

Series on Worship, Week 1

Piety and Charity

or

External Worship and the Worship of Life

That to do good is to worship the Lord, appears from the Lord's words:



Whoever hears these sayings of Mine and does them, I will liken him to a prudent man who built his house on the rock.

(Matthew 7:24; NJHD 127)

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What is a religious life?

And when you pray, do not speak on and on as the heathen do, for they think that they shall be hearkened to for their many words. Do not be like them, therefore; for your Father knows what things you need before you ask Him. (Matthew 6:7-8)

Piety

NJHD 123. It is believed by many that spiritual life, or the life which leads to heaven, consists in piety, in external holiness, and in the renunciation of [*giving up, having nothing to do with*] the world. But piety without charity, and external holiness without internal holiness, and a renunciation of the world without a life in the world, do not constitute spiritual life. Instead, piety from charity, external holiness from internal holiness, and a renunciation of the world with a life in the world, constitute spiritual life.

NJHD 124. Piety consists in thinking and speaking piously, in devoting much time to prayers, in behaving humbly at that time, in frequenting temples and listening devoutly to the preaching there, in receiving the Sacrament of the Supper frequently every year, and in performing the other parts of worship according to the ordinances of the church.

But the life of charity consists in willing well and doing well to the neighbor, in acting in every work from justice and equity, from good and truth, and in like manner in every office. In a word, the life of charity consists in performing uses.

Divine worship primarily consists in the life of charity, but secondarily in piety. Therefore, a person who separates one from the other, that is, who lives the life of piety and not at the same time the life of charity, does not worship God. He indeed thinks about God, but not from God, but from himself. For he thinks continually about himself, and nothing of the neighbor. And if he thinks of the neighbor, he holds him in low estimation, if he is not also similar to himself. And

likewise he thinks of heaven as a reward, so in his mind there is merit, and also the love of self. There is also contempt or neglect of uses and thus of the neighbor. At the same time, he cherishes a belief that he is blameless. Hence it may appear that the life of piety, separate from the life of charity, is not the spiritual life that should be in Divine worship. (Compare Matt. 6:7, 8 [above].)

NJHD 125. ...People who place the whole of worship in external holiness are for the most part empty, that is, without knowledges of good and truth. And yet goods and truths are the real holy things that are to be known, believed and loved, because they are from the Divine, and the Divine is in them.

Internal holiness, therefore, consists in loving good and truth for the sake of good and truth, and justice and sincerity for the sake of justice and sincerity. So far also as man loves them in this way, so far he is spiritual, and so is his worship, for so far also he wants to know them and to do them.... External worship without internal may be compared with the life of the respiration without the life of the heart; but external worship from internal may be compared with the life of the respiration conjoined to the life of the heart.

NJHD 128. From this it is now clear that a life of piety has strength and is accepted by the Lord so far as a life of charity is conjoined to it, for the life of charity is the primary, and such as this is, such is the life of piety.

Also, external holiness has strength and is accepted by the Lord so far as it proceeds from internal holiness, for such as the internal holiness is, such is the external holiness.

And also, the renunciation of the world has strength and is accepted by the Lord so far as it is practiced in the world. For they renounce the world who remove the love of self and the world, and act justly and sincerely in every office, in every business, and in every work, from an interior, thus from a heavenly origin. This origin is in that life when man acts well, sincerely, and justly, because it is according to the Divine laws.

Questions

1. Can you think of present-day examples of people who make a big point of piety, external holiness, or renunciation of the world? This approach to religion does not seem very popular in American culture today.
2. Looking at the beginning of NJHD 124, how would you rate yourself on the practices of piety? Would it help you to do a little more?
3. Much more important, how would you rate yourself in the practice of charity, described in the second paragraph of NJHD 124?
4. Do you find it hard to fit in the practices of piety in your busy life? When you do fit in time to go to church, to pray, or to read the Word, do you usually find it strengthens your practice of charity and supports you in fulfilling your uses?

How hard it is to go to heaven?

Enter ye in through the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many are they who enter in by it; for confined is the way and narrow is the gate that leads to life, and few are they who find it (Matt. 7:13, 14).

HH 528. IT IS NOT SO DIFFICULT TO LIVE THE LIFE THAT LEADS TO HEAVEN AS IS BELIEVED.

There are some who believe that to live the life that leads to heaven, which is called the spiritual life, is difficult... because they understand this to mean that they must discard worldly things, which consist chiefly in riches and honors; that they must walk continually in pious meditation on God, salvation, and eternal life; and must spend their life in prayers and in reading the Word and pious books....

