

*You have heard that it was declared...
but I say to you...*



Week 4: Oaths

Matthew 5:33-37

Again, you have heard that it has been declared to the ancients, Thou shalt not swear falsely, but shalt render to the Lord thine oaths. But I say to you, Swear not at all; neither by the heaven, for it is the throne of God; nor by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your word be, Yes, yes; No, no; and whatever is beyond these is from evil.

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DAY ONE: DO NOT TAKE THE LORD'S NAME IN VAIN

Exodus 20:7. Thou shalt not take the name of Jehovah thy God in vain; for Jehovah will not hold him innocent who takes His name in vain.

Revelation 4:8.

And the four animals, each one by itself, had six wings around [it]; and [they were] full of eyes within; and they had no rest day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was, and Who is, and Who is to come.

AR 13:2. The name Jehovah signifies is; and He who is, or who is Being itself, the same is also He who was, and is to come, for in Him the past and the future are present; hence He is, without time, eternal, and without place, infinite. This also is acknowledged by the church in the doctrine of the Trinity, called Athanasian, in which are these words: "The Father is eternal and infinite, the Son is eternal and infinite, and the Holy Spirit is eternal and infinite, but yet there are not three eternals and infinites, but one." That this one is the Lord, is demonstrated in *The Doctrine of the New Jerusalem concerning the Lord*.

DP 230. The profanation of what is holy is meant in the second commandment of the Decalogue, "Thou shalt not profane the name of thy God"; and that it ought not to be profaned is meant by these words in the Lord's Prayer, "Hallowed be thy name."

Scarcely anyone in the Christian world knows what is meant by the name of God. The reason why this is not known is that in the spiritual world names are not as in the natural world, but everyone has a name according to the quality of his love and wisdom; for as soon as anyone enters a society or into association with others he is named there according to his character. This naming is effected by spiritual language, which is such that it can give a name to everything, because there each letter signifies one thing and the letters combined into one word, forming a person's name, include the entire state of what is named. This is one of the wonderful things of the spiritual world.

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Hence it is clear that by “the name” of God in the Word is signified God with all the Divine that is in Him and that proceeds from Him. And as the Word is the Divine proceeding, it is the name of God; and as all the Divine things which are called the spiritual things of the Church are from the Word, they, too, are the name of God.

TCR 297. THE SECOND COMMANDMENT: THOU SHALT NOT TAKE THE NAME OF JEHOVAH THY GOD IN VAIN, FOR JEHOVAH WILL NOT HOLD HIM GUILTLESS THAT HAS TAKEN HIS NAME IN VAIN.

In the natural sense, which is the sense of the letter, to take the name of Jehovah God in vain means the name itself, and its abuse in various kinds of conversation, especially in false speaking or lying, and in useless oaths or oaths to exculpate oneself in evil intentions (that is, oaths with imprecations), also when employed in witchcraft and spells. But to swear by God and His holiness, by the Word or the Gospel, at coronations, inaugurations into the priesthood, and inductions into offices of trust, is not to take the name of God in vain, unless he who takes the oath afterwards discards his promises as vain.

But the name of God, because it is holiness itself, must be used continually in the holy things pertaining to the church, as in prayers, psalms, and all worship, also in preaching, and in writing on ecclesiastical subjects. This is so because God is in all things of religion, and when He is solemnly invoked, He is present through His name and hears. In such ways the name of God is hallowed.

That the name of Jehovah God is in itself holy is evident from that name, in that the Jews since their earliest age have not dared and do not dare to utter the name Jehovah; and for their sake the writers of the Gospels and the apostles were unwilling to use it, and used the name “Lord” instead, as is evident from various passages translated from the Old Testament into the New, where the name “Lord” is used instead of “Jehovah” (as in Matt. 22:37; Luke 10:27, compared with Deut. 6:5, and other passages).

