

Memorable Relations—Week 6

Memorable Relations about a Variety of Subjects



“The fear of the Jehovah
is the beginning of wisdom.”
(Psalm 111:10)

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Greed and Avarice Depicted

CL 267. I entered a certain grove and was walking around there, in meditation on those who are in the lust and thence in the fantasy of possessing the things which are of the world, when at some distance from me I saw two angels conversing together, and by turns looking at me. Therefore I went nearer, and as I approached they spoke to me and said, “We perceive within us that you are meditating on what we are saying....”

[2] And so I asked them what was the subject of their conversation. They said they were speaking of fantasy, of lust, and of intelligence, and just now about those who delight themselves with the vision and imagination of possessing all things in the world. I then asked them to express their minds on those three, lust, fantasy, and intelligence.

Beginning their conversation, they said that everyone is interiorly in lust from birth, but exteriorly in intelligence by education. And no one is in intelligence interiorly, that is in spirit, except from the Lord. “For everyone is withheld from the lust of evil and kept in intelligence according to his looking to the Lord and at the same time conjunction with Him. Without this, man is nothing but lust; but still in externals, or as to the body, he is in intelligence from education. For man lusts after honors and riches, or eminence and wealth, and he does not attain these two unless he appears moral and spiritual, thus intelligent and wise; and therefore, from infancy he learns to appear so....

[3] “Hence every man who is not inwardly led by the Lord is a dissembler, a deceiver, a hypocrite, and thus an apparent man and yet not a man. Of him it may be said that his shell or body is wise and his kernel or spirit insane, and that his external is human and his internal bestial.... They who are in the love of the world desire to possess all things of it, and they grieve and are envious if any of its treasures lie hidden with any others. To the end therefore, that such people may not become mere lusts, and thus not human, it is given them in the natural world to think from fear of the loss of reputation, and thus of honor and gain, and also from fear of the

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law and its penalty. And it is also given them to apply the mind to some study or occupation, by which they are kept in their externals, and thus in a state of intelligence, however delirious and insane they are inwardly.”

[4] “...Into this delirium a man is let after death who has withdrawn his spirit from the body, and who was not willing to withdraw from the delight of the delirium by thinking anything from religion about evils and falsities, and still less anything about the unbridled love of self, that it is destructive of love of the Lord, and about the unbridled love of the world, that it is destructive of love towards the neighbor.”

CL 268. After this a desire came upon the two angels and also on me to see those who from love of the world are in the visionary lust or fantasy of the possession of all riches. Consequently we looked at each other and said, “Let's go.” Their abodes were under the earth beneath our feet, yet above hell. And an opening appeared and a stairway there. By this we descended....

[2] And behold, there appeared a dwelling constructed of reeds, and thus full of chinks, standing in a thick cloud which flowed continually, like smoke, through the chinks of three of the sides. We entered and saw fifty here and fifty there sitting on benches. And being turned away from the east and south, they looked towards the west and north. In front of each one was a table, and on the table bulging purses, and around the purses an abundance of gold coins.

We asked them, “Are these the riches of all in the world?” They said, “Not of all in the world, but of all in the kingdom.” Their speech had a hissing sound. They appeared to have round faces, which had a reddish glow like a snail-shell; and the pupils of their eyes glittered as it were on a field of green, which was from the light of fantasy. We stood in the midst of them and asked, “Do you believe that you possess all the riches of the kingdom?” They responded, “We do possess them.” Then we asked, “Which of you?” They answered: “Each one.” And we asked, “How [can] each one? You are many.” They said, “Each one of us knows that

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all his are mine. It is not permitted anyone to think, still less to say ‘Mine are not yours,’ but he may think and say ‘Yours are mine.’”

The coins on the table appeared as of pure gold, even to us. But when we let in light from the east, they were little grains of gold which by common united fantasy they thus magnified. They said that everyone who entered there had to bring some gold with him, which they divide into small bits, and these into little grains, which by the unanimous power of fantasy they enlarge into coins of larger form.

[3] Then we said, “Were you not born men of reason? Where did you get this visionary foolishness?” They said, “We know that it is an imaginary vanity, but as it delights the interiors of our minds we come in here and are delighted as if from the possession of all things. But we do not remain here except for a few hours, and when these hours are passed, we go out and just as often a sound mind returns to us. But yet, from time to time our visionary pleasure comes over us and makes us periodically come in again, and periodically go out, so that we are alternately wise and insane. We know also that a hard lot awaits those who craftily deprive others of their goods.” We asked, “What lot?” They said, “They are swallowed up and cast naked into some infernal prison where they are made to work for clothing and for food, and after that, for a few small coins, which they collect, and on which they set their heart’s joy. But if they do evil to their companions, they are made to give up a part of their little coins as a fine.”

