

Original Insights on the BNL Process: A Chapter by Emanuel Swedenborg Titled, “Repentance”¹

509.² Now that faith [nos. 336-391], goodwill [nos. 392-462], and free choice [nos. 463-508] have been treated, the related topic of repentance comes next, because without repentance there can be no true faith and no genuine goodwill, and no one could repent without free choice. Another reason why there is a treatment of repentance at this point is that the topic that follows is regeneration [nos. 571-625], and none of us can be regenerated before the more serious evils that make us detestable before God have been removed; repentance is what removes them. What else are unregenerate people but impenitent? And what else are impenitent people but those who are in a drowsy state of apathy? They know nothing about sin and therefore cherish it deep within themselves and make love to it every day the way an adulterous man makes love to a promiscuous woman who shares his bed.

To make known what repentance is and what effect it has, this treatment of it will be divided into separate headings.

Repentance is the Beginning of the Church Within Us

510. The extended community that is known as the church consists of all the people who have the church within them. The church takes hold in us when we are regenerated, and we are all regenerated when we abstain from things that are evil and sinful and run away from them as we would run if we saw hordes of hellish spirits pursuing us with flaming torches, intending to attack us and throw us onto a bonfire.

As we go through the early stages of our lives, there are many things that prepare us for the church and introduce us into it; but acts of repentance are the things that actually produce the church within us. Acts of repentance include any and all actions that result in our not willing, and consequently not doing, evil things that are sins against God.

Before repentance, we stand outside regeneration. In that condition, if any thought of eternal salvation somehow makes its way into us, we at first turn toward it but soon turn away. That thought does not penetrate us any farther than the outer areas where we have ideas; it then goes out into our spoken words and perhaps into a few gestures that go along with those words. When the thought of eternal salvation penetrates our will, however, then it is truly inside us. The will

¹ Emanuel Swedenborg, *True Christianity*, vol. 2, chapter 9, translated by Jonathan S. Rose (West Chester, PA: Swedenborg Foundation, 2011). Reproduced here with the permission of the Swedenborg Foundation.

² Swedenborg numbered his paragraphs for easy reference. In addition, references to paragraph numbers that Swedenborg makes within the text of this chapter (chapter 9 of *True Christianity*) are references to paragraphs elsewhere in the same work.

is the real self, because it is where our love dwells; our thoughts are outside us, unless they come from our will, in which case our will and our thought act as one, and together make us who we are. From these points it follows that in order for repentance to be genuine and effective within us, it has to be done both by our will and by thinking that comes from our will. It cannot be done by thought alone. Therefore it has to be a matter of actions, and not of words alone.

[2] The Word makes it obvious that repentance is the beginning of the church. John the Baptist was sent out in advance to prepare people for the church that the Lord was about to establish. At the same time as he was baptizing people he was also preaching repentance; his baptism was therefore called a baptism of repentance. Baptism means a spiritual washing, that is, being cleansed from sins. John baptized in the Jordan river because the Jordan means introduction into the church, since it was the first border of the land of Canaan, where the church was. The Lord himself also preached that people should repent so that their sins would be forgiven. He taught, in effect, that repentance is the beginning of the church; that if we repent, the sins within us will be removed; and that if our sins are removed, they are also forgiven. Furthermore, when the Lord sent out his twelve apostles and also the seventy, he commanded them to preach repentance. From all this it is clear that repentance is the beginning of the church.

511. As for the point that the church does not exist within us until the sins inside us have been removed, this is something anyone can conclude through the use of reason.

It can also be illustrated through the following comparisons. No one can pasture flocks of sheep, goats, and lambs in fields or woodlands that are already occupied by all kinds of predatory animals, without first driving away the predators. No one can turn land that is full of thornbushes, brambles, and stinging nettles into a garden without first uprooting those harmful plants. No one can go into a city that is occupied by hostile enemy forces, set up a new administration devoted to justice and judgment, and make it a good place for citizens to live without first expelling the enemy. It is similar with the evils that are inside us. They are like predatory animals, brambles and thornbushes, and enemies. The church could no more live alongside them than we could live in a cage full of tigers and leopards; or lie down in a bed whose sheets were lined, and pillows stuffed, with poisonous plants; or sleep at night in a church building under whose stone floor there are tombs with dead bodies in them—would we not be harassed there by ghosts that were like the furies?

**The "Contrition" That is Nowadays Said to Precede Faith
and to Be Followed by the Consolation of the Gospel
is Not Repentance**

512. The Protestant Christian world holds that there is a certain type of anxiety, pain, and terror (which they call "contrition") that comes over people who are going to be regenerated. It comes on before they have faith and is followed by the consolation of the Gospel.

They claim that this contrition arises in them as the result of fear of the justifiable anger of God, and therefore fear of the eternal damnation that clings to

us all because of Adam's sin and because of our resulting inclination toward evil. They say that the faith that ascribes the merit and justice of the Lord our Savior to us is not granted us if we lack that feeling of contrition. Those who have acquired this faith are said to receive "the consolation of the Gospel," which means that they are justified, that is, renewed, regenerated, and sanctified, without any cooperation on their part. In this way they are moved from damnation to the eternal blessedness that is everlasting life.

Let us examine this "contrition": (1) Is it the same as repentance? (2) Is it of any value? (3) Does it in fact exist?

513. *Is this contrition the same as repentance or not?* The description of repentance in the sections below will enable you to conclude that repentance is not possible unless we know not only in a general way but also in specific detail that we are sinners. This is something we cannot know unless we examine ourselves, see the sins that are within us, and condemn ourselves on their account. The contrition that preachers say is necessary to our faith has nothing in common with the actions just listed. It is only a thought and a confession that we have been born into the sin of Adam and into an inclination toward the evils that spring from that sin, and that therefore the wrath of God is upon us and we deserve damnation, destruction, and eternal death. Clearly, then, this contrition is not the same as repentance.

514. The next step in these considerations is as follows. Since this contrition is not the same as repentance, *Is it of any value?* We are told that it contributes to our faith as a prerequisite to what follows, although it does not mix together with, join, or become part of that faith. But the faith that follows it is the belief that God the Father assigns us the justice acquired by his Son, and then (even though we are not actually aware that we have any sin) he declares us just, new, and holy, and puts a robe on us that has been washed and made white by the blood of the Lamb [Revelation 7:14]. When we walk in that robe, what are the evils that are in our lives but sulfurous stones thrown into the depths of the sea? What then is Adam's sin but something that has been covered over, removed, or taken away by the assignment to us of Christ's justice? When we walk along holding our belief in the justice and also the innocence of God the Savior, what then is that feeling of contrition good for if not for giving us confidence that we are safe in Abraham's embrace [Luke 16:22] and can therefore regard those who do not yet feel contrition or have faith as wretched inhabitants of hell or as dead people? They say that there is no living faith in those who lack contrition. To that one could add that if they immersed themselves now and then in damnable evils, they would not feel them or pay them attention any more than piglets lying in a filthy gutter notice the stench. From these points it is clear that this contrition, as long as it is not repentance, is not actually anything.

515. The third step in these considerations is, *Apart from repentance does this contrition really exist?*

In the spiritual world I have approached a number of people who had convinced themselves that faith assigns us Christ's merit; I have asked them whether they had ever felt any contrition.

"Why should we feel contrition?" they replied. "Since our childhood we have believed as a certainty that Christ through his suffering took away all our sins. Feeling contrition is out of alignment with this belief. Feeling contrition is to throw ourselves into hell and torment our own consciences, when in fact we know that we have been redeemed and are therefore exempt from and immune to hell."

They added that the prescribed feeling of contrition is simply a figment of the imagination now accepted as a replacement for the repentance that is so often mentioned in the Word and in fact commanded there. Yes, perhaps there is some such emotion felt by people who are simple and ignorant of the Gospel, when they hear or think about the torments of hell.

They also said that the consolation of the Gospel, which had been impressed upon them from their earliest youth, so thoroughly took away that feeling of contrition that whenever it was mentioned they would laugh to themselves about it. They felt that hell had no more power to terrify them than the fires of Vesuvius and Aetna would have over people living in Warsaw and Vienna. It scared them no more than vipers and poisonous snakes in the deserts of Arabia or tigers and lions in the forests of Tartary would scare people who live in some European city in safety, rest, and tranquility. Indeed, the wrath of God had no more power to terrify or crush them than the wrath of the king of Persia would have over those who live in Pennsylvania.

[2] From these conversations and by my own reasoning about church traditions I have become convinced that this feeling of contrition—unless it is the type of repentance described in the following pages—is a mere piece of imaginative theater. The Protestant churches substituted the feeling of contrition for repentance in order to move away from the Roman Catholics, who urge both repentance and goodwill. After the Protestants established their notion of justification by faith alone, they cited as a reason for this substitution the concern that both repentance and goodwill would introduce into their faith something that smacks of the desire to earn merit, which would defile it.

By Itself, an Oral Confession That We Are Sinners is Not Repentance

516, The Protestant Reformers who signed the Augsburg Confession have this to say about oral confession:

Not one of us can know our own sins; we are unable to list them. They are inward and hidden away. Therefore our confession of them would be false, inaccurate, maimed, and crippled. On the other hand, if we confess that we are nothing but sin, we include all our sins, leave none out, and forget about none. Although the listing of our sins is unnecessary, it should not be done away with, since it helps those with sensitive and trembling consciences; but this type of confession is vulgar and childish—it is best suited to those who are relatively simple and unrefined. (*Formula of Concord*, pages 327, 331, 380)

After they broke away from Roman Catholics, Protestants adopted this type of confession in place of active repentance because this confession is based on their belief in the assignment [of Christ's merit], which is said by itself to produce forgiveness of sins and to regenerate us, even if we lack goodwill and do not practice repentance. Another reason for this substitution is that inseparably attached to that belief is the view that we do not cooperate with the Holy Spirit at all in the moment of our justification. Yet another reason is the belief that we have no free choice in spiritual matters. And still another is the view that everything [spiritual] is the result of unmediated mercy—nothing is mediated by us or through us.

