

# Section B

## Starting Assumptions

The *BNL* process of life change and spiritual transformation is based on the Judeo-Christian scriptures as explained in the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg. As such, it makes a number of starting assumptions. These are as follows:

**1. The *BNL* process is the same thing as scriptural repentance.**

This process of life change and spiritual transformation is the same thing as the Judeo-Christian process of *repentance*. In Judaic scripture, the word *repent* means to make changes in your life for the better, with an emphasis on outward *behavior*. In Christian scripture, the word *repent* means the same thing, with an emphasis on changing your *mind*, i.e., what you *think* and *intend*. And in Latin (the language in which Emanuel Swedenborg wrote) the word *repent* emphasizes sorrow, remorse, or grief of conscience, each of which implies a change of *heart*, *desire*, and *will*. Repentance is therefore a holistic, universal process of life change and spiritual transformation which, when taken in and practiced, can impact your life for good on every level of your being—from outside in and inside out. The process you're now exploring *is* this holistic, universal process of repentance.

**2. God exists.**

The *BNL* process assumes that there is a God—one God—who is Lord of the universe. That God is perfect (divine) love, perfect wisdom, and perfect life, all existing within the one person of God. This means that God is fully visible, approachable, and capable of human interaction, connection, and relationship with all people throughout the world—regardless of what religion or life philosophy they embrace, and regardless of what culture or background they're from. *Anyone* who has genuine goodness and truth present in him- or herself experiences some level of relationship with this one God, because God *is* the goodness and truth present within all people.

In addition, God is known by many names and titles in Judeo-Christian scripture. One title that appears throughout is *Lord*. Therefore, within this process, the title *Lord* is used interchangeably with *God* to refer to this one perfect, divine person.

**3. God is loving, wise, and forgiving.**

The *BNL* process assumes that God the Lord is loving and wise: He is *love* and He is *wisdom* perfectly balanced in *life*. Because God *is* love, He is only capable of mercy, compassion, and kindness toward all people. When we are caught up in harmful habits of life, or destructive patterns of thinking and intending, He doesn't accuse us, blame us, impute negative motives to us, or seek revenge. Instead, His attitude is one of forgiveness: He looks past our weaknesses and helps us focus on making changes for the better. As we work on making these changes a way is opened, and He enters, touching our hearts, minds, and lives with genuine goodness from within. In this way God's love, wisdom, and forgiveness become active, effective, and fully realized in us.

**4. There are four universal kinds (or levels) of love.**

The BNL process assumes that there are four kinds or levels of love that all people experience: love of God, love of our neighbor (wanting what's best for people and treating them well), love of worldly pleasures and material things (also known as love of the world), and love of ourselves (also known as love of self or self-love—a love of caring for ourselves and our dependants, now and for the future). All four of these universal types of love are useful and important, and when they're kept in their created order and priority within us, they help perfect us as human beings. They are kept in their created order and priority when love of God is in the lead and valued above the others; love of our neighbor is next in line and valued as second most important; love of the world comes next; and finally, love of self.

This process also assumes that any time love of worldly pleasures or material things becomes *more important* to us than loving God or people (or we might say, any time love of the world becomes *insubordinate* to love of God or love of our neighbor) we start to become materialistic, stingy, and greedy. And any time love of ourselves becomes *more important* to us than loving God or people (that is, any time love of self becomes *insubordinate* to love of God or love of people) we start to become self-focused, self-centered, and selfish.

Therefore, we are spiritually and emotionally healthiest when these four kinds of love are kept in their created order and priority within us.

**5. Angels and hellish spirits exist. We are regularly influenced by them.**

This process assumes that there is a life after death, a heaven and a hell, and that angels and hellish (“evil”) spirits exist. It also assumes that we are influenced moment to moment by them. We do not generate or manufacture any of the warm feelings or loving desires we experience. Instead, these things enter our hearts from God, in part filtered through angels who are with us. Likewise, we do not generate or manufacture any of the selfish feelings or greedy desires we experience. Instead, these things enter our hearts from hellish spirits who are nearby. Feelings and desires that come to us via angels inspire us to keep the four kinds of love mentioned above in their created order and priority. Feelings and desires that come to us from evil spirits do the opposite: They encourage us to *invert* the order of the four kinds of love and *reverse* their priority.

One of the freeing implications of these concepts is that any time we experience harmful or destructive feelings or desires, together with the destructive impulses, thoughts, and intentions they generate, we are not guilty, responsible, or at fault for the fact that these things have shown up in us. The fact that they've shown up simply presents us with options and choices. What matters is what we *do* with these things once they've shown up. In this way, the presence of God, angels, and evil spirits provides a balanced context in which we freely choose what we will spend time thinking about, what we will believe, how we will live our lives, and what we will ultimately become.

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**6. Each of us experiences a will for good and a will for evil.**

This process assumes that each of us experiences a will for good and also a will for what is harmful and destructive (“evil”). On one hand we have a loving, heavenly will (also known as conscience) which wants to do what is right and desires what is best for our neighbor. On the other hand, we have a selfish, destructive will that is opposed to God and wants what is harmful, destructive, and bad. (This will for good and will for evil are referred to in Judeo-Christian scripture as *heart of stone/heart of flesh*. They’re also known in certain faith traditions as *old will/new will, old self/new self, one’s own will* and a *God-given will for good, also heavenly will/hellish will*.)

This process also assumes that our heavenly will/conscience is a spiritual storehouse that gathers in all the good tendencies, helpful inclinations, and wholesome desires that come to us from God. Likewise, our hellish/selfish will is a spiritual dumping ground which contains all the harmful desires, destructive tendencies, materialistic cravings, and selfish impulses that come to us from evil spirits.

One of the practical implications of these concepts is that any time hellish spirits stir up the contents of our old will, or incite us to new forms of badness, we don’t have to change those spirits for the better, improve the quality of what they dump into our minds, or improve the quality of our selfish will. All we have to do is be aware of the desires, ways of thinking and intending, and modes of behavior these spirits inspire. Then, with God’s help and power, we steer clear of them, choosing instead to think, will, and act from the conscience/heavenly will that the Lord is building in us over time. Doing these things, and making these choices, is what this process of life change and spiritual transformation is all about.

These are some of the starting assumptions that form a foundation for this process of life change and spiritual transformation. You are now invited to go through the process yourself to discover what value it may hold for your life.

Good wishes in this spiritual practice.