mind, in him. For this state there must be laws to keep the mind in relation to Heaven in the reading. There is no longer the possibility of being in relation to Heaven in all things of the sense of the letter, because the evil of man's will is active in such things, pouring phantasies of every kind into the understanding. Man has to enter the confined space of the ark, protected from his cupidities and phantasies, or he in his reading will be swept away from all contact with Heaven in the flood of them.

For this man to be in the circle of life within the Word there has to be laws to which he most carefully adheres.

First: The acknowledgment that there is an internal sense, Heaven itself, the celestial and spiritual, in everything in the Word must dominate in him.

Second: The acknowledgment that the Word is given solely for the reformation and regeneration of man must dominate in him. Nothing is there said for any other purpose.

Third: Any supposition that he is in the things of the internal sense of the Word, or in the good and true of that sense must be removed. He must see that he is in the sense of the letter, and that this is given to prepare him to come to the internal sense, under the leading of the Lord.

Fourth: While he must learn the sense of the letter, he must not allow his mind to be dragged off into merely worldly things or into philosophical things by it. If what the Word says leads him off into archeological speculations, into mere correspondences and the pseudo sciences based on them, into theories of evolution, into speculations about the earth in the universe or astronomy, into a thousand and one such merely worldly things, he will be dragged back into the phantasies of the fall of his first state of the Church.

Fifth: He must see that he is not in the internal sense, not only where the Word treats of worldly things, but also where it treats directly of the Lord and Heaven, of the Divine Human, of the Divine Trinity, and such inmost things, and where it treats of love, faith, charity, and regeneration itself. He must learn what the Word says about all these things with great care, as also he must read what it says of natural things, but with the acknowledgment that with him as yet there cannot be the disposition into a heavenly, a celestial and spiritual order, of all those things, whereby he is in the internal sense of the Word.

Sixth: He must acknowledge that in the internal sense of the Word, one man is being treated of, and that all things that are said in the sense of the letter about the heavens and hells and about the Most Ancients, Ancients, Hebrews, Jews, Protestants and Catholics, and all said about persons, refer in their internal sense to the things that are or will be present in the man of the Church in his formation. If he reads and thinks about these things in any other way, he is going to fall into suppositions about himself that are phantasies.

Seventh: The charity which can bring the Word open in this state is essentially the acknowledgment of what he of himself is, the humiliation of himself before the Coming Lord as the source of all the genuine good and true.