517. There are many reasons why an oral confession that we are sinners is not by itself repentance. Among them is this: Any and every human being, even godless people and devils, are capable of uttering an exclamation like this and making outward shows of devoutness, when they think about the clear and present danger of being tortured in hell. Surely everyone can see, though, that this outburst is not the result of any inner devoutness. It is an outward act of the imagination and the lungs, not an inward act of the will and the heart. The godless and the devils are still inwardly burning with love and desire for doing evil; this passion drives them the way windstorms drive a windmill. An outburst like this, then, is nothing more than a plot to fool God or to deceive ordinary people in order to be set free. How difficult is it to make our lips and our breath cry out, to raise our eyes and lift up our hands? As the Lord says in Mark, "Isaiah prophesied about you hypocrites correctly when he said, 'These people honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me'" (Mark 7:6). And in Matthew, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, because you clean the outside of your cup and plate, but the insides are full of plundering and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of your cup and plate, so that the outside may be clean as well" (Matthew 23:25, 26; that chapter includes more passages like this).

518. A similarly hypocritical form of worship is found among those who have convinced themselves of the modern-day belief that through his suffering on the cross, the Lord took away all the sins of the world, which they take to mean the sins of anyone who utters formulaic prayers about appeasement and mediation. Some such people are indeed capable of standing in the pulpit and, with a loud voice as if they were ablaze with passion, pouring forth one holy thought after another about repentance and goodwill, even though they themselves view repentance and goodwill as having no value for our salvation. They take "repentance" to mean nothing more than oral confession, and "goodwill" to mean nothing more than acts of public charity. But they preach this way merely to win the favor of the crowd. These are the type to which the following words of the Lord refer:

Many will say to me in that day, "Lord, Lord! Haven't we prophesied in your name, and haven't we done a number of miracles in your name?" But then I will declare to them, "I don't know you. Go away from me, you who practice wickedness." (Matthew 7:22, 23)

[2] On one occasion I heard someone in the spiritual world praying like this: "I am covered with skin disease. I am a leper. I have been disgusting from my mother's womb. There is nothing in me that is whole from my head to the sole of my foot. I am unworthy to lift my eyes toward God. I deserve death and eternal damnation. Have mercy on me for the sake of your Son. Purify me in his blood. The salvation of all is up to you. I beg for your mercy."

People standing nearby who had heard this asked him, "How do you know this is what you are like?"

"I know this," he replied, "because that is what I have been told."

Then he was sent to exploratory angels. In their presence he said similar things.

After conducting their investigation they gave their report: "Everything he said about himself is true. Nevertheless, he does not recognize a single evil in himself, because he has never examined himself. He had the belief that after making an oral confession, any evil he had done would no longer be evil in the sight of God, for two reasons: God would turn his eyes away from it, and he would be appeased. Therefore even though this person was a deliberate adulterer and robber, a lying slanderer, and an ardently vengeful person, he did not recover from any of his evils. This is what he was like in his will and his heart, and this is what he would have been like in word and deed if fear of the law and of losing his reputation had not held him back."

After the discovery that this was what he was like, he was judged and sent off to join other hypocrites in hell.

519. The nature of these people can be illustrated by various comparisons.

They are like church buildings full of dragon spirits and people meant by the locusts in the Book of Revelation. They are like pulpits where there is no copy of the Word, because it has been hidden under foot.

They are like [a building with] exterior walls covered in beautifully colored plaster, but screech owls and dreadful night birds are flying around inside because the windows were left open. They are like whitewashed tombs in which lie the bones of the dead. They are like gilded coins made out of dregs or dried dung. They are like bark and pith around a core of rotted wood. They are like the vestments of the sons of Aaron worn on a leprous body. They are like wounds that are thought to have been cured, but infecting pus remains just under a thin surface of skin.

Who does not know that outward holiness and inward profaneness do not go together?

People like this are more afraid than others to examine themselves. As a result they are no more aware of the vices that are inside them than they are of the foul-smelling contents of their own intestinal tract before they excrete them into the latrine.

Be careful, however, not to confuse the people I have just mentioned with those who live good lives and have good beliefs. Also, do not confuse them with those who are practicing repentance from some sins and who pray or quietly say an oral confession like [the one above] to themselves, perhaps during worship and especially in times of spiritual crisis. It is common for a confession like this both to precede and to follow reformation and regeneration.

**From Birth We Have a Tendency Toward Evils of Every Kind.
Unless We at Least Partly Lay Them Aside Through Repentance,
We Remain in Them, and If We Remain in Them
We Cannot Be Saved**

520. We are all born with a tendency toward evils. As is recognized in the church, from our mother's womb we are nothing but evil. Now, the reason this is recognized is that the church councils and leaders have passed down to us the notion that Adam's sin has been passed on to all his descendants; in this view, this is the sole reason why Adam and everyone since has been condemned; and this damnation clings to us all from the day we are born. Many teachings of the church are based on these assertions. For example, [we are told that] the Lord instituted the washing of regeneration that is called baptism so that this sin would be removed. This sin was also the reason for the Lord's Coming. Faith in his merit is the means by which this sin is removed. The churches have many other teachings as well that are based on this notion.

[2] Nevertheless, the teachings that were brought forward above in n. 469 make it clear that there is no such thing as evil that we inherit from Adam. Adam was not the first human being. "Adam" and "his wife" are used symbolically to describe the first church on this planet. The Garden of Eden symbolizes the wisdom of the people in that church; the tree of life symbolizes their focus on the Lord who was to come; the tree of the knowledge of good and evil symbolizes their focus on themselves instead of the Lord. *Secrets of Heaven*, which was published in London, uses many parallel passages found elsewhere in the Word to demonstrate thoroughly that the first chapters of Genesis describe this church in symbolic terms. Once people comprehend and absorb the teachings presented in that work, they experience a collapse of their formerly cherished opinion that the evil bred into us by our parents comes from [Adam's sin]; they realize that inherited evil comes not from Adam but from some other source.

As was amply demonstrated in the chapter on free choice [nos. 466-469], the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil exist within every human being; and the fact that these trees are said to have been placed in a garden means that we have free choice to turn ourselves toward the Lord or to turn ourselves away from him.

521. My friend, the evil we inherit comes in fact from no other source than our own parents. What we inherit, though, is not evil that we ourselves actually commit but an inclination toward evil. All who reflect on their experience will acknowledge the truth of this. Surely everyone realizes that children are born with faces, habits, and temperaments that are like those of their parents. Grandchildren and great-grandchildren resemble their grandparents and great-grandparents. By these similarities we tell families apart. This applies to nations as well. We can tell Africans from Europeans, Neapolitans from Germans, the British from the French, and so on. Who is unable to tell whether people are Jewish by their faces, eyes, speech, and gestures?

If you were able to sense the sphere of life that emanates from people's native character, you would be convinced that minds and personalities, too, carry family and national resemblances.

[2] We are not born with actual evils but only with a tendency toward them. We may have a greater or a lesser tendency to a specific evil. Therefore after death no one is judged on the basis of his or her inherited evil; we are judged only on the basis of our actual evils, the evils we ourselves have committed. This is clear from the following commandment of the Lord: "Parents will not be put to death for their children; children will not be put to death for their parents. Each will die for her or his own sins" (Deuteronomy 24:16). I have become certain of this from my experience in the spiritual world of little children who had died. They have an inclination toward evils and will them, but they do not do them, because they are brought up under the Lord's supervision and are saved.

[3] The only thing that breaks the inclination and tendency toward evil that is passed on by parents to their offspring and descendants is the new birth from the Lord that is called regeneration. In the absence of rebirth, this inclination not only remains uninterrupted but even grows from one generation to the next and becomes a stronger tendency toward evil until it encompasses evils of every kind.

This is why Jewish people today are still images of their father Judah, who took a Canaanite woman as his wife and through adultery with his daughter-in-law Tamar generated three lineages. This heredity among Jewish people grew to such a degree that they were incapable of embracing the Christian religion with any heartfelt faith. The reason I say they were incapable is that the inner will within their mind was opposed to it, and this made it impossible.

522. The rest of the heading is self-evident: every evil remains inside us unless it is laid aside; and if we remain in our evils we cannot be saved. From what has gone before, it is evident that no evil can be laid aside except by the Lord, working in those who believe in him and who love their neighbor. See especially the section in the chapter on faith that teaches that the Lord, goodwill, and faith form a unity in the same way our life, our will, and our intellect form a unity; if we separate them, each one crumbles like a pearl that is crushed to powder [nos. 362-367]; and the section that teaches that the Lord is goodwill and faith within us, and we are goodwill and faith within the Lord [nos. 368-372].

How can we become part of that unity? We cannot unless *we* lay aside at least some of our evils through repentance. I say that we lay aside our evils, because the Lord does not lay them aside by himself without our cooperation. This too was fully shown in that same chapter and in the chapter on free choice that follows it.

523. There is a saying that no one can fulfill the law, especially since someone who breaks one of the Ten Commandments breaks them all [Matthew 5:19; James 2:10-11]. But this formulaic saying does not mean what it seems to. The proper way to understand it is that people who purposely or deliberately behave in a way that is contrary to one commandment in effect behave contrary to the rest, because doing something [against one commandment] purposely and deliberately is the same as completely denying that that behavior is sinful and rejecting any argument to the contrary. And people who thus deny and reject the very idea of sin do not care whether any given act is labeled a sin or not.

This is the type of resolve developed by people who do not want to hear anything about repentance. People who, through repentance, have laid aside

some evils that are sins, though, develop a resolve to believe in the Lord and to love their neighbor. They are held by the Lord in a resolution to abstain from many other things as well. Therefore if it happens that because they did not realize what was going on or because they were overwhelmed by desire, they commit a sin, it is not held against them. It was not something they had planned to do, and they do not support what they did.

[2] I may reinforce this point as follows. In the spiritual world I have come across many people who had shared a similar lifestyle when they were in the physical world. They all dressed in fashionable clothing, enjoyed fine dining, took profit from their business, went to the theater, told jokes about lovers as if they themselves were lustful, and many other things of the kind. Yet for some of these people the angels labeled their behaviors as evil and sinful, whereas for others the angels did not. The angels declared the former guilty and the latter innocent. Upon being asked why this was, since the people had done the same things, the angels replied that they had evaluated all the people on the basis of their plans, intentions, and purposes and distinguished them accordingly. Those whose intent excused them, the angels excused, and those whose intent condemned them, the angels condemned, since all who are in heaven have good intent, and all who are in hell have evil intent.