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That the name of Jesus is in like manner holy is known from the saying of the apostle that at this name, every knee is bowed or should be bowed in heaven and on earth¹; and furthermore from this, that no devil in hell can utter that name. There are many names of God that must not be taken in vain, as Jehovah, Jehovah God, and Jehovah of Hosts; the Holy One of Israel, Jesus and Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

Questions and Comments

1. How do we change the culture around us where the name of God is not held holy?
2. What names of the Lord are most comforting? Challenging?
3. Why is it that the Devils are unable to speak the name "Jesus"? (But they can say God—see TCR 111:3, DP 262:8.)

¹ [See Philippians 2:10 and Romans 14:11; and Isaiah 45:23]

DAY TWO: CURSING AND BAD LANGUAGE

The Law in Mark and Luke

Exodus 22:28 Thou shalt not revile God, and a chief among thy people thou shalt not curse.

AC 9349. Those [laws] which are to be altogether observed and done are those contained in... Exod. 22:28....

Matthew 5:22. But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother rashly shall be subject to the judgment; and whoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be subject to the council; and whoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be subject to the hell of fire.

AC 9220. “Thou shalt not curse God,” signifies that truths Divine must not be blasphemed; “and a prince in thy people thou shalt not execrate,” signifies that neither are the doctrines of truth to be blasphemed....

AC 245. That “He said to the serpent, Thou art cursed above every beast, and above every wild animal of the field” signifies that the sensuous part turned itself away from that which is heavenly, and turned itself to that which is of the body, and thus cursed itself, may be clearly shown from the internal sense of the Word. Jehovah God or the Lord never curses anyone. He is never angry with anyone, never leads anyone into temptation, never punishes anyone, and still less does He curse anyone. All this is done by the infernal crew, for such things can never proceed from the Fountain of mercy, peace, and goodness.

NJHD 325. Obedience is due to a king, according to the laws of the realm, and on no account ought he to be injured either by word or deed; for on this depends the public safety.

322. The regal office consists in administering according to the laws of the realm, and in judging according to these laws, from a principle of justice. A king who regards the laws as above himself, is wise; but he who considers himself as being above the law, is not

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wise. A king who looks upon the laws as above himself, places the regal office in the law, and the law rules over him; for he knows that the law means justice, and all justice, which is justice, is Divine. But he who looks upon himself as being above the laws, places the regal office in himself, and either believes himself to be the law, or that the law, which is justice, is derived from himself. Hence he claims for himself that which is Divine, when yet he ought to be under it.

TCR 298. In the spiritual sense, the name of God means everything which the church teaches from the Word, and by which the Lord is invoked and worshiped. All such things in the complex are the name of God. “To take the name of God in vain,” means, therefore, to introduce any of these things into frivolous conversation, into false speaking, lying, curses, witchcraft or spells; for this too is reviling and blaspheming God, thus His name.

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

AC 7379. “And the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments,” signifies the abuse of Divine order, whence there was the like in the outward form; “and caused frogs to come up upon the land of Egypt,” signifies in respect to reasonings from the natural mind....

Miracles 17. Magical miracles, such as were performed in ancient times in Egypt, in Chaldea and among other gentile races, were accomplished by artificial means only, or by witchcraft, for no other end than to bring about a belief that they were divine

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manifestations, and thus to assert authority even over souls, and to gain worldly wealth. These miracles were in themselves contrary to Divine order, but as to outward form they were like Divine miracles.

Many such miracles are wrought by diabolic spirits in the other life. These spirits, when set free, have no other aim than to imitate heavenly things, and by these imitations to delude the minds of others, especially to the end that they may rule over and injure them. Those are delusions induced by persuasions and appearances, and by disorderly applications of correspondences, by which newcomer spirits are particularly charmed. There is a field stretching forward to a considerable length, in the plane of the sole of the foot, where these spirits are present in great number. The hell of the magi of Egypt and Chaldea is there also, but in caverns below. All who entangled others by their cunning wiles, during their life in the body, are associated with such spirits.

Questions and Comments

1. Are curse words OK as long as they don't profane the Lord's name?
2. What commandments could you be breaking using bad language, even if you don't say one of God's names?
3. How do we push back against the prevalence and acceptance of obscene language?
4. Do you think it is still possible to use the Lord's name to perform curses and other evil magic?