But that this is not at all true it has been given me to know by much experience and from conversation with the angels. I have learned, in fact, that those who renounce the world and live in the spirit in this manner acquire a sorrowful life that is not receptive of heavenly joy, since everyone's life continues the same after death. On the contrary, to receive the life of heaven a man must live in the world and engage in its business and employments, and by means of a moral and civil life there receive the spiritual life. In no other way can the spiritual life be formed in man, or his spirit be prepared for heaven; for to live an internal life and not at the same time an external life is like dwelling in a house that has no foundation, that gradually sinks or becomes cracked and torn apart, or totters till it falls.

HH 529. When the life of man is scanned and explored by rational insight, it is found to be threefold, namely, spiritual, moral, and civil. These three lives are distinct from each other. For there are men who live a civil life and not as yet a moral and spiritual life; and there are men who live a moral life and not as yet a spiritual life; and there are those who live a civil life, a moral life, and a spiritual life at the same time. These live the life of heaven, but the former live the life of the world separated from the life of heaven. This shows, in the first place, that the spiritual life is not a life separated from natural life or the life of the world, but is joined with it as the soul is joined with its body.... To will well is the province of the spiritual life, and to act well of the moral and civil life, and if acting well is separated from willing well, the spiritual life consists solely of thought and speech, and the will, left with no support, withdraws; and yet the will is the very spiritual part of man.

HH 530. That it is not so difficult as some believe to live the life that leads to heaven will now be shown. Who cannot live a civil and moral life? For everyone from his childhood is initiated into that life, and learns what it is by living in the world. Moreover, everyone, whether evil or good, lives that life; for who does not wish to be called honorable, and who does not wish to be called just? Almost everyone practices honorable behavior and justice outwardly, so far as to seem to be honorable and just at heart, or to seem to act from real honor and justice.

The spiritual man ought to live in a similar way, and can do so as easily as the natural man can, with this difference only, that the spiritual man believes in the Divine, and acts honorably and justly, not just because to do so is in accord with civil and moral laws, but also because it is in accord with Divine laws. As the spiritual man, in whatever he is doing, thinks about Divine things, he has communication with the angels of heaven. And so far as this takes place he is

conjoined with them, and thereby his internal man, which regarded in itself is the spiritual man, is opened. When man comes into this state he is adopted and led by the Lord, although he himself is unconscious of it. And then whatever he does that is honorable and just, pertaining to moral and civil life, is done from a spiritual motive; and doing what is honorable and just from a spiritual motive is doing it from honor and justice itself, or doing it from the heart.

Questions

1. Does it seem hard to go to heaven?
2. Has it seemed that a lot of piety (going to church, reading the Word, praying, etc.) is required in order to go to heaven, and that this requirement makes life a drag?
3. Is it comforting to know that the most important part of preparing for heaven is to live a good, useful life, not the practice of piety?
4. The difference between a merely natural man and a spiritual man is that the spiritual man believes in God and acts honorably and justly because God commands it, not just to be well thought of and avoid penalties. Does it seem like a hard thing to do, to believe in God and to act for His sake as well as for our own sakes?

What is the difference between a good man's good deeds and a bad man's good deeds?

Everyone who hears My words and does them, I will liken to a prudent man who built a house upon a rock; but he who hears My words and does not do them, I will liken to a foolish man who built a house on the sand, or on the ground without a foundation (Matt. 7:24-27; Luke 6:47-49).

NJHD 127. That to do good is to worship the Lord, appears from the Lord's words (above).

HH 530:2. [A good man's] justice and honorable behavior appear outwardly precisely the same as the justice and honor of natural men, and even of evil and infernal men, but in inward form they are wholly unlike. For evil men act justly and honorably solely for the sake of themselves and the world. And therefore if they had no fear of laws and penalties, or the loss of reputation, of honor, of gain, and of life, they would act in every respect dishonorably and unjustly, since they neither fear God nor any Divine law, and therefore are not restrained by any internal bond.... That inwardly they are such can be clearly seen from those of the same character in the

other life, while everyone's externals are taken away, and his internals in which he at last lives to eternity are opened.... As such then act without external restraints... they act insanely, and laugh at honor and justice.

HH 530:3. But those who have acted honorably and justly from regard to Divine laws, when their externals are taken away and they are left to their internals, act wisely, because they are conjoined to the angels of heaven, from whom wisdom is communicated to them.