524. These points may be illustrated with comparisons. The sins that we retain when we do not practice repentance are like various diseases we suffer that are fatal unless we are given medicine that takes away what is causing harm. Such sins are especially like gangrene, which spreads (if not caught in time) and inevitably leads to death. They are like boils and abscesses that have not been lanced and opened—the accumulation of pus will press into surrounding tissues, then into nearby internal organs, and finally into the heart, causing death.

[2] Sins that remain can also be compared with tigers, leopards, lions, wolves, and foxes. Unless these animals are kept in caves or are bound with ropes or chains, they will attack our flocks and herds, like a fox among the hens, and slaughter them. Such sins are like poisonous snakes—if the snakes are not held down with pegs and their fangs removed, they will inflict their deadly bite on us. If a whole flock of sheep is left in fields that have poisonous plants, they will die unless the shepherd moves them to safe pasture. A silkworm and therefore its silk will be destroyed if other grubs are not shaken from the leaves of its tree.

[3] Sins that remain can also be compared to grains kept in barns or houses, which become moldy, rancid, and therefore useless if they do not have enough air circulating around them to take away the harmful elements. If a fire is not extinguished when it first breaks out, it will destroy the whole city or the entire forest. If thistles and thornbushes are not uprooted, they will completely overrun a garden.

As experienced gardeners know, a trunk that comes from bad seed or a bad root sends its noxious sap into the branch of a good tree that has been grafted onto it, and the bad sap that creeps up that branch is then turned into good sap and produces useful fruit. Something similar occurs in us when evil is laid aside through the process of repentance; through repentance we are grafted onto the Lord like a branch onto a vine and we bear good fruit (John 15:4, 5, 6).

Having a Concept of Sin and Then Looking for Sin in Ourselves is the Beginning of Repentance

525. It is impossible for anyone in the Christian world to lack a concept of sin. Everyone in Christianity from early childhood on is taught what evil is, and from youth on is taught which evils are sinful. All adolescents learn this from their parents and teachers, and also from the Ten Commandments, which for all who grow up in Christianity is the first book they own. As they get a little older, they are further taught this by the preaching they hear in church, by instruction they receive at home, and most thoroughly by [their own reading of] the Word. Beyond that, they are also exposed to it by the civil laws of justice, which teach much the same things as the Ten Commandments and the other injunctions in the Word.

The evil that is sinful is simply evil against our neighbor; and evil against our neighbor is also evil against God, which is what sin is.

Nevertheless, having a concept of sin does nothing for us unless we examine the actions we have taken in our lives and see whether we have either openly or secretly done any such thing.

Before we take this action, everything about sin is just an idea to us; what the preacher says about it is only a sound that comes in our left ear, goes out our right ear, and is gone. Eventually it becomes a subject relegated to vague thoughts and mumbled words in worship, and for many it comes to seem like something imaginary and mythical.

Something completely different occurs, however, if we examine ourselves in the light of our concepts of what is sinful, discover some such thing in ourselves, say to ourselves, "This evil is sinful," and then abstain from it out of fear of eternal punishment. Then for the first time we receive the instructive and eloquent preaching in church in both of our ears, take it to heart, and turn from a non-Christian into a Christian.

526. What could possibly be better known across the entire Christian world than the idea that we should examine ourselves? Everywhere in both Roman Catholic and Protestant empires and monarchies, as people approach the Holy Supper they are given teachings and warnings that they must examine themselves, recognize and admit to their sins, and start a new life of a different nature. In British territories this is done with terrifying threats. During the prayer that precedes communion, the priest by the altar reads and proclaims the following:

The way and means of becoming a worthy partaker in the Holy Supper is first to examine your life and your conversations by the rule of God's commandments. In whatever regard you notice that you have committed an offense of will, speech, or act, then bewail your own sinfulness and confess yourselves to Almighty God, with full purpose of amending your life. If you observe that your offenses are not only against God but also against your neighbors, you shall reconcile yourselves to them, being ready to make restitution and satisfaction to the utmost of your power for all injuries and wrongs done by you to any other, and being likewise ready to for-

give others who have offended you, just as you wish to have forgiveness from God for your offenses. Otherwise receiving the Holy Supper does nothing but increase your damnation. Therefore if any of you is a blasphemer of God, or a hinderer or slanderer of his Word, or an adulterer, or someone taken with malice or ill will, or involved in any other grievous crime, repent of your sins. Or else do not come to the Holy Supper; otherwise, after you take it the Devil may enter into you as he entered into Judas, fill you with all wickedness, and bring you to destruction of both body and soul.

527. Nevertheless, there are some people who are incapable of examining themselves: for example, children and young men and women before they reach the age at which they can reflect upon themselves; simple people who lack the ability to reflect; all who have no fear of God; some who have a mental or physical illness; and also people who, entrenched in the teaching that justification comes solely through the faith that assigns us Christ's merit, have convinced themselves that if they practiced self-examination and repentance something of their own selves might intrude that would ruin their faith and divert or redirect their salvation from its sole focus.

For the types of people just listed, an oral confession is of benefit, although, as discussed earlier in this chapter [nos. 516-519], it is not the same as practicing repentance.

[2] People who know what sin is and especially those who know a lot about it from the Word and who teach about it, but who do not examine themselves and therefore see no sin within themselves, can be compared to people who scrape and save money, only to put it away in boxes and containers and make no other use of it than looking at it and counting it. They are like people who collect pieces of gold and silver jewelry and keep them in a safe in a storage room for no other purpose than to own them. They are like the businessman who hid his talent in the ground and the one who wrapped his mina in a handkerchief (Matthew 25:25; Luke 19:20). They are like the hardened pathways and rocks onto which the seed fell (Matthew 13:4, 5). They are like fig trees with abundant foliage that bear no fruit (Mark 11:13). They are like hearts of stone that have not turned to flesh ([Ezekiel 36:26]; Zechariah 7:12). They are "like partridges that nest but do not bear young. They amass riches, but without judgment. In the middle of their days they leave their riches behind and at the end of their [lives] they become fools" (Jeremiah 17:11). They are also like the five young women who had lamps but no oil (Matthew 25:1-12).

[3] People who take in many teachings from the Word about goodwill and repentance and who know all about the commandments and yet do not live by those things could be compared to gluttons who stuff food in chunks into their mouths and swallow it without chewing, so that it sits undigested in their stomach and then clogs up their chyle and causes chronic diseases, from which they eventually die a wretched death.

No matter how much light they may have, people like this can be called winters, frozen lands, arctic climates, and indeed snow and ice, because they have no spiritual warmth.

**Active Repentance is Examining Ourselves,
Recognizing and Admitting Our Sins, Praying to the Lord,
and Beginning a New Life**

528. Many passages in the Word and many unambiguous statements by the Lord there make it clear that we absolutely have to repent and that our salvation depends on it. For now I will give just the following examples. "John preached a baptism of repentance and said, 'Bear fruits worthy of repentance'" (Luke 3:3, 8; Mark 1:4). "Jesus began to preach and said, 'You must repent'" (Matthew 4:17). "Jesus said, 'Repent, because the kingdom of God has become closer'" (Mark 1:14, 15). "If you have not practiced repentance, you will all perish" (Luke 13:5). "Jesus preached to his disciples that in his name they should preach repentance and forgiveness of sins to all the nations" (Luke 24:47; Mark 6:12). Therefore "Peter preached repentance and baptism in the name of Jesus Christ for forgiveness of sins" (Acts 2:38). Peter also said, "Repent and turn yourselves around, so that your sins may be wiped out" (Acts 3:19). Paul "preached to all people everywhere that they should repent" (Acts 17:30). Paul "also proclaimed in Damascus, in Jerusalem, throughout the region of Judea, and to the nations, that they should repent, turn themselves to God, and do things that are in keeping with repentance" (Acts 26:20). Paul "also proclaimed to both Jews and Greeks repentance before God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21). To the church of Ephesus the Lord said, "I have something against you, that you have left behind the goodwill you had at first. Repent. Otherwise if you do not repent, I will remove your lampstand from its place" (Revelation 2:4, 5). To the church in Pergamos he said, "I know your works. Repent" (Revelation 2:13, 16). To the church in Thyatira he said, "I will hand you over to affliction if you have not repented of your works" (Revelation 2:19, 22, 23). To the church in Laodicea he said, "I know your works. Be zealous and repent" (Revelation 3:15, 19). "There is joy in heaven over one sinner who repents" (Luke 15:7). There are of course more passages as well.

From these teachings it is clear that we absolutely have to repent. What repentance involves, however, and how we go about it will be shown in what follows.

529. With the reasoning powers we have been given, surely we are all able to understand that repentance does not consist of a mere oral confession that we are a sinner and of listing a number of things about sin, like a hypocrite (see n. 518 above). What is easier for us, when we feel anguish and agony, than breathing out and emitting sighs and groans through our lips, beating our chests, and declaring ourselves guilty of sins of every kind, even if we are actually unaware of a single sin within ourselves? Does the Devil's gang, which lives inside our loves, go out of us along with our sighing? Surely they whistle contemptuously at our histrionics, and stay inside us as before, since we are their home.

These points serve to clarify that by "repentance" the Word does not mean mere confession; as I said before, it means a repentance from evil actions.

530. The question then is, How are we to repent? The answer is, we are to do so actively. That is, we are to examine ourselves, recognize and admit to our sins, pray to the Lord, and begin a new life.

The fact that repentance is not possible without examining ourselves was shown under the previous heading [nos. 526-527]. And what is the point of examining ourselves unless we recognize our sins? What is the point of that recognition unless we admit that those sins are in us? What is the point of all three of these steps unless we confess our sins before the Lord, pray for his help, and then begin a new life, which is the purpose of the whole exercise? This is active repentance.

[2] The fact that this is the sequence of actions to take is something we are all capable of realizing as we leave childhood and become more and more independent and able to reason for ourselves. We can see this from thinking of our baptism. The washing of baptism means regeneration; and during the ceremony our godparents promised on our behalf that we were going to reject the Devil and all his works. Likewise thinking of the Holy Supper, we have all been warned that in order to approach it worthily we have to repent from our sins, turn ourselves to God, and start a new life. We can also think of the Ten Commandments—the catechism that is in the hands of all Christians. Six of the ten simply command us not to do evil things. If we do not remove these evils through repentance, we are unable to love our neighbor and even less able to love God, even though the Law and the Prophets, that is, the Word and therefore salvation, hinge on these two commandments [Matthew 22:40].