DAY THREE: RENDER TO THE LORD

Matthew 5:33. “Again, you have heard that it has been declared to the ancients, Thou shalt not swear falsely, but shalt render to the Lord thine oaths.”

Deuteronomy 22:21. When thou shalt vow a vow to Jehovah thy God, thou shalt not delay to pay it; for Jehovah thy God requiring will require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee.

AE 608:8. “Everyone that sweareth by God shall glory, but the mouth of them that speak a lie shall be stopped” (Ps. 63:11). “To swear by God” here signifies to speak the truth, for it is added, “the mouth of them that speak a lie shall be stopped.”

TCR 297. To swear by God and His holiness, by the Word or the Gospel, at coronations, inaugurations into the priesthood, and inductions into offices of trust, is not to take the name of God in vain, unless he who takes the oath afterwards discards his promises as vain.

AR 474:3. As a covenant was a representative of the conjunction of the Lord with the church, and, reciprocally, of the church with the Lord; and as the oath was a part of the covenant, and man was to swear from the truth in it, thus also by it, therefore the sons of Israel were permitted to swear by Jehovah, and thus by the Divine truth.

AC 2842:8. Moreover, it was enjoined upon those who were of the representative Jewish Church, that when they confirmed covenants by an oath, and likewise vows, also promises and sureties, they should “swear by the name of Jehovah.” The reason why this was enjoined upon them, although it was only permitted, was that the confirmation of the internal man also would thus be represented; so that oaths at that time in the name of Jehovah, were as other things were, namely, representative.

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AE 608. That “to swear” signifies asseveration and confirmation, but here verity [or truth]—since it is the Lord that is meant by the angel that swears—can be seen from this, that “to swear” means to asseverate and confirm that a thing is so, and when done by the Lord it means Divine verity. For oaths are made only by those who are not interiorly in truth itself, that is, by those who are not interior but only exterior men. Consequently, they are never made by angels, still less by the Lord. But He is said in the Word to swear, and the Israelites were allowed to swear by God, because they were only exterior men, and because the asseveration and confirmation of the internal man, when it comes into the external, falls into the form of an oath. In the Israelitish Church all things were external, representing and signifying things internal. The Word in the sense of the letter is similar.

[4] Jehovah God, or the Lord, never swears, for to swear is not becoming to God Himself, or the Divine verity. But when God, or the Divine verity, wills to have anything confirmed before men, then that confirmation in its descent into the natural sphere falls into the form or formula of an oath, such as is used in the world. This shows why it is said in the sense of the letter of the Word, which is the natural sense, that God swears, although He never swears.

Genesis 31:48-49. And Laban said, This heap [is] a witness between me and thee this day; therefore he called the name of it Galeed, and Mizpah²; for he said, Jehovah watch between me and thee, for we shall be hidden, a man from his companion.

AC 9166. “The oath of Jehovah shall be between them both.” That this signifies a search by means of truths from the Word in respect to each and all of these things, is evident from the signification of an “oath,” as being confirmation by means of truths (see n. 2842, 3037, 3375), thus “the oath of Jehovah” denotes by means of truths from the Word, for in the Word are the truths of Jehovah, or truths

² Galeed means a witness; Mizpah means to watch (AC 4196, 4198).

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Divine; and from the signification of “them both,” as being in each and all things, for in the internal sense “between both” does not signify between two persons, but in each and all things, for “two” denotes conjunction into one.

Questions and Comments

1. Do you feel that making a promise is more powerful than simply stating something?
2. What are useful ways to invite the Lord’s presence in relationships between people or groups without the need to swear by His Name?
3. Are there times where it would still be appropriate to swear or promise by the name of the Lord?

DAY FOUR: NOT BY HEAVEN, NOR EARTH, NOR JERUSALEM

Matthew 5:34-35 But I say to you, Swear not at all; neither by the heaven, for it is the throne of God; nor by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.

AC 9408:4. In these passages, and in many others, by “the heavens” are signified the angelic heavens; and as the Lord’s heaven on earth is the church, by “heaven” is also signified the church.