Questions and Comments

1. Have you ever envisioned something similar to those spirits cutting the gold? There is something kind of crazy about it, and yet many of us have tried taking out \$20 in \$1 bills. How are these the same? How are they different?
2. Is the problem with these spirits that they wanted wealth?
3. Can you think of some specific examples where the love of wealth crosses the line? Is there a healthy love of wealth?

DAY TWO: O HOW JUST

False notions of Justice

CL 231. I once heard noisy outcries which as it were gurgled up through waters from beneath. One on the left was, “O, how just!” Another on the right, “Oh, how learned!” And a third from behind, “Oh, how wise!” And as it came into my thought [to wonder] whether there are any who are just, learned, and wise, also in hell. I was impressed with the desire of seeing whether there were any such there, and it was said to me out of heaven, “You shall see and hear.” And in spirit I went out of the house and saw an opening before me. I drew near and looked down, and behold, a stairway. By this I descended, and when I reached the bottom, I saw level plains overgrown with trees mingled with thorns and nettles. And I asked if this was hell. They said, “It is the lower earth, which is next above hell.” And then I went on following the outcries in order. I came to the first, “Oh, how just!” and saw an assembly of those who in the world were judges for the sake of friendship and for gifts. Then I came to the second, “Oh, how learned!” and saw an assembly of those who in the world had been reasoners; and to the third cry, “Oh, how wise!” and saw an assembly of those who in the world had been confirmers.

[2] I turned away from these to the first, where there were judges [who judged] for friendship and for gifts, and who were proclaimed to be just. And I saw at one side as it were an amphitheater built of brick and roofed with black tiles, and I was told that they called it the Tribunal. Into this there opened on the north side three entrances, and three on the west side; but on the south and the east sides there were none, an indication that their judgments were not the judgments of justice but arbitrary decisions. In the middle of the amphitheater a fireplace appeared, into which servants having the charge of it were throwing pitch-pine wood impregnated with sulphur and bitumen. The flickering light from this fire, thrown up on the plastered walls, presented pictured images of birds of evening and of night. The fireplace and the flickerings of light from it in the forms of those images were representations of their judgments, in that they could light up the

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subject matters of any question with colored dyes and present them in forms according to their inclination.

[3] After half an hour I saw old men and young enter wearing long robes and gowns, who taking off their hats, took their places in chairs at the tables to sit in judgment. And I heard and perceived how skillfully and ingeniously from the aspect of friendship they warped and inverted judgments, into the appearance of justice; and this so completely that they themselves did not see the unjust to be otherwise than as just, and on the other hand the just as unjust. Such persuasions about them were apparent from their faces and audible from their speech. At that time enlightenment was given me from heaven, by which I perceived in each case whether the judgment was of right (*juris*) or not of right. And I saw how assiduously they covered over the unjust and induced on it the appearance of justice; and how, out of the laws, they selected what was favorable and drew the rest to their side by skillful reasoning. After the judgment the decisions were conveyed to the clients, their friends and favorers; and to repay the judges for their favor these shouted for a long distance, "O how just! O how just!"

[4] After this I conversed with angels of heaven about these things and narrated to them something of what I had seen and heard. And the angels told me that such judges appear to others as gifted with most penetrating acuteness of understanding, when yet they see not the least of what is just and equitable. If you take away their friendship for anyone, they sit in judgment mute as statues, and only say, "I assent, I agree with this one or that one." The reason is that all their judgments are prejudices, and prejudice with favor pursues the case from beginning to end. Hence they see nothing but what is in favor of their friend; everything that is against him they set aside, and if they take it up again, they entangle it in reasonings, as a spider does its prey in the filaments of its web and consumes it. This is why if they do not follow the web of their prejudice, they see nothing of the right. They were explored as to whether they could see, and it was found that they could not. "The inhabitants of your world," said the angels, "will be surprised that this is so; but tell them that it is the truth, explored by angels of