[3] Repentance becomes effective if we practice it regularly—that is, every time we prepare ourselves to take the Communion of the Holy Supper. Afterward, if we abstain from one sin or another that we have discovered in ourselves, this is enough to make our repentance real. When we reach this point, we are on the pathway to heaven, because we then begin to turn from an earthly person into a spiritual person and to be born anew with the help of the Lord.

531. This change can be illustrated by the following comparison. Before repentance, we are like a desert, inhabited by terrifying wild creatures, dragons, eagle-owls, screech owls, vipers, and bloodletting snakes; in the clumps of bushes in that desert there are the owls and wild beasts of the desert [mentioned in the Bible], and satyrs are dancing [Isaiah 13:21]. After these creatures have been expelled by human work and effort, however, that desert can be plowed and cultivated into fields, and these can be planted with oats, beans, and flax, and later on with barley and wheat.

This can also be compared to the wickedness that is abundant and dominant in humankind. If evildoers were not chastised and punished with whippings and death, no city would survive; no nation would last. In effect, each one of us is society itself in its smallest form. If we do not treat ourselves in a spiritual way as evildoers are treated by the larger society in an earthly way, we are going to be chastised and punished after death; and this will continue until out of sheer fear of further punishment we stop doing evil, even if we can never be compelled to do what is good out of love for it.

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True Repentance is Examining Not Only the Actions of Our Life but Also the Intentions of Our Will

532. The reason why true repentance is to examine not only the actions of our life but also the intentions of our will is that our intellect and our will produce our actions. We speak from our thought and we act from our will; therefore our speech is our thought speaking, and our action is our will acting. Since this is the origin of what we say and do, it is clear without a doubt that it is these two faculties that commit the sin when our body sins.

It is in fact possible for us to repent of evil things we have done through our bodies but still think about evil and will it. This is like cutting down the trunk of a bad type of tree but leaving its root still in the ground; the same bad tree grows up from the root again and also spreads itself around. There is a different outcome when the root is pulled up, though; and this is what happens within us when we explore the intentions of our will and lay our evils aside through repentance.

[2] We explore the intentions of our will by exploring our thoughts. Our intentions reveal themselves in our thoughts—for example, when we contemplate, will, and intend acts of revenge, adultery, theft, or false witness, or entertain desires for those things. This applies as well to acts of blasphemy against God, against the holy Word, and against the church, and so on.

If we keep our minds focused on these issues, and explore whether we would do such things if no fear of the law or concern for our reputation stood in the way, and if after this exploration we decide that we do not will those things, because they are sins, then we are practicing a repentance that is true and deep. This is even more the case when we are feeling delight in those evils and are free to do them, but at that moment we resist and abstain. If we practice this over and over, then when our evils come back we sense our delight in them as something unpleasant, and in time we condemn them to hell. This is the meaning of these words of the Lord: "Any who try to find their soul will lose it, and any who lose their soul for my sake, will find it" (Matthew 10:39).

People who remove evils from their will through this type of repentance are like those who in time pulled up the weeds that had been sown by the Devil in their field, allowing seeds planted by the Lord God the Savior to gain free ground and to sprout for the harvest (Matthew 13:25-30).

533. There are two loves that have been deeply rooted in the human race for a long time now: love for dominating everyone, and love for possessing everyone's wealth. If the reins are let out on the first type of love, it rushes on until it wants to be the God of all heaven. If the reins are let out on the second type of love, it rushes on until it wants to be the God of the whole world. All other forms of love for evil are ranked below these two and serve as their army.

These two loves are extremely difficult to find by self-examination. They live at a deep level within us and hide themselves away. They are like vipers lurking in a craggy rock surface that save up their venom so that when someone falls asleep on the rock, they strike lethal blows and then slither back out of sight.

These loves are also like the sirens mentioned by ancient writers. The sirens would use their singing to lure people in and kill them.

These two loves dress themselves up in robes and tunics just the way devils use magic to project images in order to appear well dressed before their own cronies and others they wish to deceive.

[2] It is important to note, however, that these two loves can be more prevalent among commoners than among the great; more prevalent among the poor than among the wealthy; more prevalent among subjects than among royalty. The latter in each case are born into power and wealth. Over time, the latter come to view their power and wealth much the way people at a somewhat lower level—commanders, governors, admirals, or even impoverished farm workers—view their own households and possessions. It is not the same, though, when monarchs wish to exercise power over nations that are not their own.

[3] The intentions of our will must be examined, because our love resides in our will. Our will is a vessel for our love, as shown above [39, 263, 362:1]. From its residence in our will, our whole love imparts its feelings of delight to the perceptions and thoughts in our intellect. Our perceptions and thoughts do nothing on their own; they serve our will. They are in harmony with our will and agree with and support everything that has to do with our love.

Our will, then, is the home in which we live. Our intellect is just the front hall through which we go in and out. This is why I said above that we must examine the intentions of our will. When these are examined and have been laid aside, we are lifted from our earthly will—where the evils we inherited and the evils we have actually committed are lodged—to our spiritual will. Through that higher will, the Lord reforms and regenerates our earthly will, and also works through it to reform and regenerate the sensory and voluntary faculties of our body, until the process has encompassed the whole of us.

534. People who do not examine themselves are like people with a sickness that closes off their capillaries and therefore corrupts their blood, causing their limbs to go to sleep and atrophy, and resulting in severe chronic diseases because their humors, and therefore the blood that arises from them, are viscous, sticky, irritating, and acidic. People who do examine themselves, however, including the intentions of their will, are like people who are healed from these diseases and regain the vitality they felt when they were young.

People who examine themselves in the right way are like ships from Ophir completely filled with gold, silver, and precious stones; before they examined themselves, though, they were like barges loaded down with unclean freight, carting away the filth and excrement from city streets.

People who examine themselves deeply become like mines, whose walls all shine with ores of precious metals; before they do so, however, they are like foul-smelling swamps inhabited by serpents and poisonous snakes with glittering scales, and harmful insects with shiny wings.

People who do not examine themselves are like the dry bones in the valley; but after people have explored themselves they become like those same bones after the Lord Jehovih put sinews on them, brought flesh upon them, covered them with skin, and breathed spirit into them, and they came to life (Ezekiel 37:1-14).

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**Repentance is Also Practiced by
Those Who Do Not Examine Themselves
but Nevertheless Stop Doing Evils Because Evils Are Sinful;
This Kind of Repentance is Done by People Who Do
Acts of Goodwill as a Religious Practice**

535. In the Protestant Christian world, active repentance, which is examining ourselves, recognizing and admitting to our sins, praying to the Lord, and starting a new life, is extremely difficult to practice, for a number of reasons that will be covered under the final heading in this chapter [nos. 564-566; see also nos. 561-563]. Therefore here is an easier kind of repentance: When we are considering doing something evil and are forming an intention to do it, we say to ourselves, "I am thinking about this and I am intending to do it, but because it is a sin, I am not going to do it." This counteracts the enticement that hell is injecting into us and keeps it from making further inroads.

It is amazing but true that it is easy for any of us to rebuke someone else who is intending to do something evil and say, "Don't do that—that's a sin!" And yet it is difficult for us to say the same thing to ourselves. The reason is that saying it to ourselves requires a movement of the will, but saying it to someone else requires only a low level of thought based on things we have heard.

[2] There was an investigation in the spiritual world to see which people were capable of doing this second type of repentance. It was discovered that there are as few of such people as there are doves in a vast desert. Some people indicated that they were indeed capable of this second type of repentance, but that they were incapable of examining themselves and confessing their sins before God. Nevertheless, all people who do good actions as a religious practice avoid actual evils. It is extremely rare, though, that people reflect on the inner realms that belong to their will. They suppose that because they are involved in good actions they are not involved in evil actions, and even that their goodness covers up their evil.

But, my friend, to abstain from evils is the first step in gaining goodwill. The Word teaches this. The Ten Commandments teach it. Baptism teaches it. The Holy Supper teaches it.

Reason, too, teaches it. How could any of us escape from our evils or drive them away without ever taking a look at ourselves? How can our goodness become truly good without being inwardly purified?

I know that all devout people and also all people of sound reason who read this will nod and see it as genuine truth; yet even so, only a few are going to do what it says.

536. Nevertheless, all people who do what is good as a religious practice—not only Christians but also non-Christians—are accepted and adopted by the Lord after they die. The Lord says, "I was hungry and you gave me something to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger and you took me in. I was naked and you clothed me. I was sick and you visited me. I was in prison and you came to me." And he said, 'As much as you did this to one of the least of my people, you did it to me. Come, you who are blessed, and possess as your inheritance the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world'" (Matthew 25:34-36, 40).

Here I will add something previously unknown: All people who do good things as a religious practice, after death reject the teaching of the church of today that there are three divine persons who have existed from eternity. They also reject the belief of today's church as it is applied to those three in sequence. Instead they turn themselves to the Lord God the Savior and drink in the teachings of the new church with great pleasure.

[2] All others, however, who have not exercised goodwill as a religious practice, have hearts that are as hard as diamonds. At first they worship three gods, then the Father alone, and finally no God. They regard the Lord God the Savior as not the Son of God but only the son of Mary born from her having slept with Joseph. Then they shake themselves free of all the good actions and true insights taught by the new church and soon join up with dragon spirits. Along with these spirits they are driven off into deserts or caves that lie at the outer boundaries of the so-called Christian world. After some time elapses, as a result of their separation from the new heaven they rush into committing crimes and are therefore sent down into hell.

