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Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka  
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Baum Henry Nietzsche Dumas Flaubert Turgenev Balzac Crane  
Leslie Stockton Vatsyayana Verne  
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Curtis Homer Tolstoy Darwin Thoreau Twain Plato  
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# **Spiritual Life and the Word of God**

Emanuel Swedenborg

# Imprint

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## **Part First – THE SPIRITUAL LIFE**

### **I. How Spiritual Life is Acquired**

Spiritual life is acquired solely by a life according to the commandments in the Word. These commandments are given in summary in the Decalogue, namely, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet the goods of others. These commandments are the commandments that are to be done, for when a man does these his works are good and his life is spiritual, and for the reason that so far as a man shuns evils and hates them so far he wills and loves goods.

For there are two opposite spheres that surround man, one from hell, the other from heaven; from hell a sphere of evil and falsity therefrom, from heaven a sphere of good and of truth therefrom; and these spheres do [not immediately] affect the body, but they affect the minds of men, for they are spiritual spheres, and thus are affections that belong to the love. In the midst of these man is set; therefore so far as he approaches the one, so far he withdraws from the other. This is why so far as a man shuns evils and hates them, so far he wills and loves goods and the truths therefrom; for no one can at the same time serve two masters, for he will hate the one and will love the other. (Matt. vi. 24).

But let it be noted, that man must do these commandments from religion, because they are commanded by the Lord; and if he does this from any other consideration whatever, for instance, from regard merely to the civil law or the moral law, he remains natural, and does not become spiritual. For when a man acts from religion, he acknowledges in heart that there is a God, a heaven and a hell, and a life after death. But when he acts from regard merely to the civil and moral law, he may act in the same way, and yet in heart may deny that there is a God, a heaven and a hell, and a life after death. And if he shuns evils and does goods, it is merely in the external form, and not in the internal; thus while he is outwardly in

respect to the life of the body like a Christian, inwardly in respect to the life of his spirit he is like a devil. All this makes clear that a man can become spiritual, or receive spiritual life, in no other way than by a life according to religion from the Lord.

I have had proof that this is true from angels of the third or inmost heaven, who are in the greatest wisdom and happiness. When asked how they had become such angels, they said it was because during their life in the world they had regarded filthy thoughts as abominable, and these had been to them adulteries; and had regarded in like manner frauds and unlawful gains, which had been to them thefts; also hatreds and revenges, which had been to them murder; also lies and blasphemies, which had been to them false testimonies; and so with other things. When asked again whether they had done good works, they said they loved chastity, in which they were because they had regarded adulteries as abominable; that they loved sincerity and justice, in which they were because they had regarded frauds and unlawful gains as abominable; that they loved the neighbor because they had regarded hatreds and revenges as abominable; that they loved truth because they had regarded lies and blasphemies as abominable, and so on; and that they perceived that when these evils have been put away, and they acted from chastity, sincerity, justice, charity and truth, it was not done from themselves, but from the Lord, and thus that all things whatsoever that they had done from these were good works, although they had done them as if from themselves; and that it was on this account that they had been raised up by the Lord after death into the third heaven. Thus it was made clear how spiritual life, which is the life of the angels of heaven, is acquired.

It shall now be told how that life is destroyed by the faith of the present day. The faith of this day is that it must be believed that God the Father sent His Son, who suffered the cross for our sins, and took away the curse of the law by fulfilling it; and that this faith apart from good works will save everyone, even in the last hour of death. By this faith instilled from childhood and afterward confirmed by preachings, it has come to pass that no one shuns evils from religion, but only from civil and moral law; thus not because they are sins but because they are damaging.

Consider, when a man thinks that the Lord suffered for our sins, that He took away the curse of the law, and that merely to believe these things, or to have faith in them without good works saves, whether this is not to regard as of little worth the commandments of the Decalogue, all the life of religion as prescribed in the Word, and furthermore all the truths that inculcate charity. Separate these, therefore, and take them away from man, and is there any religion left in him? For religion does not consist in merely thinking this or that, but in willing and doing that which is thought; and there is no religion when willing and doing are separated from thinking. From this it follows that the faith of this day destroys spiritual life, which is the life of the angels of heaven, and is the Christian life itself.

