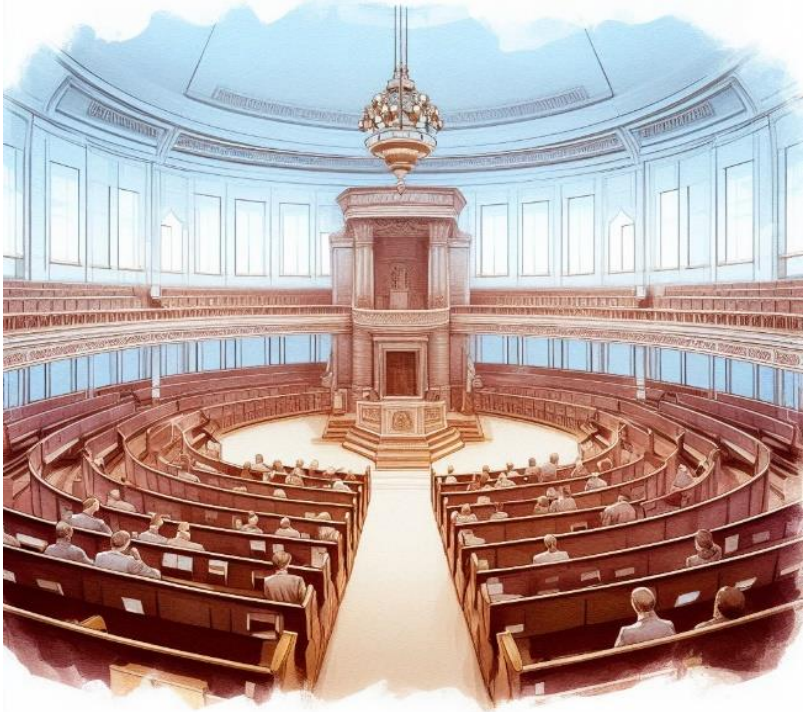


Memorable Relations—Week 4

Memorable Relations about Angels and Heaven



“The temple was huge, capable of holding about three thousand people. It was semicircular, with benches or pews arranged around in circular fashion following the contour of the temple, and the seats in back were higher than those in front. The pulpit was in front of the seats, placed a little way back from the center.”

Conjugal Love 23

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A Memorable Relation about Use in Heaven

CL 207. After some time, I was looking towards the city of Athenaeum, of which something was said in a former Relation, and heard from there an unusual clamor. There was something of laughter in it, within this something of indignation, and in this somewhat of sadness; and yet the cry was not therefore discordant, but harmonious, because one quality was not accompanying but within another. In the spiritual world the variety and commingling of affections in sound are distinctly perceived. I asked from a distance, “What is the matter?” And they said:

“A messenger has come from the place where newcomers from the Christian world first appear, saying that he had heard, from three in that place, that in the world from which they came, they believed with others there that the blessed and happy after death would have entire rest from labors; and, as administrations, offices, and employments are labors, that they would have rest from these.”

[2] ...The elders, or wiser ones, were seated at the sides in the auditorium, the rest in the middle, and in front of them was a raised platform. To this the three strangers, with the messenger, were conducted by the younger men in formal procession through the middle of the auditorium. And when silence had been obtained, they were greeted by a certain elder there and asked:

“What news from Earth?”

They answered, “There are many new things. But tell us, please, on what subject?”

The elder replied, “What is the news from Earth about our world and about heaven?”

They answered, “When we first came into this world we heard that here and in heaven there are administrations, ministries, employment, business, studies in all kinds of learning, and wonderful works. And yet we have believed that after removal or transition from the natural to this spiritual world, we would come into eternal rest from labors; and what are employments but labors?”