DAY TWO: O HOW JUST

heaven. Because these see nothing of what is just, we in heaven regard them not as men but as monsters, of whom matters of friendship make the head, those of injustice make the breast, matters of confirmation the feet, and those of justice the soles which, if they do not favor a friend are overthrown and trodden under foot. But how they appear to us from heaven, you shall see; for their end is nigh.” And behold, suddenly the ground then opened, and tables fell upon tables, and with the whole amphitheater, the men were swallowed up and were thrown into caverns and imprisoned. And the angels then said to me, “Do you wish to see them there?” And behold, they appeared as with faces of polished steel, with a body from the neck to the loins as of sculptured stone clothed in garments of panther’s skins, and with feet like serpents. And I saw the law books which they had laid on the tables turned to playing cards; and now, instead of sitting in judgment, the employment was given them of making vermilion into rouge, with which to deck the faces of harlots and thus transform them into beauties.

After seeing these I desired to go to the two other assemblies, to the one where were the mere reasoners, and to the other where there were mere confirmers. But then it was said to me, “Rest a little. Angel companions will be given you from the society next above them. Through them light will be given you by the Lord and you will see strange things.”

Questions and Comments

1. Obviously, we all want our judges to make decisions based on the law... most of the time. We can also probably think of times we want the judges to rule in our favor, even if it is against the law. Can you think of any examples where you have seen a court ruling that you were happy about, even though it seemed to go against the law?
2. People are generally in favor of justice until justice requires that they are punished. Are there ever times where what is *just* is for a judge to rule against the law?

DAY THREE: O HOW LEARNED

False notions of being Learned

CL 232. After some time I again heard from the lower earth, as before, the cries, “Oh, how learned!” and “Oh, how wise!” And I looked around to see what angels were then present, and behold, angels were there who were from the heaven immediately over those who were crying “Oh, how learned!” And I spoke to them about the cry. They said, “These ‘learned’ are those who merely reason whether a thing is or is not, and rarely think that it is so, and therefore, they are like winds that blow and pass away, or like bark on trees without a heart, or as shells of almonds without any kernel, or rinds on fruits with no pulp. For their minds are without interior judgment and are united with the bodily senses only. If therefore, the very senses do not judge, they can form no conclusion. In a word they are merely sensual, and by us are called “reasoners” because they never come to any conclusion, but take up whatever they hear and discuss whether it is, by perpetually contradicting. And they like nothing more than to attack truths themselves, and so by bringing them into dispute to tear them in pieces. These are they who believe themselves learned above all in the world.”

[2] Hearing these things I asked the angels to conduct me to them. And they brought me to a cavern from which steps led down to the lower earth. We descended and followed the cry, “Oh, how learned!” And behold, some hundreds were standing in one place beating the ground with their feet.

Surprised at this at first, I asked, “Why do they stand this way and beat the ground with the soles of their feet?” And I said, “They may thus make a hollow in the ground with their feet.” At this the angels smiled and said, “They appear to stand this way because they do not think about anything that it is so, but they only think and discuss whether it is, and as the thought makes no further progress they appear merely to tread and wear away a single patch of ground and make no progress.” But then I went towards this congregation, and behold, they appeared to me men of not unhandsome face and in elegant clothing. But the angels said, “In

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their own light they appear this way, but if light from heaven flows in, their faces change and their garments also.” And it was so. They then appeared with swarthy countenances and clothed in black sackcloth. But when this light was withdrawn, they appeared as before.

Presently I spoke to some of them and said, “I heard the crowd around you shouting, ‘Oh, how learned!’ May I then be permitted some conversation with you, to discuss subjects of the highest learning?”

[3] They answered, “Say whatever you please and we will satisfy you.” And I asked, “What must the religion be by which a man is saved?” They replied, “We must divide the question into several, and cannot give an answer until we have formed a conclusion upon them. The first consideration must be, Whether religion is anything? The second, Whether there is salvation or not? The third, Whether one religion is more effective than another? The fourth, Whether there is a heaven, and a hell? And fifth, Whether there is eternal life after death? Besides others.” I asked about the first question, “Whether religion is anything?” And they began to discuss it, with abundance of arguments as to whether there is religion, and whether what is called so is anything. And I begged that they would refer it to the congregation, and they referred it. And the common response was that this proposition required so much investigation that it could not be finished within the evening. I asked, “Can you finish it within a year?” And one said it could not be done within a hundred years. I replied, “Meanwhile you are without religion.”