[3] This is the final outcome for those who do not do acts of goodwill as a religious practice. They believe that none of us can do anything good on our own unless we do it to earn merit; therefore they omit doing such things. They join up with the goats, who are condemned and thrown into the eternal fire prepared for the Devil and his angels, because they did not do the things that the sheep did (Matthew 25:41 and following). Note that it does not say there that they did evil things; it just says that they did *not* do *good* things. People who do good things, but not as a religious practice, actually do evil things, since "No one can serve two lords without hating one and loving the other, and staying close to one and ignoring the other" (Matthew 6:24). Jehovah says through Isaiah, "Wash yourselves; purify yourselves. Remove the evil of your actions from before my eyes. Stop doing evil. Learn to do what is good. Then, if your sins have been like scarlet, they will become as white as snow. If they have been red as crimson, they will be like wool" (Isaiah 1:16, 17, 18). Jehovah says to Jeremiah, "Stand in the entrance to Jehovah's house and proclaim there this word. 'Thus spoke Jehovah Sabaoth, the God of Israel: "Make your ways and your works good. Do not put your trust in the words of a lie, saying, 'The temple of Jehovah, the temple of Jehovah is here [that is, the church].' When you steal, kill, [commit adultery,] and swear falsely, then do you come and stand before me in this house that carries my name? Do you say, 'We were carried away,' when you are committing all these abominations? Has this house become a den of thieves? Behold, I, even I, have seen it," says Jehovah'" (Jeremiah 7:2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11).

537. It is important to realize that people who do what is good only because they possess a natural goodness and not because of their religion are not accepted [by the Lord] after they die. This is because the only goodness that was in their goodwill was earthly and not also spiritual; and spiritual goodness is what forges a partnership between the Lord and us, not earthly goodness without spiritual goodness. Earthly goodness is of the flesh alone, and is inherited at our birth from our parents. Spiritual goodness is goodness of the spirit and is born anew with the help of the Lord.

People who, as a religious practice, do good actions that have to do with goodwill and, as part of that same practice, do not do evil things, but who have

not yet accepted the teaching of the new church about the Lord, can be compared to trees that bear good fruit, but only a few pieces of it. Such people are also like trees that bear pieces of fruit that are fine but small; the trees are nevertheless kept and taken care of in gardens. They can also be compared to olive trees and fig trees that grow wild in the forest, and to fragrant herbs and balsam bushes that grow wild on hills. They are like little buildings that are houses of God in which devout worship occurs. They are the sheep on the right [Matthew 25:33], and are examples of the ram that was attacked by a goat in Daniel 8:2-14. In heaven their clothes are red. After they have been initiated into the good actions and attitudes taught by the new church, however, their clothes become purple and (if they also accept the truths of the new church) more and more beautifully radiant.

**We Need to Make Our Confession
Before the Lord God the Savior,
and Also to Beg for His Help and Power in Resisting Evils**

538. It is the Lord God the Savior to whom we must turn, (1) because he is the God of heaven and earth, the Redeemer and Savior, who has omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence, who is both mercy and justice itself, and (2) because we are his creation and the church is his sheepfold, and we are commanded many times in the New Covenant to turn to him and worship and adore him.

In the following words in John the Lord commands that we are to turn to him alone:

Truly, truly I say to you, those who do not enter through the door to the sheepfold but instead climb up some other way are thieves and robbers. The person who goes in through the door is the shepherd of the sheep. I am the door. Anyone who enters through me will be saved and will find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal, slaughter, and destroy. I have come so that they may have life and abundance. I am the good shepherd. (John 10:1, 2, 9, 10, 11)

The "other way" that we are not to climb up is toward God the Father, because he cannot be seen, and is therefore inaccessible and unavailable for partnership. This is why he came into the world and made himself able to be seen, accessible, and available for partnership. He did this for only one reason: so that human beings could be saved. If we do not direct our thinking toward God *as a human being*, our whole mental sight of God is lost. It collapses like our eyesight when we send it out into the universe. Instead of God we see empty nothingness, or nature as a whole, or certain objects within nature.

[2] The being who came into the world was God himself, who from eternity [has been and] is the One. This is very clear from the birth of the Lord and Savior. He was conceived by the power of the Highest through the Holy Spirit. As a result the Virgin Mary gave birth to his human manifestation. It follows then that his soul was the Divinity itself that is called the Father—God is, after all, indivisible—and the human being born as a result is the human manifesta-

tion of God the Father, which is called the Son of God (Luke 1:32, 34, 35). It follows from all this that when we turn to the Lord God the Savior, we are turning to God the Father as well. This is why he replied to Philip, when Philip asked him to show them the Father, "Those who see me see the Father. How then can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me" (John 14:6-11). For more on this, see many things that are stated in the chapters on God, the Lord, the Holy Spirit, and the Trinity.

539. There are two duties that we are obliged to perform after we have examined ourselves: prayer and confession. The *prayer* is to be a request that [the Lord] have mercy on us, give us the power to resist the evils that we have repented of, and provide us an inclination and desire to do what is good, since "without him we cannot do anything" (John 15:5). The *confession* is to be that we see, recognize, and admit to our evils and that we are discovering that we are miserable sinners.

There is no need for us to list our sins before the Lord and no need to beg that he forgive them. The reason we do not need to list our sins before the Lord is that we searched them out within ourselves and saw them, and therefore they are present before the Lord because they are present before us. The Lord was leading us in our self-examination; he disclosed our sins; he inspired our grief and, along with it, the motivation to stop doing them and to begin a new life.

[2] There are two reasons why we should not beg the Lord to forgive our sins. The first is that sins are not abolished, they are just relocated within us. They are laid aside when after repentance we stop doing them and start a new life. This is because there are countless yearnings that stick to each evil in a kind of cluster; these cannot be set aside in a moment, but they can be dealt with in stages as we allow ourselves to be reformed and regenerated.

The second reason is that the Lord is mercy itself. Therefore he forgives the sins of all people. He blames no one for any sin. He says, "They do not know what they are doing" [Luke 23:34] (but this does not mean our sins are taken away altogether). To Peter, who was asking how many times he should forgive a friend who was sinning against him—whether he should give forgiveness as many as seven times—the Lord answered, "I do not say as many as seven times, but as many as seventy times seven" (Matthew 18:21, 22). How forgiving, then, is the Lord?

It does no harm, though, for people who are weighed down by a heavy conscience to lighten their load by listing their sins before a minister of the church, for the sake of absolution. Doing so introduces them to the habit of examining themselves and reflecting on their daily evils. Nevertheless, this type of confession is earthly in nature, whereas the confession described above is spiritual.

560. Giving adoration to some vicar [of Christ] on earth as we would to God or calling on some saint as we would call on God has no more effect on heaven than worshiping the sun, the moon, and the stars, or seeking for a response from fortune-tellers and believing in their meaningless utterances. Doing this would be like worshiping a church building but not God, who is in that church. It would be like submitting a request for glorious honors not to the king himself but to a servant of the king who is carrying his scepter and crown. This would be pointless, like paying deference to a gleaming scarlet robe but not the person who is

wearing it; like praising the glorious light and golden rays from the sun but not the sun itself; like saluting names but not people. The following statement in John is for people who do such things: "We must remain in truth in Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. Little children, beware of idols" (1 John 5:20, 21).

**Active Repentance is Easy
for People Who Have Done It a Few Times;
Those Who Have Not Done It, However,
Experience Tremendous Inner Resistance to It**

561. Active repentance is examining ourselves, recognizing [and admitting to] our sins, confessing them before the Lord, and beginning a new life. This accords with the description of it under the preceding headings. People in the Protestant Christian world—by which I here mean all [Christians] who have separated from the Roman Catholic Church, and also people who belong to that church but have not practiced active repentance—experience tremendous inner resistance to such repentance, for various reasons. Some do not want to do it. Some are afraid. They are in the habit of not doing it, and this breeds first unwillingness, and then intellectual and rational support for not doing it, and in some cases, grief, dread, and terror of it.

[2] The primary reason for the tremendous resistance to active repentance among Protestant Christians is their belief that repentance and goodwill contribute nothing to their salvation. They believe that faith alone brings salvation; when faith is assigned to us, it comes with forgiveness of sins, justification, renewal, regeneration, sanctification, and eternal salvation, without our having to cooperate either actually on our own or even seemingly on our own. The teachers of their dogma call this cooperation of ours useless, and even a roadblock that is resistant and harmful to [our reception of] Christ's merit. Although the lay public is ignorant of the mysteries of this faith, its teaching has nevertheless been sown in them through just a few words: "Faith alone saves," and "Who among us can do anything good on our own?"

This has made repentance among Protestants like a nest of baby birds abandoned by parents who were caught and killed by a bird-catcher.

An additional cause of this resistance is that in spirit, so-called Reformed people are among spirits in the spiritual world who are no different than they are, who introduce these reactions into their thinking and steer them away from the first step of introspection and self-examination.

562. I have asked many Protestants in the spiritual world why they did not practice active repentance, even though in all their denominations they were commanded to do so in the Word and in baptism and also before coming to Holy Communion. They had various responses.

Some said that it is enough just to feel contrition and then to orally confess to being a sinner.

Some said that repentance of the type mentioned above, because it is something we have to do of our own will, is not in agreement with the faith that is universally received.

Some said, "Who could examine themselves when they know they are nothing but sin? It would be like casting a net into a lake that is full from top to bottom of bad-smelling muck that contains stinging worms!"

Some said, "Who would be able to look so deeply into themselves that they could see the sin of Adam inside, as the source of all their actual evils? Aren't their evils and the sin of Adam washed away by the waters of baptism, and wiped away or completely covered over by the merit of Christ? What is repentance in that case but an imposition that seriously disturbs the conscientious? Surely, because of the Gospel we are under grace and not under the hard law of that repentance." And so on.

Some said that when they set out to examine themselves, they are seized with dread and terror as if they had seen a monster next to their bed at twilight. These responses reveal why active repentance in the Protestant Christian world is, so to speak, neglected and moldy.

[2] In the presence of these same people I asked some Roman Catholics about their acts of confession before their ministers and whether they experienced inner resistance to confession. They answered that after they were initiated into it, they were not afraid to list their misdeeds before a confessor who was not severe. They even felt some pleasure in compiling their list, and would laugh when they said some of the lighter things out loud, although they would state the serious ones a little more timidly. Every year, at the time established by custom of years past, they would go back willingly again. After absolution, they would celebrate. They also mentioned that they regarded as impure any people who were unwilling to disclose the uncleanness in their hearts.

When the Protestants who were present heard all this, they ran away. Some were laughing and guffawing; some were shocked but also gave the Catholics praise.

[3] Afterward some other people came along who were Catholic but had lived in Protestant areas. According to the customary practice there, they had gone before their priest and made not a specific confession like their companions from elsewhere in Catholicism but only a general confession. These people said that they were utterly unable to examine themselves, to investigate or divulge either the evils they had done or the secret evils in their thoughts. They felt as much resistance and terror as they would crossing through a ditch to climb ramparts where an armed soldier was shouting, "Stop! Go no farther."