DAY ONE: HEAVEN IS NOT IDLENESS

[3] To this the elder replied, “By eternal rest from labors did you understand eternal idleness, in which you would continually sit and lie down, inhaling delights into your bosoms, and drinking in joys with the mouth?” The three strangers, smiling blandly, said that they had supposed something of the kind, and then it was answered them:

“What do joys and delights and the happiness from them in common with idleness? By idleness the mind collapses, and is not expanded, and a man is rendered dead, not enlivened. Suppose someone were sitting in complete idleness, hands down, eyes cast down or withdrawn, and suppose that at the same time he were surrounded by an atmosphere of gladness, would he not be overcome, head and body, with drowsiness? Would not the lively expansion of his face cease? And at length with fibers relaxed would he not nod and nod until he fell to the earth? What keeps the whole bodily system in expansion and tension but intentness of mind? And where does intentness of mind come from but from administrations and work, when done with enjoyment? Let me, therefore, tell you some news from heaven: there are administrations and ministries there, and courts of justice, higher and lower, and also trades and employments.”

[4] When the three newcomers heard that there are higher and lower courts of justice in heaven, they said, “Why do they have them? Are not all in heaven inspired and led by God? And do they not therefore know what is just and right? What need for judges then?”

The elder man replied, “In this world we are instructed and learn what is good and true, and what is just and equitable, in like manner as in the natural world; and we learn it not immediately from God, but mediately through others. And every angel, just as every man, thinks truth and does good as if of himself, and this, according to the state of the angel, is mixed and not pure. There are also among the angels the simple and the wise, and the wise must judge, when the simple from simplicity and ignorance are in doubt about what is just or swerve from it. But as you have newly come

DAY ONE: HEAVEN IS NOT IDLENESS

into this world, if it is your pleasure, follow me into our city and we will show you everything.'

[5] And they left the auditorium, and some of the elders also accompanied them. They went first into a great library, which was divided into smaller libraries, according to the sciences. The three new-comers were amazed at seeing so many books, and said:

“There are also books in this world! Where are the parchments and the paper from? Where [do you get] the pens and ink?”

To this the elder replied, “All things here are substantial, not material; and material things derive their origin from the substantial. We who are here are spiritual men because [we are] substantial and not material. This is why all things that are in the natural world are here in their perfection, even books and writings and many more things.”

When the three newcomers heard the things called substantial, they believed that they were so, both because they saw the written books, and because they heard the statement that material things originate from things substantial. That they might be still further assured, they were taken to the dwellings of the scribes who were making copies of the original writings of the wise men of the city. And they inspected the writings and admired their neatness and elegance.

[6] After this they were conducted to museums, gymnasiums, and colleges, and to where their literary sports were held.... The so-called sports were spiritual exercises and trials of skill. Afterwards they were conducted around the city, to the rulers, the administrators, and their subordinate officers, and by them to the wonderful productions that are made by artisans in a spiritual manner.

[7] After seeing all these things, the elder spoke with them again of the eternal rest from labor into which the blessed and happy come after death, and said:

“Eternal rest is not inactivity; for from inactivity come languor, torpidity, stupor, and drowsiness of the mind and thence of the

DAY ONE: HEAVEN IS NOT IDLENESS

whole body, and these are death not life, still less the eternal life in which the angels of heaven are. Eternal rest, then, is rest that dispels [states] these and makes man live; and this is no other rest than such as elevates the mind. It is, therefore, some study and work by which the mind is aroused, enlivened, and delighted; and this takes place according to the use from which, in which, and for which [the mind] is working. Hence it is that the whole heaven is seen by the Lord as containing uses, and every angel is an angel according to his use. The enjoyment of use carries him along as a favoring current does a ship, and causes him to be in eternal peace, and in the rest of peace. This is meant by eternal rest from labors. That an angel is alive according to the eagerness of his mind from use, is very plain from the fact that every angel has conjugal love, with its virtue, its potency, and its delights, according to his eager application to the genuine use in which he is.'

[8] When the three newcomers were well assured that eternal rest is not idleness, but the enjoyment of some work that is of use, a number of virgins came with pieces of embroidery and sewing, the work of their own hands, and gave these to them. And as the newcomer spirits departed, the virgins sang a song, by which, in angelic melody, they expressed the affection of the works of use with its pleasures.

Questions and Comments

1. Eternal rest is not idleness. Despite knowing this, many of us will still try to fill our *rest* on earth with things that make us more *dead*, not alive. Have you ever watched TV for a few hours (or more) hoping that you would feel revitalized, only to feel more sluggish?
2. The newcomers are asked if they thought eternal rest meant idleness. Note that they smile and perhaps laugh, admitting that they did. We could all learn from them about positively responding to truth and laughing at our previous false notions.