And he responded, “Should it not first be shown whether there is religion, whether what is so-called is anything? If it is, it must be for the wise also. If not, then it must be only for the common people. It is known that religion is called a bond. But it is asked, ‘For whom?’ If only for the common people, in itself it is nothing. If also for the wise it is something.”

[4] Hearing these things I said to them, “You are anything but learned, for you are only able to think whether a thing is, and to

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turn it this way and that. Who can become learned unless he knows something for certain, and goes forward in that, as a man advances from step to step, and so on successively into wisdom. Otherwise you do not so much as touch truths with the finger-nail, but put them more and more out of sight. To reason only whether a thing is, is it not like arguing about a cap which is never put on? Or a shoe that is never worn? What comes of it except that you do not know whether there is anything? That is to say, Whether there is salvation? Whether there is eternal life after death? Whether one religion is more effective than another? Whether there is a heaven and a hell? You cannot think anything about these things so long as you stick fast in the first step and beat the sand there, and do not set foot beyond foot and go forward. Beware lest your minds, while they stand thus without outside of judgment, grow hard within and become statues of salt, and you, friends of Lot's wife."

[5] Having said this I went away, and they in indignation threw stones after me. And then they appeared to me like graven images of stone, in which there is nothing of human reason. I asked the angels about their lot, and they said, "Their lot is that they are let down into the deep, and into a desert there, and are set to carrying packs; and then being unable to bring forth anything from reason, they chatter and talk nonsense. And from a distance they appear then like asses bearing burdens."

Questions and Comments

1. Have you ever been in a conversation where you felt that someone was simply throwing questions out with no intent of getting answers? It can be exceedingly frustrating. What strategies can you develop to have more productive conversations?
2. Asking clarifying questions is important. Breaking complicated questions into smaller parts is useful. Sometimes we may approach or cross that line and shift from a productive use of questions to employing them as a stalling tactic. Other times we may use the questions to ratiocinate ourselves into a stalemate and then feel proud of how smart we are.

False notions of Wisdom

CL 233. After this one of the angels said, “Follow me to the place where they are shouting ‘Oh, how wise!’ and,” he added, “you will see prodigies of men. You will see faces and bodies that are of man, and yet they are not men.” And I said, “Are they beasts then?” He answered, “They are not beasts but beast-men, for they are such that they are entirely unable to see whether truth is truth or not, and yet can make whatever they want to be the truth. Such with us are called confirmers.” We followed the shouting and came to the place....

[2] But the angels said to me, “Let us not go to them, but call out one from the company.” And we called one out and went aside with him and conversed on various subjects. And he confirmed them, every one, even so that they appeared altogether as if true. We asked him whether he could also confirm their opposites. He said, “Just as well as the former.” Then he said frankly and from the heart, “What is truth? Is there anything true in the nature of things, other than what a man makes true? Say anything you please to me and I will make it true.” I said, “Make this true, that faith is the all of the church.” And he did it so dexterously and skillfully that the learned standing around admired and applauded. Afterwards I asked him to make it true that charity is the all of the church, and he did it; and after that, that charity is nothing of the church; and then he clothed and decked them both in such appearances that the bystanders looked at each other and said, “Is he not wise!”

“But,” I said, “do you not know that to live well is charity? And that to believe well is faith? Does not he who lives well also believe well? And thus faith is of charity and charity is of faith? Do you not see that this is true?” He replied, “Let me make it true and I shall see.” And he did it, and said, “Now I see.” But presently he made its opposite true, and said, “I see also that this is true.” We smiled at this, and said, “Are they not opposites? How can two opposites be seen as truths?” Indignant at this, he replied, “You are

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in error. Each is true, for nothing is true but what a man makes true.”

[3] Standing nearby was one who in the world had been an ambassador of the first rank. He was astonished at this, and said, “I am aware that there is something like this in the world, but you are insane. Make it true if you can that light is darkness, and darkness light.” He replied, “That I can easily do. What are light and darkness but states of the eye? Is not the light changed to shade when the eye passes out of a sunny place? As well as when it looks intently at the sun? Who does not know that the state of the eye is then changed, and that it is from this that the light appears as shade? ... What then is light but a state of the eye? And if it is a state of the eye, is not light darkness and darkness light? Therefore, the one is true, and the other is true.”