This makes it clear that active repentance is easy for those who have done it a few times, but those who have not done it experience tremendous resistance to it.

563. It is well known that habits form a kind of second nature, and therefore what is easy for one person is difficult for another. This applies also to examining ourselves and confessing what we have found.

It is easy for manual laborers, porters, and farm workers to work with their arms from morning till evening, but a delicate person of the nobility cannot do the same work for half an hour without fatigue and sweating. It is easy for a forerunner with a walking stick and comfortable shoes to ply the road for miles, whereas someone used to riding in a carriage has difficulty jogging slowly from one street to the next. [2] All artisans who are devoted to their craft pursue it easily and willingly, and when they are away from it they long to get back to it; but

it is almost impossible to force a lazy person with the same skills to practice that craft. The same goes for everyone who has some occupation or pursuit.

What is easier for someone who is pursuing religious devotion than praying to God? And what is more difficult for someone who is enslaved to ungodliness?

All priests are afraid the first time they preach before royalty. But after they get used to it, they go on boldly.

What is easier for angelic people than lifting their eyes up to heaven? What is easier for devilish people than casting their eyes down to hell? (If they are hypocrites, however, they can look toward heaven in a similar way, but with aversion of heart.)

We are all saturated with the goal we have in mind and the habits that result from it.

**Those Who Have Never Practiced Repentance or Looked at
or Studied Themselves Eventually Do Not Even Know
What Damnable Evil or Saving Goodness is**

564. Since only a few people in the Protestant Christian world practice repentance, it is important to add that those who have not looked at or studied themselves eventually do not even know what damnable evil or saving goodness is, because they lack the religious practice that would allow them to find out. The evil that we do not see, recognize, or admit to stays with us; and what stays with us becomes more and more firmly established until it blocks off the inner areas of our minds. As a result, we become first earthly, then sense-oriented, and finally bodily. In these cases we do not know of any damnable evil or any saving goodness. We become like a tree on a hard rock that spreads its roots into the crevices in the rocks and eventually dries up because it has no moisture.

[2] All people who were brought up properly are rational and moral. There are different ways of being rational, however: a worldly way and a heavenly way. People who have become rational and moral in a worldly way but not also in a heavenly way are rational and moral only in word and gesture. Inwardly they are animals, and predatory animals at that, because they are in step with the inhabitants of hell, all of whom are like that. People who have become rational and moral in a heavenly way as well, however, are truly rational and truly moral, because they have these qualities in spirit as well as in word and deed. Something spiritual lies hidden within their words and actions like the soul that activates their earthly, sense-oriented, and bodily levels. Such people are in step with the inhabitants of heaven.

Therefore there is such a thing as a rational, moral person who is spiritual, and such a thing as a rational, moral person who is only earthly. In the world you cannot tell them apart, especially if their hypocrisy is well rehearsed. Angels in heaven can tell the two apart, however, as easily as telling doves from eagles or sheep from tigers.

[3] Those who are only earthly can see good and evil qualities in others and criticize them, but because they have never looked at or studied themselves, they see no evil in themselves. If someone else discovers an evil in them, they use

their rational faculty to hide it, as a snake hides its head in the dust; then they plunge themselves into that evil the way a hornet dives into dung.

Their delight in evil is what has this blinding effect. It surrounds them like a fog over a swamp, absorbing and suffocating rays of light. This is the nature of hellish delight. It radiates from hell and flows into every human being, but only into the soles of our feet, our back, and the back of our head. If we receive that inflow with our forehead and our chest, however, we are slaves to hell, because the human cerebrum serves the intellect and its wisdom, whereas the cerebellum serves the will and its love. This is why we have two brains. The only thing that can amend, reform, and turn around hellish delight of the kind just mentioned is a rationality and morality that is spiritual.

565. Allow me to briefly describe people whose rationality and morality are merely earthly. Such people are truly sense-oriented. If they continue in this direction, they become bodily or carnal. The description that follows will be presented as a list of points in outline form.

"Sensory" is a term for the lowest level of life within the human mind; it clings, and is closely joined, to the five senses of the human body.

"Sense-oriented people" are people who judge everything on the basis of their physical senses—people who will not believe anything unless they can see it with their eyes and touch it with their hands. What they can see and touch they call "something." Everything else they reject.

The inner levels of their mind, levels that see in heaven's light, are closed to the point where they see nothing true related to heaven or the church. Their thinking occurs on an outermost level and not inside, where the light is spiritual. Since the light they have is dull and earthly, people like this are inwardly opposed to things related to heaven and the church, although they are outwardly able to speak in favor of them. If they have hope of gaining ruling power or wealth by so doing, they are even capable of speaking ardently in favor of them.

The educated and the scholarly who are deeply convinced of falsities—especially people who oppose the truths in the Word—are more sense-oriented than others.

[2] Sense-oriented people are able to reason sharply and skillfully, because their thinking is so close to their speech as to be practically in it—almost inside their lips; and also because they attribute all intelligence solely to the ability to speak from memory. They also have great skill at defending things that are false. After they have defended falsities convincingly, they themselves believe those falsities are true. They base their reasoning and defense on mistaken impressions from the senses that the public finds captivating and convincing.

Sense-oriented people are more deceptive and ill intentioned than others. Misers, adulterers, and deceitful people are especially sense-oriented, although before the world they appear smart.

The inner areas of their mind are disgusting and filthy; they use them to communicate with the hells. In the Word they are called the dead.

The inhabitants of hell are sense-oriented. The more sense-oriented they are, the deeper in hell they are. The sphere of hellish spirits is connected to the sensory level of our mind through a kind of back door. In the light of heaven the backs of their heads look hollowed out.

The ancients had a term for people who debate on the basis of sense impressions alone: they called them serpents of the tree of the knowledge [of good and evil].

[3] Sense impressions ought to have the lowest priority, not the highest. For wise and intelligent people, sense impressions do have the lowest priority and are subservient to things that are deep inside. For unwise people, sense impressions have the highest priority and are in control.

If sense impressions have the lowest priority, they help open a pathway for the intellect. We then extrapolate truths by a method of extraction.

Sense impressions stand closest to the world and admit information that is coming in from it; they sift through that information.

We are in touch with the world by means of sense impressions and with heaven by means of impressions on our rationality.

Sense impressions supply things that serve the inner realms of the mind.

There are sense impressions that feed the intellect and sense impressions that feed the will.

Unless our thought is lifted above the level of our sense impressions, we have very little wisdom. When our thinking rises above sense impressions, it enters a clearer light and eventually comes into the light of heaven. From this light we become aware of things that are flowing down into us from heaven.

The outermost contents of our intellect are earthly information. The outermost contents of our will are sensory pleasures.

566. Our earthly self is like an animal. Over the course of our lives we take on the image of an animal. Because of this, sense-oriented people in the spiritual world appear surrounded by animals of every kind. These animals are correspondences. Regarded on its own, our earthly self is only an animal, but because a spiritual level has been added to it we are capable of becoming human. If we decline to undergo this transformation, even though we have the faculties that make it possible, we can still pretend to be human although we are then actually just animals that can talk. In that case our talking is based on earthly rationality, but our thinking is based on spiritual insanity; our actions are based on earthly morality, but our love is based on spiritual satyriasis. To someone else who has a rationality that is spiritual, our actions seem almost exactly like the frenzied dancing of someone bitten by a tarantula, called Saint Vitus's or Saint Guy's dance.

[2] As we all know, a hypocrite can talk about God, a robber can talk about honesty, an adulterer can talk about being a faithful spouse, and so on. We have the ability to close and open the door that stands between what we think and what we say, and the door that stands between what we intend and what we do (the doorkeeper is prudence or else deceitfulness). Without the ability to close these doors, we would quickly fall into acts of wickedness and cruelty with greater savagery than any animal. That door is opened in us all after death, though, and then it becomes apparent what we truly are. Then the forces that keep us in check are punishment and imprisonment in hell.

Therefore, kind reader, take a look inside yourself, diligently search out one evil or another within yourself, and turn away from it for religious reasons. If you turn away from it for any other reason or purpose, you are only doing so that it will no longer appear before the world.



567. To these points I will add the following memorable occurrences.

The first memorable occurrence. I was suddenly overcome with a deathly illness. My whole head felt worse and worse. A poisonous smoke was blowing in from the Jerusalem that is called Sodom and Egypt (Revelation 11:8). I was half dead and in severe pain. I thought I was about to die. I lay in bed in that condition for three and a half days. My spirit developed this sickness, and then my body came down with it as well.

Then I heard voices around me saying, "Look, he is lying dead in the street of our city—the one who was preaching that we should repent so that our sins would be forgiven and [that we should worship] only Christ the human being."

They asked some of the clergy, "Is he worthy of burial?"

The clergy replied, "No. Let him lie there as a spectacle."

They kept going away and coming back to mock me.

And I am telling the truth when I say that this happened to me at the very time that I was explaining the eleventh chapter of the Book of Revelation.

Then I heard more serious words from the people who had been mocking me—especially these: "How can repentance be practiced apart from faith? How can Christ the human being be adored as God? Given that we are saved for free without our deserving it at all, what then do we need except faith alone—the faith that God the Father sent the Son to take away the damnation of the law, to credit us with his own merit, to justify us before the Father, to absolve us from our sins (with the priest as his mouthpiece), and then to give us the Holy Spirit, who activates every good thing within us? Aren't these points in accordance with Scripture and also with reason?"

The crowd of bystanders applauded these statements.

[2] I heard all this but was unable to respond because I was lying there almost dead.

After three and a half days, however, my spirit regained its health. In the spirit I went from that street into the city, and I said again, "Practice repentance and believe in Christ, and your sins will be forgiven and you will be saved. If you do not, you will perish. The Lord himself preached that we must repent in order for our sins to be forgiven, and that we must believe in him. He commanded the disciples to preach the same message. Surely the dogma of your faith leads to utter complacency about the way you live!"

"What are you babbling about?" they replied. "The Son has made satisfaction. The Father has assigned us the Son's credit and has justified us for the reason that these are our beliefs. We are now led by the spirit of grace. What sin could there be within us? What death could there be among us? Do you grasp this Good News, you preacher of sin and repentance?"