DAY TWO: THE SABBATH IN HEAVEN

A Memorable Relation about the Sabbath in Heaven

CL 23. At dawn they heard a proclamation, “Today is the Sabbath.” And they arose, and asked the angel what that was. He answered, “It is for the worship of God, which recurs at stated times and is proclaimed by the priests. It is celebrated in our temples, and continues about two hours. Come with me, therefore, if you like, and I will take you there. And they made ready and went with the angel and entered. And behold! a large temple, capable of containing about three thousand, semi-circular, with benches or seats extending around in a continuous sweep, according to the form of the temple, the rear seats more elevated than those in front. The pulpit before them was a little back from the center. The door was behind the pulpit at the left. The ten newcomers went in with their angel guide, and the angel assigned them the places where they were to sit, saying to them, “Everyone who enters the temple knows his place. He knows it from a something within and cannot sit elsewhere. If he sits in any other place he hears nothing and perceives nothing; and he also disturbs order, and because of this disturbance, the priest is not inspired.”

CL 24. When the congregation was assembled, the priest ascended the pulpit and preached a sermon full of the spirit of wisdom. The sermon was on the holiness of the Sacred Scripture, and on the conjunction of the Lord both with the spiritual world and the natural world by means of it. In the state of enlightenment in which he was, he fully proved that this Holy Book was dictated by Jehovah, the Lord; and that therefore, He is in it, even so that He is the wisdom in it; but that the wisdom, which is Himself in it, lies concealed beneath the sense of the letter, and is only opened to those who are in truths of doctrine and at the same time in goods of life, and so are in the Lord and the Lord in them. To the sermon he added a reverent prayer, and descended. The audience having departed, the angel requested the priest to speak a few words of peace with his ten companions; and he came to them, and they conversed for about half an hour.

DAY TWO: THE SABBATH IN HEAVEN

He spoke of the Divine Trinity, that it is in Jesus Christ in whom dwells all the fulness of Divinity bodily, according to the declaration of the Apostle Paul. And afterwards he spoke of the union of charity and faith, but he said the union of charity and truth, because faith is truth.

HH 221. DIVINE WORSHIP IN HEAVEN. Divine worship in the heavens is not unlike Divine worship on the earth in externals, but in internals it is different. In the heavens, as on the earth, there are doctrines, preachings, and church edifices. In essentials the doctrines there are everywhere the same; but in the higher heavens they contain more interior wisdom than in the lower. The preachings are in harmony with the doctrines; and as they have houses and palaces, so they also have church edifices, in which there is preaching.

HH 222. I have talked with angels on this subject and told them that it is believed in the world that Divine worship consists solely in attending church, listening to the preaching, observing the sacrament of the Supper three or four times a year, and performing other acts of worship according to the requirements of the church; also devoting special times to prayers, and at such times, behaving devoutly. The angels said that these are outward acts that *ought to be done*, but are of no avail unless there is an internal from which they proceed, which is a life in accordance with the precepts that doctrine teaches.

Questions and Comments

1. HH 221 says that worship in heaven looks similar to worship on earth. The difference is what is going on inside of the people worshipping.
2. The Doctrine is clear that internal worship is important. This is the life we live according to the Word. But the Doctrine is also clear that external worship ought to be done too. Things like going to church, listening to sermons, taking holy supper are all external things and are still important.

DAY THREE: THE EFFECT OF GARMENTS AND SPEECH

Garments Change the Way People Think and Speak

TCR 663. I was once in the midst of angels and heard their conversation. It was about intelligence and wisdom, to the effect that man has no other feeling or perception than that these are in himself, and therefore that whatever he wills and thinks is from himself, and yet no least part of these is from man except the ability to receive them. Among other things that they said was this, that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the garden of Eden, signified the belief that intelligence and wisdom are from man; and that the tree of life signified that intelligence and wisdom are from God; and because Adam by the persuasion of the serpent ate of the former tree, believing that thus he had become or would become as God, he was driven out of the garden and condemned.