[4] The ambassador then asked him to make it true that the raven is white, and not black. And he responded: “That also I can easily do,” and said: “Take a needle or a razor and open the feathers or quills of a raven. Are they not white within? Then remove the feathers and quills and look at the skin of the raven, is it not white?” ... “But,” replied the ambassador, “does not the raven appear black to the sight?” “And will you,” responded the confirmer, “who are a man, think anything from appearance? You can indeed say from appearance that the raven is black, but you cannot think it.... Appearance is appearance. Say what you will, the raven is entirely white. It grows white also as it grows old. I have seen this.”

[5] We then asked him to tell us, from the heart, whether he was jesting, or believed that nothing is true but what a man makes true. He answered, “I swear that I believe it.” After that the ambassador asked him if he could make it true that he was insane. He said, “I can, but I don’t want to. Who is not insane?”

This universal confirmer was afterwards sent to angels who explored him as to what kind of man he was. And after exploration they said that he possessed not one grain of understanding, because all that was above the rational in him was closed, and only that was

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open which is below the rational. Above the rational is heavenly light and below the rational is natural light, and the latter light is such that it can confirm whatever one pleases. But if heavenly light does not flow into natural light, a man does not see whether any truth is true, nor therefore, that anything false is false....

[6] I asked the angel concerning the lot of such.... He said that people like this, when they are alone, are not able to think anything, nor thence to speak, but that they stand mute as machines, and as if in profound sleep, but that as soon as they catch anything with the ears they awake. And he added that they become such who inmosty are evil....

[7] This said, I heard a voice from the angels who explored him, saying to me, "From the things you have heard form a universal conclusion." And I formed this conclusion: That to be able to confirm whatever one pleases is not the mark of an intelligent man, but to be able to see that the truth is true and that the false is false, and to confirm it, is the mark of an intelligent man. After this I looked towards the assembly where the confirmers stood and the crowd around them were shouting, "Oh, how wise!" And behold, a dark cloud overveiled them, and in the cloud screech-owls and bats were flying... for confirmations of falsities, even to the point that they appear as truths, are represented in this world under the forms of birds of night, whose eyes are lit up by an illusory light within, by which they see objects in the dark as if in light.

Questions and Comments

1. On the cover of this booklet, the quote says, "The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom." How is being afraid ever wise?
2. Clearly, the confirmers were not demonstrating wisdom. It is not wisdom to use your rational mind to confirm falsity.
3. Sometimes we find ourselves in conversations where it seems that collectively we are trying to turn a raven white. How do we guard ourselves from twisting the truth to say whatever we want it to?

A Memorable Relation about Spirits Discussing Charity

TCR 459. I saw at a distance five gymnasia, each encompassed by a different kind of light; the first by a flame-colored light, the second by a yellow light, the third by a white light, the fourth by a light intermediate between that of noon and evening, the fifth was hardly visible, standing as if shrouded by the shades of evening. And on the roads, I saw some on horseback, some in carriages, some walking, and some running and hurrying towards the first gymnasium, which was enveloped in the flamy light.

Seeing this, I was seized and impelled by a strong desire to go there and to hear what was under discussion. Therefore I quickly got ready and joined company with those hastening to the first gymnasium, and entered with them; and behold! there was a large assembly, part of which moved off to the right and part to the left, to seat themselves on benches near the walls. Before me I saw a low pulpit, in which stood one who filled the office of president, having a staff in his hand, a cap on his head, and a robe tinted with the flame-colored light of the gymnasium.

[2] When the people had assembled, he spoke aloud and said, “Brothers, today you will discuss the question, What is charity? Each one of you can understand that charity is spiritual in its essence, and natural in its practices.”

Immediately one of those on the first bench on the left, on which those who were reputed wise were sitting, arose and beginning to speak, said, “*It is my opinion that charity is morality inspired by faith.*” This he corroborated thus: “Who does not know that charity follows faith, as a waiting-maid follows her mistress, and that the man who has faith obeys the law, and thus practices charity so spontaneously that he is unaware that it is the law and charity according to which he is living? For if he did this knowingly, and at the same time thought of salvation as his end, he would pollute holy faith with his selfhood [*proprium*] and thus impair its efficacy. Is not this in accordance with the dogma of our church?” And he looked towards those sitting beside him, among whom were some of the regular clergy, and they nodded assent.

DAY FIVE: SPIRITS DISCUSSING CHARITY

[3] “But what is spontaneous charity but morality into which everyone is initiated from infancy, and which is therefore in itself natural, but becomes spiritual when inspired by faith? Who, from the moral life of men, can distinguish whether they have faith or not? For every man lives morally....