Then a voice from heaven said, "Surely the faith of someone who has not practiced repentance is nothing but a dead faith. The end has come, the end has come upon you who are complacent, guiltless in your own eyes, justified by your own faith—satans!"

At that moment a chasm suddenly opened up in the middle of the city and spread outward. The houses were falling in on each other and the people

were swallowed up. Soon water bubbled up from the great hole and flooded what was already devastated.

[3] After they sank to a lower level and were seemingly covered in water, I wanted to know what their situation was like in the depths. A voice from heaven told me, "You will see and hear."

Then the water that had seemingly flooded them disappeared from before my eyes. (Water in the spiritual world is a correspondence that appears around people who have false beliefs.) I saw the people in a sandy place at a great depth, where there were piles of stones. They were running between the piles of stones and loudly bemoaning their having been cast out of their great city. They were shouting and wailing, "Why has this happened to us? We are clean, pure, just, and holy because of our faith. Through our faith we have been cleansed, purified, justified, and sanctified."

Some among them were saying, "Hasn't our faith made it possible for us to appear before God the Father and be seen and esteemed by him and declared before angels as clean, pure, just, and holy? Haven't we been reconciled, atoned for, ritually purged, and therefore absolved, washed, and wiped free of our sins? Didn't Christ take away the damnation of the law? Why then have we been thrown down here like the damned? We did hear from a bold proclaimer of sin in our great city, 'Believe in Christ and practice repentance.' But didn't we believe in Christ when we believed in his merit? Didn't we practice repentance when we confessed that we were sinners? Why then has this happened to us?"

[4] A voice was then heard from the side: "Are you aware of any sin in yourselves? Have you ever examined yourselves, and then abstained from any evil because it is sinful against God? If you do not abstain from sin, then you are still in it; and sin is the Devil. You, then, are the people of whom the Lord spoke when he said, 'You will then begin to say, "We ate and drank with you. You taught in our streets." But he will say, "I tell you, I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from me, all you workers of wickedness"' (Luke 13:26, 27). Matthew 7:22, 23 is also about you. Therefore go away, each to your own place. Do you see the openings to those caves? Go in there, and each of you will be given your own work to do, and food in accordance with your work. If you don't go in, your hunger will drive you in."

[5] After that a voice from heaven came to some people who were up at the level of the ground but were outside the city (see Revelation 11:13). The voice said loudly, "Beware! Beware of associating with people like that. Don't you understand that evils that are called sins and acts of wickedness make us unclean and impure? How can you be cleansed and purified from them except by active repentance and by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? Active repentance is examining yourselves, recognizing and admitting to your sins, accepting that you are at fault, confessing them before the Lord, begging for his help and power in resisting them, stopping doing them, and living a new life. All this is to be done as if you were doing it on your own. Do this once or twice a year when you are about to take Holy Communion. Afterward, when the sins for which you are at fault recur, say to yourselves, 'We do not want these, because they are sins against God.' This is active repentance.

[6] "Surely you can all recognize that if you do not examine yourselves and see your sins, you remain in them. From birth you find all evils delightful. It feels good to take revenge, to be promiscuous, to cheat, to slander, and especially

to dominate others out of love for yourselves. Because they feel good you overlook them. If someone happens to point out to you that they are sins, you make excuses for them because they feel good; you use false arguments to insist that they are not sins, and you stay in them. And afterward you do those evil things more than you did before, to the point where you no longer know what sin is or even whether there is such a thing.

"It is different, however, for people who actively go through a process of repentance. The evils that they recognize and admit to [in themselves] they call sins. They therefore begin to abstain and turn away from them. Eventually they begin to feel the pleasure of those evils as unpleasant. The more this happens, the more they see and love what is good, and eventually even feel delight in it, which is the delight that the angels in heaven feel. Briefly put, the more we put the Devil behind us, the more we are adopted by the Lord and are taught, led, held back from what is evil, and kept in what is good by him. This is the pathway from hell to heaven; there is no other way."

[7] It is amazing that Protestants have such a deep-seated resistance, antipathy, and aversion to active repentance. Their reaction to it is so strong that they cannot force themselves to do self-examination, to see their sins, and to confess them before God. It is as if they are overcome by horror as soon as they form the intention to do it. I have asked many Protestants in the spiritual world about this, and they all said that it is completely beyond their strength. When they heard that Catholics practice this, that is, that they examine themselves and openly confess their sins to a monk, the Protestants were profoundly amazed, especially since the Protestants themselves could not do this even in secret before God, although they had been commanded, just as the Catholics had been, to do this when they were about to take the Holy Supper. Some people in the spiritual world investigated why this was, and discovered that faith alone was what had led to such an impenitent state and such an attitude of heart. Then those Protestants were allowed to see that Catholics who worship Christ and do not call on the saints are saved.

[8] After that we heard a kind of thunder, and a voice speaking from heaven and saying, "We are amazed. Say to the gathering of Protestants, 'Believe in Christ and practice repentance, and you will be saved.'"

So I said it.

I added, "Clearly, *baptism* is a sacrament of repentance and therefore introduction into the church. What else do godparents promise for the child being baptized but that he or she will renounce the Devil and all his works? Clearly, *the Holy Supper* is a sacrament of repentance and therefore introduction into heaven. Doesn't the priest say to those about to take it that they absolutely have to practice repentance first? Clearly, the catechism is the universal teaching of the Christian church; it urges repentance. Isn't it true that the six commandments on the second tablet say, 'You are not to do this and that thing that is evil,' not, 'You are to do this and that thing that is good'? Therefore you are capable of knowing that the more we renounce and turn away from what is evil, the more we desire and love what is good; and that before that, we do not know what good is, or even what evil is."

568. *The second memorable occurrence.* Most people who are devout or wise want to know what the outcome of their life will be after they die. I will reveal some generalities so that they will know.

After they die, all people become aware that they are still alive but are in another world. They hear that above them lies heaven where there are eternal joys, and below them lies hell where there is eternal suffering. Next, they are put back into the outer selves they had while they were still in the physical world. At that point they believe that they are definitely going to heaven. They speak intelligently and act prudently.

Some of them say, "We have lived moral lives. We have had honorable pursuits. We have not done evil deliberately."

Others say, "We have attended church regularly. We have heard Mass. We have kissed holy statues. We have poured forth prayers on our knees."

Some say, "We have given to the poor. We have helped the needy. We have read religious literature, including the Word," and more of that nature.

[2] Nevertheless, after they have said that, angels appear and say, "All the things you mentioned, you did in your outer selves, but you are still unaware of what you are like in your inner selves. You are now spirits in a substantial body. Your spirit is your inner self. This is the part in you that thinks about what it wants and wants what it loves; what it loves is the delight of your life.

"From early childhood we all begin our lives in our outer selves. We learn to behave morally and speak intelligently. When we have formed some idea of heaven and its blessedness, we begin to pray, to go to church, and to attend the customary religious rituals. Meanwhile when evils rise up from their native source, we begin hiding them deep within our mind and also cleverly covering them with a veil of reasonings based on mistaken ideas, to the point where we do not know that evil is evil. Then, because those evils have been covered over and buried in the dirt, so to speak, we no longer reflect on them; we just take care that they do not appear before the world. We practice a moral life only in outward ways. Therefore we become a dual person—a sheep on the outside but a wolf on the inside. We are like a golden box that contains poison; like people with disgusting breath who keep something sweet-smelling in their mouths so that others nearby cannot tell; and like a rat's skin that smells of balsam.

[3] "You have asserted that you lived moral lives and pursued religious practices. Let me ask, however, did you ever examine your inner selves? Did you become aware of any desire for revenge, even to the point of committing murder? Any desire to indulge lust, even to the point of committing adultery? Any desire to commit fraud, even to the point of committing theft? Any desire to lie, even to the point of bearing false witness? Four of the Ten Commandments say, 'You are not to do these things,' and the last two say, 'You are not to desire to do these things.' Is it your belief that your inner self was much like your outer self in these regards? If this is your belief, perhaps you are wrong."

[4] "What is our inner self?" they replied. "Isn't it the same as our outer self? We have heard from our ministers that our inner self is simply our faith, and that our devout words and moral lives are signs that we have faith, because they are our faith at work."

"Faith that truly has power to save does indeed reside in the inner self, along with goodwill," the angels replied, "and these do lead to Christian faithfulness and morality in the outer self. If, however, desires for revenge, for commit-

ting fraud and theft, and for lying remain in your inner self (meaning your will and your thinking) and inwardly you love those desires (no matter what you say or do outwardly), then evil takes precedence over goodness, and goodness is less important to you than evil. In this case, no matter how much you speak as if you had understanding or act as if you had love, there is evil within you, and your words and actions just cover it up. Then you are like clever chimpanzees who can mimic human actions, although their heart is far different.

[5] "You know nothing about your inner self, because you have not examined yourselves, and after self-examination have not practiced repentance. Soon, however, you will see exactly what it is like, when your outer self is taken off, and you are introduced into your inner self. When this happens, you will no longer be recognized by your companions or even by yourselves. I have seen evil people, who had been moral, become like predatory animals, looking at their neighbor with hostile eyes, burning with murderous hatred, and uttering blasphemy against the God they had worshiped in their outer selves."

When they heard that, they walked away. The angels then said to them, "After this you are going to see the outcome of your life. Soon your outer self will be taken away, and you will come into your inner self, which is now your spirit."

569. *The third memorable occurrence.* Every type of love that is within us exudes a delight by which it makes itself felt. This delight is exuded first into our spirit and then into our body. The delight that comes from our love and the enjoyment that comes from our thinking go together to constitute our life.

As long as we are alive in our earthly bodies, this delight and this enjoyment register only in an obscure way, because our bodies absorb them and dull them. After death, though, when our physical body is taken away and therefore this covering or clothing of our spirit is removed, the delights associated with what we love and the enjoyment associated with what we think are fully felt and perceived. Amazing to say, they are sometimes experienced as odors. This is the mechanism whereby people in the spiritual world are all associated by what they love; this is how heavenly loves bring people together in heaven, and how hellish loves bring people together in hell.

[2] In heaven the feelings of delight that come from [angels'] loves are turned into odors like all the kinds of fragrances, sweet smells, pleasant breezes, and delicious sensations that we experience in vegetable gardens, flower gardens, fields, and forests on a morning in spring.