[2] While the angels were engaged in this conversation, there came two priests and also a man who in the world had been a royal ambassador, and I told them what I had heard about intelligence and wisdom from the angels. On hearing these things, the three began to dispute about them, and also about prudence, whether they were from God or from man. The dispute was heated. The three believed alike that they were from man, because this is the testimony of sensation itself and of perception from it. But the priests, who at the time were influenced by theological zeal, insisted that nothing of intelligence or wisdom, and therefore nothing of prudence, is from man, and this they confirmed by the following passages from the Word:

A man can take nothing, except it be given him from heaven (John 3:27).

Also by this: Jesus said to His disciples, Without Me ye are unable to do anything (John 15:5).

[3] Then, because the angels perceived that although the priests talked so, they still in heart believed the same as the royal ambassador, they said to them, “Lay aside your garments, and put on the garments of ministers of state, and believe that you are such.” They did so; and then they thought from their interior selves, and spoke according to the opinions which they inwardly

DAY THREE: THE EFFECT OF GARMENTS AND SPEECH

cherished, which were, that all intelligence and wisdom dwell in man and are his; and they said, “Who has ever felt the influx of these from God?” And they looked at one another and were convinced.

It is peculiar to the spiritual world that a spirit thinks himself to be such as his dress is. This is because in that world the understanding clothes everyone.

[4] At that moment a tree appeared near them, and it was said to them, “That is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; be careful not to eat of it.” Nevertheless, infatuated by their own intelligence, they burned with the lust to eat of it, and said to one another, “Why not? Is it not good fruit?” And they drew near and ate of it.

When the royal ambassador observed this he joined them, and they became hearty friends; and holding each other by the hand they together went the way of their own intelligence which tended towards hell. But I saw them brought back from there because they were not yet prepared.

Questions and Comments

1. Have you ever experienced a dramatic change in your thinking because of the clothes you wear? Do you think differently in a suit as opposed to athletic shorts?
2. Some research suggests that academics are improved by dressing up for school or work. Also, that behavior tends to be worse when dressed casually. Perhaps the spiritual effect of garments plays a role in these earthly effects.

Angels and Spirits Engage in a Debate about the Lord, Faith and Christian Doctrine

TCR 137. I heard that a synod had been convoked of those celebrated for their writings and learning in respect to the faith of the present day and the justification of the elect thereby. This was in the world of spirits; and it was granted me to be present in spirit; and I saw an assembly of the clergy, both those of like belief and those of differing beliefs. On the right stood those who were called in the world the Apostolic Fathers, who had lived in the centuries preceding the Nicene Council. On the left stood men renowned in the following centuries for their printed or manuscript works. Many of these latter had no beards, and wore curled wigs made of women's hair, and some of them wore ruffled collars with points; while the former had beards and wore their natural hair.

In front of them all stood a man, a judge and a critic of the writings of the present century, with a staff in his hand. He struck the floor and caused silence. He then ascended the upper step of the pulpit and breathed out a sigh, and wished to follow it up by a loud exclamation; but the sighing breath kept back the sound in his throat.

[2] At length he spoke and said, "O what an age, my brethren! There has risen up from the herd of the laity one having neither gown, tiara, nor laurel, who has plucked our faith from heaven and hurled it into the Styx. O horrible! And yet that faith alone is our star, shining like Orion in the night, and like Lucifer in the morning. That man, though advanced in years, is wholly blind to the mysteries of our faith, because he has not investigated it and seen in it the righteousness of the Lord our Savior and His mediation and propitiation. And as he has not seen these, neither has he seen the wonders of its justification, which are the remission of sins, regeneration, sanctification, and salvation. This man, in place of our faith—which, being a faith in three Divine persons and therefore in the whole Deity, is saving to the utmost—has transferred faith to the second person; yet not even to Him, but to His Human, which we call Divine because of the incarnation of the

DAY FOUR: ANGELS AND SPIRITS ENGAGE IN DEBATE

Son from eternity; but is there anyone who thinks of it as anything more than merely human? From this what else can result but a faith from which naturalism flows as from a fountain? And such a faith, not being spiritual, differs but little from faith in a pope or in a saint. You know what Calvin said in his time about worship from that kind of faith. And pray tell me, anyone of you, where does faith come from. Must it not be directly from God to thus have in it all things of salvation?"