[4] After this another rose up from the first bench on the right and said, “*It is my opinion that charity is piety inspired by commiseration.* This opinion I corroborate as follows: That nothing has such effect in propitiating God as piety arising from a humble heart; and piety prays unceasingly for God to bestow faith and charity; and the Lord says: “Ask, and it shall be given you” (Matthew 7:7). And because both are given, they are both in that piety. I say that charity is piety inspired by commiseration; for all devout piety commiserates, for piety so moves the heart of man that he groans, and what is that but commiseration?... When I have read the Word I have been able to see nothing else than that faith and charity are the two means of salvation. But when I have consulted the ministers of the church, I have heard that faith is the only means, and that charity is nothing. And then it has seemed to me that I was on the sea, in a ship that was drifting between two rocks; and when I feared that the ship would be broken to pieces, I betook myself to a boat and sailed away. My boat is piety; and piety, moreover, is profitable for all things.”

[5] After him another, from the second bench on the right, arose and said, “*It is my opinion that charity is doing good to everyone, virtuous and vicious alike;* and this opinion I corroborate as follows: What is charity but goodness of heart? And a good heart wishes good to everyone, to the virtuous and the vicious alike. And the Lord has said that good ought to be done even to our enemies.... A vicious man is a man equally with a virtuous one, and charity regards a man as a man. If he is vicious, what is that to me?” ... So saying, he took in his hand a fresh grape, and said, “It is with charity as it is with this grape; divide it, and all its contents run out.” He divided it, and out they ran.

[6] After this speech another from the second bench on the left arose and said, “*It is my opinion that charity is to serve by every*

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means one's relatives and friends, which I corroborate thus: Who does not know that charity begins with oneself, since everyone is neighbor to himself? Therefore, charity goes forth from oneself through degrees of nearness, first to brother and sister, and from these to kinsmen and relatives; and thus the progression of charity is self-limited. Those who are beyond its limits are strangers, and strangers are not interiorly recognized, and thus are as aliens to the internal man. But those related by blood and birth are joined together by nature, and friends by custom, which is a second nature, and these become the neighbor in that way.... What except blood causes homogeneity?... But heterogeneity, on the contrary, from which antipathy springs, is, as it were, not blood, and therefore not charity... It follows that charity is also doing good to one's friends....”

[7] Then from the third bench on the right another arose, and speaking with a loud voice, said: “*It is my opinion that charity is giving alms to the poor and assisting the needy*. This surely is charity, for the Divine Word so teaches, the statements of which admit of no contradiction. What is giving to the rich and the possessors of abundance but vain glory, in which there is no charity but only a looking for return? And in this there can be no genuine affection of love towards the neighbor, but only spurious affection, which is effective on earth but not in heaven. Therefore want and poverty ought to be relieved, because into this no idea of recompense enters. In the city where I lived, and where I knew who were virtuous and who were not, I observed that all of the virtuous, when they saw a beggar in the street, would stop and give him alms; while the non-virtuous, seeing a beggar beside them, would pass him by as if blind to his presence and deaf to his voice.... He who gives to the poor and relieves the needy is like a shepherd who leads hungry and thirsty sheep to pasture and water; while he who gives only to those who are rich and possess abundance is like one who devotes himself to the prosperous or presses food and drink upon those who are intoxicated.”

[8] After him arose another, from the third bench on the left, and said: “*It is my opinion that charity is building hospitals*,

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infirmaries, orphans' homes, and asylums, and supporting them by contributions. This I corroborate by the fact that such benefactions and aids are public and are many leagues beyond private benefactions. Consequently, charity becomes richer and more replete with good, as the good is multiplied by the number aided, and the reward hoped for from the promises of the Word become more abundant, for as one plows and sows, so he reaps. Is not this giving to the poor and relieving the needy in an eminent degree?... The rich, who do not walk the streets, but ride, cannot notice and hand pennies to those sitting at the sides of the streets by the wall of the houses; but they make their contributions of such a kind as to serve many at once. But lesser persons who walk the streets and do not have stores of wealth may do otherwise.”