AE 608:9. As swearing does not belong to the internal or spiritual man, and as the Lord, when He came into the world, taught men to be internal or spiritual, and to that end abrogated the externals of the church, and opened its internals, therefore He forbade swearing by God and by the holy things of heaven and the church. . . . Here the holy things by which one must not swear are mentioned, namely, “heaven,” “earth,” “Jerusalem,” and the “head;” and “heaven” means the angelic heaven, wherefore it is called “the throne of God” (that “the throne of God” means that heaven, see above, n. 253, 462, 477); “the earth” means the church (see above, n. 29, 304, 413, 417), which is called therefore “the footstool of God’s feet” (that “the footstool of God’s feet” also means the church, see above, n. 606); “Jerusalem” means the doctrine of the church, wherefore it is called “the city of the great king” (that “city” means doctrine, see above, n. 223). . . .

AE 608:10. The reason why they were not to swear by the temple and by the altar is that to swear by them was to swear by the Lord, by heaven, and by the church. For the temple, in the highest sense, means the Lord as to Divine Truth, and, in the respective sense, heaven and the church as to the same, also all worship from Divine Truth (see above, n. 220). And the altar signifies the Lord as to Divine Good, and, in the respective sense, heaven and the church as to that good, also all worship from Divine Good (see above, n. 391). And because by the Lord are meant all Divine things which proceed from Him, for He Himself is in them, and they are of Him,

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therefore he who swears by Him, swears by all things that are of Him. Similarly, he who swears by heaven and by the church, swears by all the holy things which pertain to them, for heaven embraces and contains them; and similarly the church. It is therefore said that the temple is greater than the gold of the temple, because the temple sanctifies the gold, and that the altar is greater than the gift which is upon it, because the altar sanctifies the gift.

AC 10044:2. There are two things which signify the whole, namely, the highest and the lowest. That the lowest or ultimate also signifies the whole, is because all the interior things, even from the first or highest, close in the ultimates, and are there together (n. 9828, 9836). Hence it is that the highest, through the ultimate, holds together in connection and in form all the interior things which are intermediate, so that they look to one end....

AE 223:11. Jerusalem was called “the city of God” because “God” in the Word of the Old Testament means Divine truth proceeding from the Lord (as may be seen above, n. 220, 222); and it was called “the city of the great king” because “king” also signifies, in reference to the Lord, Divine truth proceeding from Him (see above, n. 31). From this then it is that Jerusalem is called “the city of truth” (Zechariah 8:3).

AE 1121:3. Life regarded in itself, which is God, cannot create another that shall be the only life; for the life that is God is uncreate, continuous, and inseparable; and from this it is that God is one. But the life that is God can create forms out of substances that are not life, in which it can be, and give to them the appearance of living.... [H]uman forms, which are recipients of life, live not from themselves, but from God who alone is life. Consequently, as is well known, every good of love and every truth of faith is from God, and nothing of these is from man; for if man had the least portion of life as his own, he would be able to will and do good from himself, and to understand and believe truth from himself, and thus to claim merit. And yet if he so believes, the

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form recipient of life closes itself above and becomes perverted, and intelligence perishes. Good and its love and truth and its faith are the life that is God, for God is good itself and truth itself; and therefore in these God dwells in man....

AC 868. [T]here is nothing of good and nothing of truth in man except from the Lord, and... all evil and falsity are man's from what is his own; and... man, and spirit, and even angel, if left in the least to himself, would rush of himself into hell; wherefore also it is said in the Word that heaven is not pure. This is acknowledged by angels, and he who does not acknowledge it cannot be among angels. It is the Lord's mercy alone that liberates them and even draws them out of hell and keeps them from rushing there of themselves.

CL 135. "By the tree of life, and by the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and by eating from them, is signified that for man, life is God in him, and he then has heaven and eternal life; but that death for man is the persuasion and belief that life in man is not God but is himself, from which he has hell and eternal death, which is damnation!"

See also AR 470.