[3] At this his companions on the left, who had shaven faces, curly wigs, and collars around their necks, clapped their hands and shouted, "You have spoken most wisely. We know that we can take nothing that is not given us from heaven. If this is not faith, let that prophet tell us where faith comes from, and what it is. It cannot be anything else or from any other source. To set forth any faith that is a faith, other than this, is as impossible as for one to ride on horseback to some constellation in heaven, and to take a star from it and hide it in his pocket and bring it down." This they said to make their companions laugh at any new belief.

[4] Hearing this, the men on the right, who had bearded chins and wore their natural hair, were indignant. And one of them rose up, an old man, although he afterwards looked like a young man, for he was an angel from heaven, where those of all ages become youthful. And he spoke and said, "I have heard what your faith is, which the man in the pulpit has so magnified. But what is such a faith but our Lord's sepulcher after the resurrection, when it had been closed again by Pilate's soldiers? I have explored it and have seen nothing in it but the conjurer's rods with which the magicians in Egypt wrought miracles. Indeed, outwardly your faith in your eyes is like a shrine of molten gold set with precious stones, but when opened it is found empty, except, perhaps, for a little dust in the corners from Papal relics, since that church has the same faith; only with them at the present day it is overlaid with external sanctities. Your faith, if I may indulge in further comparisons, is like a vestal virgin among the ancients who has been buried alive for letting the sacred fire go out. And I can assure you that in my eyes it is like the golden calf around which the children of Israel

DAY FOUR: ANGELS AND SPIRITS ENGAGE IN DEBATE

danced when Moses had gone away, and had ascended Mount Sinai to Jehovah. Do not be surprised that I use such comparisons in speaking of your faith, for so we speak of it in heaven.

[5] “Our faith on the other hand is, was, and forever will be, a faith in the Lord God the Savior, whose Human is Divine and whose Divine is Human. Thus it is adapted to reception, and by it the Divine spiritual is united to the natural of man, and a spiritual faith is formed in the natural, and from the spiritual light in which our faith is, the natural becomes as it were transparent. The truths of which our faith consists are as many as the verses in the sacred Volume. The truths are all like stars, which by their light make the faith manifest and give it form. Man acquires this faith from the Word by means of his natural light; in this light it is knowledge, thought, and persuasion. But the Lord causes it, in those who believe in Him, to become conviction, trust, and confidence. Thus faith becomes spiritual-natural, and by means of charity becomes living. With us this faith is like a queen adorned with precious stones, as numerous as those in the wall of the holy Jerusalem (Revelation 21:17-20).

[6] “But lest you look upon what I have said as mere boasting and worthy of little regard, I will read to you some passages from the Holy Word, from which it will be evident that our faith is not faith in a man, as you suppose, but in the true God, in whom is the entire Divine. John says that:

Jesus Christ is the true God, and eternal life (1 John 5:20).

Paul says that:

In Christ dwells all the fullness of the Divinity bodily (Colossians 2:9); and in the Acts of the Apostles:

That he preached both to Jews and to Greeks repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ (20:21).

And the Lord Himself says:

That there was given to Him all power in heaven and in earth (Matthew 28:18).

“These are but a few of such passages.”

DAY FOUR: ANGELS AND SPIRITS ENGAGE IN DEBATE

[8] I turned to the president and said, “I know that all here present are associated with their like in the natural world. Tell me, please, do you know with whom you are associated?”

He answered in a grave tone, “I do. I am associated with a celebrated man, a leader of a host in the army of illustrious men in the church.” As he answered in so grave a tone I said, “Pardon me if I ask whether you know where that celebrated leader lives.” He answered, “I do. He lives not far from the tomb of Luther.” At this I smiled and said, “Why do you mention the tomb? Do you not know that Luther has risen, and has now renounced his erroneous ideas of justification by faith in three Divine persons from eternity, and therefore has been placed among the blessed in the new heaven, and sees and laughs at those who run mad after him?”

He replied, “I know, but what is that to me?” I then addressed him in a grave tone like his own, saying, “Inspire your celebrated man with whom you are associated with this, whether there is not reason to fear that in writing as he did against the worship of our Lord and Savior, he at the same time robbed the Lord of His Divinity, contrary to the orthodoxy of his church, or allowed his pen to plough a furrow in which he thoughtlessly sowed naturalism.”