[9] Hearing this, another from the same bench quickly drowned the voice of the first with his louder voice, saying: “Let not the rich, however, exalt the munificence and excellence of their charity over the pittance that one poor man gives to another. For we know that everyone in what he does acts according to what is suitable to his person, whether he is a king or a magistrate, a commander or an attendant. *For charity, viewed in itself, is not estimated by the excellence of the person, and consequently of the gift, but by the amplitude of the affection that prompts it;* so that a menial giving one penny may do so from a larger charity than the great man who gives or bequeaths an immense sum. This is in accordance with these words: Jesus saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury; He saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites and He said, of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all (Luke 21:1-3).

[10] After these one arose from the fourth bench on the left, and said: “*It is my opinion that charity is to endow churches and do good to their ministers;* which I confirm by this, that he who does so meditates upon what is holy and acts from what is holy in his own mind, and moreover, that this sanctifies his gifts. Charity demands this, because it is in itself holy. Is not all worship in churches holy? For the Lord says, Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them (Matthew

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18:20); and the priests, His servants, conduct the worship....

Moreover, there is given to a minister the power to bless, whereby he also sanctifies those gifts....”

[11] Then one from the fourth bench on the right arose and spoke as follows: “*It is my opinion that the old Christian brotherhood is charity.* This I confirm by the fact that every church that worships the true God begins in charity the same as the early Christian church did. Because charity unites minds and makes one out of many, the members of that church called themselves brethren—but brethren in Jesus Christ their God. But because they were then surrounded by barbarous nations whom they feared, they established a community of property, which enabled them to enjoy themselves together in harmony, and at the same time conversed together daily at their meetings about the Lord God their Savior Jesus Christ, and at their dinners and suppers about charity; hence their brotherhood. But after those times, when schisms began to spring up, and finally the abominable Arian heresy arose, which with many swept away the idea of the Divinity of the Lord's Human, charity decayed and their brotherhood was dissolved. It is true that all who worship the Lord in truth and keep His commandments are brothers (Matthew 23:8), but brothers in spirit. And as it is unknown at this day what any man is in spirit, for men to call each other brothers is of no account. A brotherhood of faith alone, and still less a brotherhood of faith in any other God than the Lord God the Savior, is not a brotherhood, because in that faith there is no charity, which is what makes brotherhood. I therefore conclude that the old Christian brotherhood was charity. But that was, and now is not; yet I prophesy that it will return.” When he had said this, a flame-colored light appeared through the eastern window, and tinged his cheeks, at the sight of which the assembly were amazed.

[12] Finally one arose from the fifth bench on the left, and asked permission to add his contribution to the remarks of the last speaker. When this had been granted, he said, “*It is my opinion that charity is to forgive everyone his trespasses.* This opinion I have drawn from the customary saying of those who approach the

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Holy Supper; for some then say to their friends, 'Forgive me what I have done amiss,' thinking that they have thus discharged all the duties of charity.... For trespasses are like ulcers, within which, if they are not opened and healed, diseased matter collects, which infects the neighboring parts.... It is the same with trespasses against the neighbor, which, unless removed by repentance and by a life according to the Lord's commandments, remain and devour. But those who, without repentance, merely pray to God to forgive their sins, are like the inhabitants of a city who, being infected with a contagious disease, go to the chief magistrate and say, 'Sir, heal us.' And he would answer, 'How can I heal you? Go to a physician, find out what medicines you need, get them for yourselves from an apothecary and take them, and your health will be restored. So the Lord will say to those who pray for the forgiveness of their sins without actual repentance. Open the Word, and read what I have spoken in Isaiah 1:4, 15-18....

Questions and Comments

1. Of the ten opinions of spirits describing charity given thus far, which one sounds the most accurate? Which one sounds the least accurate?
2. If you're in a group, take a position and defend the idea that one of the ten spirits offered (you don't need to hold onto it beyond the discussion). Every person should take a different position.
3. What do you think the most common idea of charity is today? Does the most common idea change in the New Church? If it does, why? If it doesn't, why not?

DAY SIX: SPIRITS DISCUSSING CHARITY (CONT.)

*The Conclusion to a Memorable Relation of Spirits Discussing
Charity*

TCR 459:13. When all this had taken place, I raised my hand and asked them to permit me, although a stranger, to offer my opinion also. The president proposed this, and consent being given, I spoke as follows: “It is my opinion that charity is to act with judgment from a love of justice in every employment and office, but from a love derived from no other source than the Lord God the Savior. All that I have heard from those sitting upon the benches, both on the right and on the left, are eminent examples of charity. But, as the president of this assembly stated at first, charity in its origin is spiritual, but in its flowing forth is natural; and natural charity, if it is inwardly spiritual, appears to angels transparent like a diamond; but if not inwardly spiritual, and therefore merely natural, it appears to the angels like a pearl that resembles the eye of a cooked fish.