Questions and Comments

1. Swearing by something that belongs to the Lord to justify our own statements is to claim ownership of the Lord's merit for ourselves.
2. How do we "eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil" in our communication with others?

DAY FIVE: SWEAR NOT BY THY HEAD

Matthew 5:35. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.

AE. 608.9. The “head” means intelligence [from doctrine] (see above, n. 553, 577); therefore it is said, “thou canst not make one hair white or black,” which signifies that man of himself can understand nothing.

Matthew 6:27. And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit to his stature?

DP 158. With the angels, especially the angels of the third heaven, the same truth is established not only on rational grounds but also by actual perceptions. These angels perceive the influx of Divine Love and Divine Wisdom from the Lord; and because they perceive it, and from their wisdom know that Love and Wisdom are life, they say that they live from the Lord and not from themselves; and they not only say this but they also love it and desire it to be so. ... The more nearly anyone is conjoined to the Lord the more distinctly does he appear to himself to be master of himself, and yet the more evidently does he recognise that he is the Lord's. It has also been granted to me for several years now to be conscious of a like perception and appearance at the same time, and consequently I have been fully convinced that nothing I will and think is from myself but that it only appears as from myself; and it has also been granted to me to will and to love this.

AC 8478. “Let no one make a residue of it till the morning.” That this signifies that they should not be solicitous about acquiring it from themselves, is evident from the fact that the manna was to be given every morning, and that worms would be bred in that which was left over, by which is signified that the Lord daily provides necessaries, and that therefore they ought not to be solicitous about acquiring them from themselves....

But those have care for the morrow who are not content with their lot; who do not trust in the Divine, but in themselves; and who

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have regard for only worldly and earthly things, and not for heavenly things. ...

[3] Very different is the case with those who trust in the Divine. These, notwithstanding they have care for the morrow, still have it not, because they do not think of the morrow with solicitude, still less with anxiety. Unruffled is their spirit whether they obtain the objects of their desire, or not; and they do not grieve over the loss of them, being content with their lot... They know that for those who trust in the Divine all things advance toward a happy state to eternity, and that whatever befalls them in time is still conducive to it.

[5] But they who are in the opposite are scarcely willing to hear Providence mentioned, for they ascribe everything to their own sagacity; and what they do not ascribe to this they ascribe to fortune or chance; some to fate, which they do not educe from the Divine, but from nature. They call those simple who do not attribute all things to themselves or to nature.

AC 6692.2 Magic is nothing but the perversion of order, and it is especially the abuse of correspondences. It is order that the goods and truths which proceed from the Lord should be received by man. When this is done, there is order in everything the man intends and thinks. But when a man does not receive goods and truths according to the order which is from the Lord, but believes that all things are blind flowings, and that if there comes forth anything that has been determined, it is of his own prudence, he perverts order; for he applies to himself the things of order with a view to taking care only of himself, and not of his neighbor, except so far as his neighbor favors him...

AC 6655. “Come, let us use prudence with it.” That this signifies cunning, is evident from the signification of “prudence,” when said of the evil, who have been alienated from truth and good, as being cunning; for that which the evil do from cunning, and also from deceit, they call prudence. Of the cunning which is signified by

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“prudence,” something may here be related. All who are in evil call cunning “prudence,” and make intelligence and wisdom to consist in nothing else.

DP 210:2. If therefore, you wish to be led by the Divine Providence, use prudence as a servant and steward does who faithfully dispenses the goods of his master. This prudence is the talent which was given to the servants to trade with, of which they must render an account (Luke 19:13-25; Matt. 25:14-31). Prudence itself appears to man as his own; and it is believed to be his own so long as he keeps shut up within him the deadliest enemy of God and the Divine Providence, the love of self. This dwells in the interiors of every man from birth. If you do not recognize it—for it does not wish to be recognized—it dwells securely, and guards the door lest man should open it, and it should thus be cast out by the Lord. Man opens this door by shunning, as of himself, evils as sins, with the acknowledgment that he does so from the Lord. This is the prudence with which the Divine Providence acts as one.

See also AC 8478:4.