Consider further, why the ten commandments of the Decalogue were promulgated from Mount Sinai in so miraculous a way; why they were engraved on two tables of stone, and why these were placed in the ark, over which was placed the mercy-seat with cherubs, and the place where those commandments were was called the Holy of holies, within which Aaron was permitted to enter only once a year, and this with sacrifices and incense; and if he had entered without these, he would have fallen dead; also why so many miracles were afterward performed by means of that ark. Have not all throughout the whole globe a knowledge of like commandments? Do not their civil laws prescribe the same? Who does not know from merely natural lumen, that for the sake of order in every kingdom, adultery, theft, murder, false witness, and other things in the Decalogue are forbidden? Why then must those same precepts have been promulgated by so many miracles, and regarded as so holy? Can there be any other reason than that everyone might do them from religion, and thus from God, and not merely from civil and moral law, and thus from self and for the sake of the world? Such was the reason for their promulgation from Mount Sinai and their holiness; for to do these commandments from religion purifies the internal man, opens heaven, admits the Lord, and makes man as to his spirit an angel of heaven. And this is why the nations outside the church who do these commandments from religion are all saved, but not anyone who does them merely from civil and moral law.

Inquire now whether the faith of this day, which is, that the Lord suffered for our sins, that he took away the curse of the law by fulfilling it, and that man is justified and saved by this faith apart from good works, does not cancel all these commandments. Look about and discover how many there are at this day in the Christian world who do not live according to this faith. I know that they will answer that they are weak and imperfect men, born in sins, and the like. But who is not able to think from religion? This the Lord gives to everyone; and in him who thinks these things from religion the Lord works all things so far as he thinks. And be it known that he who thinks of these things from religion believes that there is a God, a heaven, a hell, and a life after death; but he who does not think of these things from religion does not, I affirm, believe them. (A.E., n. 902.)

## II. Goods of Charity

What is meant by goods of charity or good works is at this day unknown to most in the Christian world, because of the prevalence of the religion of faith alone, which is a faith separated from goods of charity. For if only faith contributes to salvation, and goods of charity contribute nothing, the idea that these goods may be left undone has place in the mind. But some who believe that good works should be done do not know what is meant by good works, thinking that good works are merely giving to the poor and doing good to the needy and to widows and orphans, since such things are mentioned and seemingly commanded in the Word. Some think that if good works must be done for the sake of eternal life they must give to the poor all they possess, as was done in the primitive church, and as the Lord commanded the rich man to sell all that he had and give to the poor, and take up the cross and follow Him (Matt. xix. 21). (A.E., n. 932.)

It has just been said that at this day it is scarcely known what is meant by charity, and thus by good works, unless it be giving to the poor, enriching the needy, doing good to widows and orphans, and contributing to the building of churches and hospitals and lodging houses; and yet whether such works are done by man and for the sake of reward is not known; for if they are done by man they are not good, and if for the sake of reward they are not meritorious; and

such works do not open heaven, and thus are not acknowledged as goods in heaven. In heaven no works are regarded as good except such as are done by the Lord in man, and yet the works that are done by the Lord in man appear in outward form like those done by the man himself and cannot be distinguished even by the man who does them. For the works done by the Lord in man are done by man as if by himself; and unless they are done as if by himself they do not conjoin man to the Lord, thus they do not reform him. (A.E., n. 933.)

But for works to be done by the Lord, and not by man, two things are necessary: first, there must be an acknowledgment of the Lord's Divine, also that He is the God of heaven and earth even in respect to the Human, also that every good that is good is from Him; and secondly, it is necessary that man live according to the commandments of the Decalogue, by abstaining from those evils that are there forbidden, that is, from worshipping other gods, from profaning the name of God, from thefts, from adulteries, from murders, from false witness, from coveting the possessions and property of others. These two things are requisite that the works done by man may be good. The reason is that every good comes from the Lord alone, and the Lord cannot enter into man and lead him so long as these evils are not set aside as sins; for they are infernal, and in fact are hell with man, and unless hell is set aside the Lord cannot enter and open heaven. This is what is meant by the Lord's words to the rich man:

Who asked Him about eternal life, and said that he had kept the commandments of the Decalogue from his youth; whom the Lord is said to have loved, and to have taught that one thing was lacking to him, that he should sell all that he had and take up the cross (Matt. xix. 16-22; Mark x. 17-22; Luke xviii. 18-23).

"To sell all that he had" signifies that he should relinquish the things of his religion, which were traditions, for he was a Jew, and also should relinquish the things that were his own, which were loving self and the world more than God, and thus leading himself; and "to follow the Lord" signifies to acknowledge Him only and to be led by Him; therefore the Lord also said, "Why callest thou Me good? There is none good but God only." "To take up his cross"

signifies to fight against evils and falsities, which are from what is one's own (proprium). (A.E., n. 934.)