[14] “It is not for me to say whether the eminent examples of charity which you have presented in order are inspired by spiritual charity or not. But I can say what the spiritual that ought to be in them must be, that they may be natural forms of spiritual charity. The spiritual itself of these is this, that they be done with judgment from a love of justice; that is, that in the exercise of charity, man should see clearly whether he is acting from justice, and this he sees from judgment. For a man may do evil by deeds of beneficence, and by what appear to be evil deeds he may do good.

“For example: One who gives to a needy robber the means with which to buy a sword, by a beneficent act is doing evil, although the robber in begging the money did not tell what he would do with it. So again, if one rescues a robber from prison and shows him the way to a forest, saying to himself, ‘It is not my fault that he commits robbery; I have given succor to the man.’ Take as another example one who feeds an idler, and prevents his being compelled to work, saying to him, ‘Go into a bedroom in my house and lie in bed; why should you weary yourself?’ Such a one favors idleness. Or again, take one who promotes relatives and friends

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with dishonest inclinations to offices of honor, in which they can plot many kinds of mischief. Who cannot see that such works of charity do not proceed from any love of justice combined with judgment?

[15] “On the other hand, a man may do good through what appear to be evil deeds. Take as an example a judge who acquits an evildoer because he sheds tears, pours out words of piety, and begs the judge to pardon him because he is his neighbor. But in fact, a judge performs a work of charity when he decrees the man’s punishment according to the law; for he thus guards against the man’s doing further evil and being a pest to society, which is the neighbor in a higher degree, and he prevents also the scandal of an unjust judgment.

Who does not know also that it is good for servants to be chastised by their masters, or children by their parents, when they do wrong? The same is true of those in hell, all of whom are in the love of doing evil. They are kept shut up in prisons, and when they do evil are punished, which the Lord permits for the sake of their amendment. This is so because the Lord is justice itself, and does whatever He does from judgment itself.

[16] “From all this it can be seen clearly why, as just said, spiritual charity is done with judgment from a love of justice, and yet from a love derived from no other source than the Lord God the Savior. This is because all good of charity is from the Lord; for He says,

He that abides in Me and I in him, the same bears much fruit; for apart from Me, you can do nothing (John 15:5).

Also that He has all power in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18).

And all love of justice with judgment is from no other source than the God of heaven, who is justice itself, and the source of all man’s judgment (Jeremiah 23:5; 33:15).

[17] “From all this we may conclude that all that has been said about charity from the benches on the right and left, namely, That charity is morality inspired by faith; That it is piety inspired by commiseration; That it is doing good alike to the virtuous and the

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vicious; That it is to serve by every means one's relatives and friends; That it is giving to the poor and assisting the needy; That it is building infirmaries and supporting them by contributions; That it is endowing churches and doing good to their ministers; That it is the old Christian brotherhood; That it is to forgive everyone his trespasses; *all these are eminent examples of charity when they are done with judgment from a love of justice.* Otherwise, they are not charity, but are merely like brooks separated from their fountains, or like branches torn from their tree; because genuine charity is to believe in the Lord and to act justly and rightly in every employment and office. Therefore, he who from the Lord loves justice and practices it with judgment, is charity in its image and likeness.”

[18] When this had been said there was silence, such as comes to those who from their internal man, but not as yet in the external, see and acknowledge that something is true. This I perceived from their faces. But I was then suddenly removed out of their sight, returning from the spirit into my material body; for the natural man, because of his being clothed with a material body, is not visible to any spiritual man, that is, to a spirit or angel, nor they to him.

Questions and Comments

1. After having read a long discourse on charity, did it surprise you that the previous forms of charity were affirmed in some respects? “All these are eminent examples of charity when they are done with judgment from a love of justice.”
2. Of the many analogies given to describe charity, the description about the tree is a particularly potent example. Genuine charity is as a trunk of a tree and the other forms of charity are its branches. You can't have the branches without the trunk. Justice and judgment need to be used in every form of charity.
3. Discrimination is to be used in every form of charity. Above, we were taught that giving a criminal the money to buy a sword is evil, even though it feels selfless. What other examples can you think of that require judgment in doing charity?