Questions and Comments

1. Swearing by something of our “own” may seem fair until we remember that we have nothing in our proprium except evil.
2. What are inadvertent ways we could swear by our own head, when thinking and communicating about truths?
3. Would it seem artificial to recognize the Lord more often in daily life and conversation?

DAY SIX: LET YOUR WORD BE YES, YES; NO, NO

Matthew 5:37. But let your word be, Yes, yes; No, no; and whatever is beyond these is from evil.

DP 219:3. Such is the speech of all in the third heaven; for they never reason about Divine things, discussing whether a thing is so or not so, but they see in themselves from the Lord whether it is so or not. Therefore, reasoning about Divine things whether they are so or not, is because the reasoner does not see them from the Lord, but desires to see them from himself; and what man sees from himself is evil. Still the Lord desires that man should not only think and speak about Divine things, but that he should also reason about them to the end that he may see that a thing is or is not so. And this thought, speech and reasoning, provided the end is to see the truth, may be said to be from the Lord in man, although it is from the man until he sees the truth and acknowledges it. Meanwhile it is only from the Lord that he can think, speak and reason; for he has this power from the two faculties, liberty and rationality, and these faculties man has from the Lord alone.

HH 492. For man is accustomed from childhood to maintain a semblance of friendship, benevolence, and sincerity, and to conceal the thoughts of his own will, thereby living from habit a moral and civil life in externals, whatever he may be internally. As a result of this habit, man scarcely knows what his interiors are, and gives little thought to them.

HH 91. What correspondence is, may be seen from the human face. In a face which has not been taught to dissemble, all the affections of the mind come to view in a natural form as in their image. This is why the face is said to be the index of the mind; that is, it is man's spiritual world presented in his natural world. In the same way, the things pertaining to the understanding present themselves in speech, and those pertaining to the will present themselves in the movements of the body. All things, therefore, that are done in the body, whether in the face, in speech or in bodily movements, are called correspondences.

DAY SIX: LET YOUR WORD BE YES, YES; NO, NO

NJHD 121. The angels from the Lord's celestial kingdom do not know what faith is, with the result that they do not even name it. But the angels from the Lord's spiritual kingdom speak of faith, because they reason concerning truths... The angels in the Lord's celestial kingdom say only, Yes, yes, or No, no. But the angels of the Lord's spiritual kingdom reason whether a thing is so or not so, when the conversation is concerning the spiritual truths which belong to faith... The celestial angels are of such a quality because they apply the truths of faith immediately to the life, and do not first store them in the memory, as is done by the spiritual angels. For this reason, the celestial angels are in the perception of all things belonging to faith....

AC 1561. The celestial itself cannot possibly exist without activity. Worship is its first activity, for it puts itself forth in this way, because it perceives joy in it. All the good of love and of charity is essential activity itself.

AC 202. The Most Ancient Church, which was a celestial man, was of such a character as not only to abstain from "eating of the tree of knowledge," that is, from learning what belongs to faith from sensuous things and memory-knowledges, but was not even allowed to touch that tree, that is, to think of anything that is a matter of faith from sensuous things and memory-knowledges, lest they should sink down from celestial life into spiritual life, and so on downward.

Such also is the life of the celestial angels, the more interiorly celestial of whom do not even suffer faith to be named, nor anything whatever that partakes of what is spiritual. And if it is spoken of by others, instead of faith they have a perception of love, with a difference known only to themselves; thus, whatever is of faith they derive from love and charity.

Still less can they endure listening to any reasoning about faith, and least of all to anything of memory-knowledge about it. For through love, they have a perception from the Lord of what is good and

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true, and from this perception they know instantly whether a thing is so or is not so. Therefore, when anything is said about faith, they answer simply that it is so, or that it is not so, because they perceive it from the Lord....

See also HH 271, 278.

Questions and Comments

1. Should we try to act like celestial angels in all respects?
2. How can we answer only Yes, yes or No, no, if we don't have celestial perception?
3. How are spiritual people supposed to progress towards the celestial kind of faith or perception?