[11] “I ask still further, What else was the damnable heresy of Arius, on account of whom the Nicene Council was convened by the Emperor Constantine the Great, than his denial of the Divinity of the Lord’s Human? Tell me, moreover, whom you understand by these words in Jeremiah:

Behold, the days come that I will raise unto David a just Branch, and He shall reign as King, and this is His name: Jehovah our Justice (23:5, 6; 33:15, 16).

“If you say a Son born from eternity, you are irrational. That was not the Redeemer. But if you say the Son born in time, who was the only-begotten Son of God (John 1:18; 3:16), you say rightly. He through redemption became the justice upon which you build your faith. Read also Isaiah 9:6, besides other passages in which it is foretold that Jehovah Himself would come into the world.”

DAY FOUR: ANGELS AND SPIRITS ENGAGE IN DEBATE

At this the president was silent and turned away.

[12] When all this had occurred the president wished to dismiss the synod with a prayer. But just then a man started up from the company on the left, with a turban on his head and a cap over the turban. And he touched his cap with his finger, and said, "I also am associated with a man in your world, who there occupies a position of great honor. I know this because I speak from him as from myself."

I asked where that eminent man lived. He answered, "At Gottenburg. And from him I at one time thought that your new doctrines smacked of Mohammedanism." I saw that on hearing this all those on the right, where the Apostolic Fathers stood, were thunderstruck, and their countenances changed, and I heard such exclamations as these issuing from their minds through their mouths, "O horrible!" "O what an age!"

But to calm their just indignation I stretched forth my hand and begged a hearing. This being granted, I said, "I know that a man of that eminence wrote something of the kind in a letter which was afterwards printed. But if he had then known what blasphemy it was, he would certainly have torn the letter to pieces and thrown it into the fire. A slander like that is meant by the Lord's words to the Jews, when they said that Christ wrought miracles by other than Divine power (Matthew 12:22-32); and in addition to this the Lord there says:

He that is not with Me is against Me, and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth abroad" (Matt. 12:30).

At these words the countenance of the associate spirit fell. But presently he looked up and said, "I have now heard worse things from you than ever."

But I continued, "There are two items in this charge—naturalism and Mohammedanism. They are wicked lies and crafty inventions, and two deadly stigmas, designed to turn aside the wills of men and to deter them from the holy worship of the Lord." And I turned to the latter associate spirit and said, "Tell the man at Gottenburg,

DAY FOUR: ANGELS AND SPIRITS ENGAGE IN DEBATE

if you can, to read what is said by the Lord in Revelation 3:18 and also in 2:16.”

[13] At these remarks a tumult arose; but it was quieted by light sent down from heaven, in consequence of which many of those on the left passed over to those on the right, those only remaining who thought superficially, and therefore depended on the word of some master, also those who thought of the Word as merely human. From both of these classes the light that went down from heaven appeared to be thrown back, but to fall upon those who had passed over from the left to the right.

Questions and Comments

1. Rev. 2:16 says: “Repent; otherwise I will come to thee quickly, and will fight among them with the sword of My mouth.”
2. Rev. 3:18 says: “I counsel thee to buy of Me gold fired in the fire that thou mayest be rich; and white garments that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness may not be made manifest; and anoint thine eyes with eye salve that thou mayest see.”
3. We read that one of the spirits was connected with someone “at Gottenburg; and from him I at one time thought that your new doctrines smacked of Mohammedanism.” Gottenburg was where the heresy trials were held against the works of Swedenborg. Swedenborg was not personally tried, but the works he had penned were.

DAY FIVE: EVERY GIRL IN HEAVEN

Passages Regarding the Reception of Clothes, Gardens and Coins in Heaven

CSW 5660. HOW MAIDENS ARE EDUCATED IN THE OTHER LIFE AND IN HEAVEN.

Three, four, or five, are kept together, and each one has her own room, and in it her bed. Near that is a tiny little closet for their clothes and for necessaries. There is also given them a cupboard, with cases or drawers, so that they may put away in them things which they value. In these they take much delight, and store such things up in them.