From all this it can now be seen, in the first place, that when the internal man, that is, the will and thought, are conjoined to the Divine, the civil and moral life of the spiritual man may be wholly like the civil and moral life of the natural man....

HH 531. Furthermore, the laws of spiritual life, the laws of civil life, and the laws of moral life are set forth in the ten commandments of the Decalogue: in the first three the laws of spiritual life, in the four that follow the laws of civil life, and in the last three the laws of moral life. Outwardly the merely natural man lives in accordance with the same commandments in the same way as the spiritual man does... But in heart he denies the Divine, in worship acts the hypocrite, and when left to himself and his own thoughts laughs at the holy things of the church, believing that they merely serve as a restraint for the simple multitude.

HH 531:2. Consequently he is wholly disjoined from heaven, and not being a spiritual man he is neither a moral man nor a civil man. For although he refrains from committing murder he hates everyone who opposes him, and from his hatred burns with revenge, and would therefore commit murder if he were not restrained by civil laws and external bonds, which he fears; and as he longs to do so it follows that he is continually committing murder. Although he does not commit adultery, yet as he believes it to be allowable he is all the while an adulterer, since he commits adultery to the extent that he has the ability and as often as he has opportunity. Although he does not steal, yet as he covets the goods of others and does not regard fraud and wicked devices as opposed to what is lawful, in intent he is continually acting the thief.... Such is every man who denies the Divine, and who has no conscience derived from religion....

HH 531:3. It is not so with those who in heart have acknowledged the Divine, and in the actions of their lives have had respect to Divine laws, and have lived as fully in accord with the first three commandments of the Decalogue as they have in accordance with the others. When the externals of such are removed and they are let into their internals they are wiser than they were in the world; for entering into their internals is like entering from darkness into light, from ignorance into wisdom, and from a sorrowful life into a happy life, because they are in the Divine, thus in heaven....

Questions

1. One useful way to explore our motives is to think of what we would do if we were not restrained by fear of penalties or the loss of honor and employment, such as if we could be invisible.
2. The external life of people who are spiritual may look just like the life of people who are merely natural. What does this imply about how we treat other people?
3. HH 531:2 provides a useful list for introspection in preparation for the holy supper. We could each consider which one of these we seem to be most susceptible to at this time in our lives.
4. Notice how important it is to have a conscience derived from religion. Would you say that helping people develop a conscience is one of the main purposes of worship services? Do they help you?
5. Does the ending of HH 531 give you hope?

How do we go to heaven?

My yoke is easy and My burden is light (Matt. 11:30).

HH 533. That it is not so difficult to live the life of heaven as some believe can now be seen from this, that when anything presents itself to a man that he knows to be dishonorable and unjust, but to which his mind is carried along, it is simply necessary for him to think that it ought not to be done because it is opposed to the Divine precepts. If a man gets himself used to thinking this way, and from so doing establishes a habit of thinking this way, he is gradually conjoined to heaven. And so far as he is conjoined to heaven the higher regions of his mind are opened; and so far as these are opened he sees whatever is dishonorable and unjust, and so far as he sees these evils they can be driven away, for no evil can be driven away until it is seen. Man is able to enter into this state because of his freedom, for is not anyone able from his freedom to think this way? And when man has made a beginning, the Lord gives life to all that is good in him, and causes him not only to see evils to be evils, but also to refrain from willing them, and finally to turn away from them. This is meant by the Lord's words in Matthew 11:30.

But it must be understood that the difficulty of thinking this way and of resisting evils increases so far as man from his will does evils, for in the same measure he gets used to them until he no longer sees them, and at length loves them and from the delight of his love excuses them, and confirms them by every kind of fallacy, and declares them to be allowable and good. This is the fate of those who in early youth plunge into evils without restraint, and also reject Divine things from the heart.

HH 534. The way that leads to heaven, and the way that leads to hell were once represented to me. There was a broad way tending towards the left or the north, and many spirits were seen going in it; but at a distance a large stone was seen where the broad way came to an end. From that stone two ways branched off, one to the left and one in the opposite direction to the right. The way that went to the left was narrow or confined, leading through the west to the south, and thus into the light of heaven; the way that went to the right was broad and spacious, leading obliquely downwards towards hell. All at first seemed to be going the same way until they came to the large stone at the head of the two ways. When they reached that point they divided. The good turned to the left and entered the confined way that led to heaven, while the evil, not seeing the stone at the fork of the ways, fell on it and were hurt, and when they rose up they ran on in the broad way to the right which went towards hell.