In hell the feelings of delight that come from [devils' and satans'] loves are turned into the kind of foul odors, rotten smells, and stench given off by outhouses, dead bodies, and ponds full of garbage and sewage. It is astounding, but the devils and satans who are there sense these odors as fragrances, perfumes, and incense that are refreshing to their noses and their hearts.

In the physical world there does exist an association by odors among animals, birds, and crawling insects, but there is not the same association for people, until they have shed their material bodies as a kind of skin.

[3] As a result, heaven is most precisely arranged according to all the varieties of love for what is good, and hell, in exactly the opposite way, is arranged according to all the varieties of love for what is evil. This opposition is why there is a great gulf between heaven and hell that cannot be crossed [Luke 16:26]. The people who are in heaven cannot stand any of the odor from hell. It causes them

nausea and vomiting, and threatens to render them unconscious if they breathe it in. The same thing happens to the people who are in hell, if they cross the midpoint of that great gulf.

[4] On one occasion I saw a devil who looked from a distance like a leopard. He had been seen several days earlier among angels of the lowest heaven. He had developed the skill of turning himself into an angel of light, crossing the gulf, standing between two olive trees, and avoiding sensing any odor that would be harmful to his life. He was able to do this because there were no angels present. But as soon as angels arrived, he started having convulsions, and fell down with all his limbs curled up. He looked at that point like a giant snake twisting itself in coils. Eventually he rolled himself down into the gulf. He was picked up by his people and carried into a cave, where he was revived by the heavy stench of his own delight.

[5] On another occasion I saw a satan being punished by his own people. I asked why this was, and was told that by holding his nose he had been able to approach people who had the smell of heaven; he had then come back, but his clothes had brought back that smell with him.

It has happened to me several times that when some cave of hell opened up, the stench of a corpse assaulted my nostrils and made me vomit.

All this shows why it is that in the Word, "smell" means perception. It says quite frequently that from people's burnt offerings Jehovah would smell a pleasing aroma. (The oil for anointing and the incense were prepared with fragrant spices [Exodus 30:22-25, 34-35].) On the other hand, the children of Israel were commanded to carry unclean things from their camp outside its borders, and they were to dig a hole for their fecal matter and cover it up (Deuteronomy 23:12, 13). The reason for this was that the camp of Israel represented heaven and the desert outside their camp represented hell.

570. *The fourth memorable occurrence.* On one occasion I had a conversation with a recently arrived spirit. While in the world, he had meditated a great deal on heaven and hell. ("Recently arrived spirits" mean people who have recently died. They are called spirits because they are then human beings who are spiritual [rather than physical] in nature.)

As soon as he came into the spiritual world he resumed meditating on heaven and hell. When he thought about heaven he felt happy; when he thought about hell he felt sad.

When he realized that he was actually in the spiritual world, he immediately asked, "Where is heaven and where is hell? What is heaven, what is hell, and how are they experienced?"

"Heaven is above your head," [the spirits] replied, "and hell is under your feet. You are now in the world of spirits, which is midway between heaven and hell. What heaven is, what hell is, and how they are experienced, however, is not something we can describe in a few words."

Because he had a burning desire to know, he threw himself to his knees and prayed devoutly to God to be taught.

An angel immediately appeared at his right hand. The angel lifted him up and said, "You have prayed to be taught about heaven and hell. *Investigate and find out what delight is, and you will know.*" Upon saying this, the angel was raised up out of sight.

[2] The recently arrived spirit then said to himself, "What is this? 'Investigate and find out what delight is, and you will know what heaven is, what hell is, and how they are experienced?'"

Soon he left there and traveled around. When he encountered people he asked them, "Tell me, if you would, please, what delight is."

Some said, "What kind of question is that? Who doesn't know what delight is? It is joy and happiness. Delight is delight—one is like another. We are not aware of any differences."

Others said, "Delight is the laughter of the mind. When our mind is laughing, our face is cheerful, our speech is full of jokes, our gestures are playful, and our whole self embodies delight."

Others said, "I'll tell you what delight is! It is dining and eating delicacies, drinking and getting drunk on vintage wine, and then chatting about various topics, especially the games of Venus and Cupid!"

[3] Annoyed at this the new spirit said to himself, "These answers are crude and unsophisticated. The delights these spirits mentioned are not heaven and are not hell either. I wish I could meet some people with wisdom."

He left the people he was with and asked around to learn where he might find people with wisdom.

An angelic spirit noticed him and said, "I can sense your burning desire to know what the universal attribute of heaven is and what the universal attribute of hell is. Since the answer is *delight*, I will take you up onto the hill. There is a meeting every day there between spirits who conduct research on results, spirits who survey means, and spirits who investigate purposes. The spirits who conduct research on results are called spirits of the academic disciplines, or abstractly, Knowledges. The spirits who survey means are called spirits of intelligence, or abstractly, Intelligences. The spirits who investigate purposes are called spirits of wisdom, or abstractly, Wisdoms. Directly above them in heaven there are angels who see means in terms of the purposes behind them, and see results in terms of the means that lead to them. From these angels the three groups receive their enlightenment."

[4] The angelic spirit then took the newly arrived spirit by the hand and led him up the hill to the group of spirits who investigate purposes; they are called Wisdoms.

"Forgive me," the newly arrived spirit said to them, "for coming up to join you. The reason why I have done so is that since my childhood I have been meditating on heaven and hell. I have recently come into this world. Spirits who were assigned to me at the time of my transition told me that heaven was over my head and hell was beneath my feet, but they would not tell me what heaven is, what hell is, and how they are experienced. Because of my constant thought about heaven and hell I became anxious and prayed to God. An angel appeared beside me and said, 'Investigate and find out what delight is and you will know.' I did investigate, but have learned nothing. I ask you then, if you would, please, to teach me what delight is."

[5] "To all individuals in heaven," the Wisdoms replied, "delight is the most important thing in their lives; and to all individuals in hell, delight is the most important thing in their lives. Those in heaven take delight in what is good and what is true. Those in hell take delight in what is evil and what is false. Delight is always related to love, and love is the underlying reality of our lives."

How human we are depends on what kind of love we have. Therefore how human we are also depends on what kind of delight we feel. When our love is active, it causes us to feel delight. A heavenly love becomes active with the help of wisdom; a hellish love becomes active with the help of insanity. In either case the activity causes the person to experience delight. The heavens and the hells have delights that are opposite to each other, however. The heavens love what is good and therefore take delight in benefiting others. The hells love what is evil and therefore take delight in harming others. If you know what delight is, you will indeed know what heaven is, what hell is, and how they are experienced. [6] But investigate and find out more about delight from the spirits who survey means; they are called Intelligences. As you go out, they are on your right."

So he left there and came to the next group. He stated the reason he had come and asked them to teach him what delight is. They greatly enjoyed being asked, and said, "It is true that those who know what delight is know what heaven is, what hell is, and how they are experienced. The will, which is the faculty that makes us human, is not moved an inch by anything other than delight. By definition, the will is simply the desire that belongs to some love and therefore some delight. There is something agreeable and therefore pleasing that causes us to will. Since the will is what drives the intellect to think, not a moment of thinking occurs unless there is some delight flowing in from the will.

"The reason why this is the case is that everything that happens in the soul and mind of angels, spirits, and human beings is set in motion by the Lord through an inflow that comes from him—an inflow of love and wisdom. This inflow is the movement that causes the whole experience of delight, which at its point of origin is called blessedness, good fortune, and happiness; and in its derivation is called delightful, pleasant, and pleasurable. In a universal sense it is what is known as *good*. The spirits of hell, however, turn all things upside down within themselves. They turn what is good into what is evil and what is true into what is false. The only thing they retain is the sense of delight, because if delight did not continue, they would have no will and no sensation, and therefore no life. This should clarify the nature, experience, and origin of the delight felt in hell, and the nature, experience, and origin of the delight felt in heaven."

[7] Upon hearing that, the newly arrived spirit was brought to the third group, the spirits who conduct research on results; they are called Knowledges. They said, "Go down into the lower earth and go up into the higher realm. In them you will perceive and sense the delights of heaven and of hell."

At that point, however, the ground suddenly yawned wide at some distance from them. Up through the chasm came three devils, who were visibly lit up by the delight that comes from what they love. The angels who were accompanying the newly arrived spirit perceived that it was not by coincidence that the three devils had come up just then. The angels called out to the devils, "Don't come any closer, but from where you are, tell us something about what delights you."

"It is important to know," they replied, "that all people, whether labeled good or evil, have their own delight. The so-called good people have theirs and the so-called evil people have theirs."

"What do you take delight in?" the angels asked.

"What is delightful to us," they replied, "is whoring, taking revenge, cheating, and speaking blasphemy."

"What are those delights like for you, exactly?" the angels asked.

The devils replied that their delights were sensed by others as resembling the stench of excrement, the reek of dead bodies, and the smell of stagnant urine.

"Are those things actually delightful to you?" the angels asked.

"Very much so," the devils replied.

"Then you are like the filthy little creatures that live in those substances," said the angels.

"If we are, we are," the devils said, "but those things give our noses intense pleasure."

"Do you have anything further to add?" the angels asked.

"Yes," they replied. "Everyone is allowed to have her or his delight, even if it is of the 'most unclean' kind, as others call it, provided she or he does not attack good spirits and angels; but because our delight makes it absolutely impossible to resist attacking them, we are thrown into workhouses where we suffer many hard things. Being restrained and withdrawn from our delights causes the so-called torment of hell, which is profound inner pain."

"Why do you attack people who are good?" the angels asked.

"We can't help it," the devils said. "A kind of rage comes over us every time we see any angel and sense the Lord's divine sphere around that angel."

"Then you are also like animals," we said.

Soon afterward, when they noticed the newly arrived spirit with the angels, a diabolical rage came over them, which looked like a burning fire of hate. Therefore to prevent their doing any harm, they were thrown back into hell.

After that, other angels appeared in a shining white light. They were the angels who see means in terms of the purposes behind them, and see results in terms of the means that lead to them—the angels in the heaven directly above the three groups. That shining light rolled downward through spiraling turns, carrying a ring of flowers and placing it gently on the head of the newly arrived spirit. Then a voice came to him from above: "This wreath of honor is given to you because you have meditated on heaven and hell since you were young."