CSW 5661. They are always kept at their work, which is embroidery worked on white linen. They embroider flowers and such things; and the things they produce by their labor are either for their own use, or they give them to others; they do not sell them.

CSW 5662. These groups [of 3, 4, or 5], unawares to themselves, receive garments with which they clothe themselves every day; a better garment for feast days.

CSW 5663. And they also have a little garden, and as long as they are maidens, there are only flowers in them, but no fruits until they become wives.

CSW 5664. When they see spots on their clothes, it is a sign that they have been thinking ill, and that they have done something which ought not to be done. The spots cannot be washed out, as from clothes in the world. When they find out what they have thought and done—for, at such a time, they always think about that—they then see their blemishes and their evils. If they then get the better of them again, the spots disappear from the clothes of their own accord. In like manner, when they see in their chamber that any one of their clothes is missing, they then immediately know that they have done amiss. Hence is their self-examination; and, if they do not themselves know [what is wrong], a wife comes, who tells them. If they see that there is a new garment in

DAY FIVE: EVERY GIRL IN HEAVEN

their closet, then they inwardly rejoice, because they know that they have done well.

CSW 5665. When, also, they see that the flowers in their little gardens become dim, or change into worse ones, their attention is arrested; if into better and more beautiful ones, they rejoice, because it is a token that they have thought well.

CSW 5666. Also, there are given them coins of silver or of gold. These they carefully treasure up, because they are tokens of industry or of virtue. They have the written Word and Psalters, and they take them with them to the preachings. They likewise read in them; and if they do not read, either some garment is taken away, or the little garden disappears.

CSW 5667. The preachers sometimes visit and examine them.

Questions and Comments

1. Did you grow up singing the song, “Every child in heaven”? For many, there is a fond affection for the song even though they don’t even realize they are singing a memorable relation!
2. CSW 5661 states that in heaven they don’t sell their handwork projects but only give them away or keep them for themselves. Do you think this is a practice of heaven that *can* be done on earth? Or is this one better left for the next life?
3. Perhaps it is fair to say that giving gifts freely feels better than selling them, even though that is not always feasible on earth. Perhaps we would be happier if we could give various handwork projects away for free, even though we may not be able to afford to in this world.

A Discussion with Angels Who Dispel False Notions of the Afterlife

TCR 160. [2] While we were talking together in this way I saw in the north a leveled way, so crowded with spirits that there was scarcely room to step between any two; and I said to the angels that I had already seen this way, with spirits thronging it like an army; and that I had heard that this is the way by which all pass when departing from the natural world. And the way is covered with such a vast number of spirits because many thousands of men die every week, and after death they all pass into this world.

The angels added, “This road terminates in the middle of this world where we now are—in the middle, because on the sides towards the east there are societies who are in love to God and love towards the neighbor, and to the left towards the west societies of those who are opposed to these loves; while in front towards the south are societies of those who are more intelligent than the others. This is why the newcomers from the natural world move first to this point. When here, they are in the externals in which they had last been in the former world. Afterwards they are gradually let into their internals, and their characters are examined; and after the examination the good are borne to their places in heaven and the evil to theirs in hell.”

[3] We stopped at the middle point, at the termination of this way of entrance, and we said, “Let us wait here awhile and talk with some of the newcomers.” And from those approaching we picked out twelve who, having just come from the natural world, did not know but that they were in it still. We asked them their views of heaven and hell and the life after death.

One replied, “Our sacred order impressed upon me the belief that we are to live after death, and that there is a heaven and a hell. And therefore I have believed that all who live a moral life go to heaven. And as all do live a moral life, that no one goes to hell, and therefore that hell is a fable manufactured by the clergy to frighten men from evil living. What does it matter whether I think about God in this way or that? Thought is only chaff, as it were, or like a bubble on the water that bursts and passes away.”

DAY SIX: ANGELS DISPEL FALSE NOTIONS OF THE AFTERLIFE

Another near him said, “It is my belief that there is a heaven and a hell, and that God rules heaven and the devil rules hell. And as they are enemies, and therefore opposed to each other, one calls evil what the other calls good. Also, that a moral man who is a dissembler, and who can make evil look like good and good like evil, will side with both parties. What, then, does it matter whether I am on the side of one Lord or the other, providing He favors me? Good and evil are equally delightful to men.”