HH 534:2. What all this meant was afterwards explained to me. The first way that was broad, where many, both good and evil, went together and talked with each other as friends, because there was no visible difference between them, represented those who externally live alike, honorably and justly, and between whom seemingly there is no difference. The stone at the head of the two ways or at the corner, on which the evil fell and from which they ran into the way leading to hell, represented the Divine truth, which is rejected by those who look towards hell; and in the highest sense this stone signified the Lord's Divine Human. But those who acknowledged the Divine truth and also the Divine of the Lord went by the way that led to heaven.

By this again it was shown that in externals the evil lead the same kind of life as the good... And yet those who from the heart acknowledge... the Divine of the Lord, are led to heaven, while those who do not are led to hell.

HH 534:3. ...The way that leads to life is confined not because it is difficult but because there are few who find it, as is said in Matthew and Luke.... "Stone" signifies Divine truth... For this reason, the Law was inscribed on tables of stone....

HH 535. ...The life of angels is a life of joy resulting from a state of blessedness, and consists in performing good deeds, which are works of charity.... Their joy... discards merit and consists in active labors and practical services, and in a blessedness resulting from the good accomplished by it.

Questions

1. Does it seem difficult to get ourselves used to thinking, when we are drawn toward some evil, "This should not be done because it is against the Lord's Commandments"? Is it hard to get into this habit? Do you know any strategies that help?

2. At first we just know that the Lord says No. If we obey Him, gradually our minds are opened to heaven, and in that light we see that certain things are dishonorable and unjust. Then we can refrain from willing them—that is, stop wanting to do them—and finally turn away from them. Can you think of something you used to want, but now you don't even want it anymore?
3. Some people in early youth (*in aestate adolescente*) plunge into evils without restraint and at the same time reject Divine things. Parents have a responsibility to restrain adolescents because they cannot rationally restrain themselves (CL 456e), but what are the limits of what parents can do?
4. Notice how essential it is for people to acknowledge the Divine truth, and that the Lord is God. Helping people with this is meant to be a key function of worship and of conversations among friends. How can we help each other?
5. Why do you think it says there are few who find the way to heaven?

How are worship rituals “signs” of charity?

O come, let us worship and bow down;
Let us kneel before Jehovah, our Maker. (Psalm 95:6)

Charity 173. THE SIGNS OF CHARITY ARE ALL THINGS THAT PERTAIN TO WORSHIP.

All things of charity have regard to looking to the Lord and shunning evils as sins, and doing the goods of use that pertain to one's calling. But all things of worship are externals, of the body and of the mind. The externals of the body are performed by acts and by words; and the externals of the mind are those that are performed by the will and the thought, which are closely joined with the externals of the body.

Charity 174. The externals of the *body* which pertain to worship are: (1) Frequenting temples. (2) Listening to sermons.

(3) Devoutly singing, and praying on the knees. (4) Partaking of the Sacrament of the Supper.

And at home: (1) Prayer morning and evening, and at dinners and suppers. (2) Conversing with others about charity and faith, and about God, heaven, eternal life, and salvation. (3) And in the case of priests, preaching, and also private instruction. (4) And with everyone, the instruction of children and servants in such matters. (5) Reading the Word, and books of instruction and of piety.

Charity 175. The externals of the *mind* which pertain to worship are: (1) Thought and meditation concerning God, and concerning heaven, eternal life, and salvation. (2) Reflection upon one's thoughts and intentions, as to whether they are evil or good, and that the evil are from the devil, and the good from God. (3) Aversion of one's mind from impious, obscene, and filthy language. (4) Besides thoughts, there are also affections which come to the sight and sense of a man.

Char 176. These are called externals because they are closely conjoined and make one with the externals of the body.

Charity 178. *Charity itself is in the internal man, and its sign is in the external....* The internal man is called the spirit, and the external is called the flesh... For it is said and it is known by some that there is a conflict between the spirit and the flesh. The spirit that contends against the flesh is the internal man, who is charity.

Charity 179. The quality of the internal man cannot manifest itself to a man except by the external. It manifests itself when there is a conflict with the external. It especially manifests itself when a man examines himself, sees his evils, and from knowledge confesses them and thinks about repentance, and then resists his evils and sets about living a new life.

Charity 180. If a man does not do these things, his internal man is evil; but if he does them, his internal man is good. For through the internal man the Lord operates into the external; and as evil is then residing in the external, a conflict arises. For spirits from hell, who are called the devil, are admitted into the external man, which is called the flesh, and the Lord in man fights against the devil. And if, as of himself, the man also fights, he conquers; and as far as the devil is conquered, so far there is place for goods from the internal man to enter. Thus he gradually becomes a new man and is regenerated.