[4] A third, standing beside him, said, “Of what consequence is it to me to believe that there is a heaven and a hell? For who has come from either place and told us of them? If every man lives after death, why, out of so vast a multitude, has no one come back and told us?”

Next came a fourth, who said, “I will tell you why no one has come back and told us. It is because when a man breathes his last and dies, he either becomes a ghost and is dissipated, or is like the breath of the mouth, which is merely wind....”

The fifth took up the matter and said, “Friends, wait till the day of the last judgment, for all will then return into their bodies, and you will see and talk with them, and each one will tell his fate to the other.”

[5] A sixth, standing opposite, laughed and said, “How can the spirit, which is wind, return into a body that has been eaten up by worms, and into its skeleton that has been dried up by the sun and has crumbled into dust? Or how is an Egyptian, who has been made a mummy and mixed by a quack with extracts or emulsions into a potion or powder, to come back and tell anything?”

After him a seventh said, “If I believed in a heaven and a hell, and therefore in a life after death, I would also believe that birds and beasts live after death likewise.... What is man but an animal?”

An eighth, standing at his back, came forward and said, “Believe in a heaven if you will, but I do not believe in any hell. Is not God omnipotent and able to save everybody?”

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[6] Then a ninth, caressing his hand, said, “God is not only omnipotent, He is also gracious, and cannot send anyone into eternal fire; and if anyone is there, He cannot but take him out and raise him up.”

A tenth ran out of his place into the midst and said, “Neither do I believe in a hell. Did not God send His Son, and did He not make expiation for the sins of the whole world and take them away? What can the devil do against that? And as he can do nothing, what then is hell?”

An eleventh, who was a priest, took fire at hearing this, and said, “Do you not know that those who have attained to the faith on which Christ’s merit is inscribed are saved, and that those do attain to that faith whom God chooses?”

The twelfth, who was a politician, kept silent; but being asked to crown the replies, he said, “From my own thought I will not say anything about heaven and hell and the life after death, since no one knows anything about them. Nevertheless, you should not blame the priests for preaching them, for in that way the minds of the common people are kept bound by an invisible bond to the laws and to their rulers. Does not the public welfare depend upon this?”

[7] We were amazed to hear such things as these, and we said to each other, “Although these go by the name of Christians they are neither men nor beasts, but they are men-beasts.” However, to arouse them from their sleep we said, “There is a heaven and a hell and a life after death. Of this you will be convinced when we have dispelled your ignorance of the state of life in which you now are. During the first few days after death, no one knows but that he is still living in the same world in which he lived before, for the time that has passed is like a sleep, on being awakened from which he had no other feeling than that he still is where he was before. So it is with you now, and therefore you have been speaking just as you thought in the former world.”

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The angels then dispelled their ignorance; and they saw that they were in another world, and among those with whom they were not acquainted. And they cried out, “O where are we?” We said, “You are no longer in the natural world, but in the spiritual world, and we are angels.” Then, being quite awake, they said, “If you are angels, show us heaven.” We replied, “Wait here a little, and we will return.” And returning after half an hour we found them waiting for us, and we said, “Follow us into heaven.” They did so, and we went up with them, and because we were with them the guards opened the gate and admitted us. And we said to those who receive newcomers at the entrance, “Examine these men.”

And they turned them around and saw that the back parts of their heads were quite hollow. They then said to them, “Go away from here, for there is in you the delight of the love of doing evil. Therefore you are not in conjunction with heaven; for in your heads you have denied God and have despised religion.” And we said to them, “Do not delay, or you will be cast out.” So they hurried down and departed.

Questions and Comments

1. There are 12 different opinions offered about the life after death. Of the 12, which was the closest to your understanding of the Doctrine? Which was the most distant or damaging idea presented?
2. One erroneous idea is that there is no hell. Not only does the Doctrine roundly refute this idea, but there are also some examples that perhaps can help us understand why. If we are really to be free, the possibility of evil and hell needs to be present. If no one can go to hell, then heaven isn't a choice. If following the Commandments is insufferable to you, you would just get stuck in heaven miserably wanting to break them.