Charity 181. Whatever the internal man produces and presents to sight and sense in the external is called a sign. If charity is in the internal, it leads a man to reflect on the evils within him, and actually to take cognizance of and know them, and so on. If he does not do this, his external is not a sign of charity; and even if his external is in worship and piety, it is not a sign of charity, but is external charity without internal charity, which is not charity.

Charity 183. There is no internal without its sign and indication. If charity is in the internal man, or in the spirit, and this does not fight against the external man and his flesh, then charity perishes. It is as a fountain of pure water; if there is no outlet it stagnates, and then it either ceases its flow, or by stagnation the water becomes putrid....

Questions

1. How many of the “externals of worship pertaining to the body” can you check off as something you do? Are there some you want to give more attention to?
2. How many of the “externals of worship pertaining to the mind” can you check off?
3. The most important “sign of charity” discussed in this chapter is that a person examines himself, sees his evils, and resists them. Is worship, therefore, meant to assist us in practicing repentance?

4. By repentance, the devil is conquered, and then goods from the internal man can flow into our conscious life. See the similar purpose of worship described on page 18.

What are the uses of external worship?

One thing I have desired of Jehovah; that will I seek:

That I may dwell in the house of Jehovah all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of Jehovah, and to visit His temple in the morning. (Psalm 27:4)

AC 1618. When a man is in love and charity he is continually in worship, external worship being merely the effect. The angels are in such worship; with them, therefore, there is a perpetual Sabbath... But man, while in the world, should not fail to be in external worship also. For by external worship, internal things are excited, and by means of external worship, external things are kept in holiness, so that internal things can flow in. And besides, man is thus imbued with knowledges, and is prepared for receiving heavenly things, and is also gifted with states of holiness, although he is unaware of this. These states of holiness are preserved for him by the Lord for the use of eternal life, for in the other life all the states of his life return.

AC 1798:3. Take the Precepts of the Decalogue. The first of these is to worship the Lord God. He who has the life of love or of charity worships the Lord God, because this is his life.

Another precept is to keep the Sabbath. He who is in the life of love, or in charity, keeps the Sabbath holy, for nothing is more sweet to him than to worship the Lord, and to glorify Him every day.

The precept, "Thou shalt not kill," is altogether of charity. He who loves his neighbor as himself, shudders at doing anything that injures him, still more at killing him.

So too the precept, "Thou shalt not steal;" for he who has the life of charity would rather give of his own to his neighbor, than take anything away from him.

And so with the precept, "Thou shalt not commit adultery;" he who is in the life of charity the rather guards his neighbor's wife, lest anyone should do her such injury, and regards adultery as a crime against conscience, and such as destroys conjugal love and its duties.

To covet the things that are the neighbor's is also contrary to those who are in the life of charity; for it is of charity to desire good to others from oneself and one's own. Such people therefore by no means covet the things which are another's.

AC 7038. True worship consists in the performance of uses, thus in the exercises of charity. He who believes that serving the Lord consists solely in frequenting a place of worship, in hearing preaching there, and in praying, and that this is sufficient, is much mistaken. The very worship of the Lord consists in performing uses; and during man's life in the world, uses consist in everyone's discharging aright his duty in his station, thus from the heart being of service to his

country, to societies, and to the neighbor, in dealing sincerely with his fellow, and in performing kind offices with prudence in accordance with each person's character. These uses are chiefly the works of charity, and are those whereby the Lord is chiefly worshiped. Frequenting a place of worship, hearing sermons, and saying prayers, are also necessary; but without the above uses they are of no avail, because they are not of the life, but teach what the life must be. The angels in heaven have all happiness from uses, and according to uses, so that to them uses are heaven.

Questions

1. Here is the list of purposes of external worship give in in AC 1618:
 - a. internal things are excited or stirred
 - b. external things are kept in holiness, so
that internal things [love to the Lord and
charity toward the neighbor] can flow in
 - c. imbued with knowledges
 - d. prepared for receiving heavenly things
 - e. gifted with states of holiness, unawaresWhich of these are you most aware of?
2. Do these uses seem important? What forms of external worship seem to help you most with these purposes?
3. Does it seem sweet to you sometimes to worship the Lord, in gratitude, for example?
4. To do useful things for others and to serve the Lord is the most important way of worshiping Him. Note how the observances of worship are included in other lesser aspects of a good life.