### III. Shunning Evils

In the previous chapter two things are said to be necessary that works may be good, namely, that the Divine of the Lord be acknowledged, and that the evils forbidden in the Decalogue be shunned as sins. The evils enumerated in the Decalogue include all the evils that can ever exist; therefore the Decalogue is called the ten commandments, because "ten" signifies all.

The first commandment, "Thou shalt not worship other gods," includes not loving self and the world; for he that loves self and the world above all things worships other gods; for everyone's god is that which he loves above all things.

The second commandment, "Thou shalt not profane the name of God," includes not to despise the Word and doctrine from the Word, and thus the church, and not to reject these from the heart, for these are God's "name."

The fifth commandment, "Thou shalt not steal," included the shunning of frauds and unlawful gains, for these also are thefts.

The sixth commandment, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," includes having delight in adulteries and having no delight in marriages, and in particular cherishing filthy thoughts respecting such things as pertain to marriage, for these are adulteries.

The seventh commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," includes not hating the neighbor nor loving revenge; for hatred and revenge breathe murder.

The eighth commandment, "Thou shalt not bear false witness," includes not to lie and blaspheme; for lies and blasphemies are false testimonies.

The ninth commandment, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house," includes not wishing to possess or to divert to oneself the goods of others against their will.

The tenth commandment, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, his man-servants," and so on, includes not wishing to rule over others and to subject them to oneself, for the things here enu-

merated mean the things that are man's own. Anyone can see that these eight commandments relate to evils that must be shunned, and not to goods that must be done. (A.E., n. 935.)

But many, I know, think in their heart that no one can of himself shun these evils enumerated in the Decalogue, because man is born in sins and has therefore no power of himself to shun them. But let such know that anyone who thinks in his heart that there is a God, that the Lord is the God of heaven and earth, that the Word is from Him, and is therefore holy, that there is a heaven and a hell, and that there is a life after death, has the ability to shun these evils. But he who despises these truths and casts them out of his mind, and still more he who denies them, is not able. For how can one who never thinks about God think that anything is a sin against God? And how can one who never thinks about heaven, hell, and the life after death, shun evils as sins? Such a man does not know what sin is.

Man is placed in the middle between heaven and hell. Out of heaven goods unceasingly flow in, and out of hell evils unceasingly flow in; and as man is between he has freedom to think what is good or to think what is evil. This freedom the Lord never takes away from anyone, for it belongs to his life, and is the means of his reformation. So far, therefore, as man from this freedom has the thought and desire to shun evils because they are sins, and prays to the Lord for help, so far does the Lord take them away and give man the ability to refrain from them as if of himself, and then to shun them.

Everyone is able from natural freedom to shun these same evils because of their being contrary to human laws. This every citizen of a kingdom does who fears the penalties of the civil law, or the loss of life, reputation, honor, wealth, and thus of office, gain, and pleasures; even an evil man does this. And the life of such a man appears exactly the same in external form as the life of one who shuns these evils because they are contrary to the Divine laws; but in internal form it is wholly unlike it. The one acts from natural freedom only, which is from man; the other acts from spiritual freedom, which is from the Lord; both acting from freedom. When a man is able to shun these same evils from natural freedom, why is

he not able to shun them from spiritual freedom, in which he is constantly held by the Lord, provided he thinks to will this because there is a heaven, a hell, a life after death, punishment and reward, and pray to the Lord for help?

Let it be noted, that every man when he is beginning the spiritual life because he wishes to be saved, fears sins on account of the punishments of hell, but afterward on account of the sin itself, because it is in itself abominable, and finally on account of the truth and good that he loves, thus for the Lord's sake. For so far as anyone loves truth and good, thus the Lord, he so far turns away from what is contrary to these, which is evil. All this makes clear that he that believes in the Lord shuns evils as sins; and conversely, he that shuns evils as sins believes; consequently to shun evils as sins is the sign of faith. (A.E., n. 936.)

But as all the evils into which man is born derive their roots from a love of ruling over others and from a love of possessing the goods of others, and all the delights of man's own life flow forth from these two loves, and all evils are from them, so the loves and delights of these evils belong to man's own life. And since evils belong to the life of man, it follows that man from himself can be no means refrain from them, for this would be from his own life to refrain from his own life. An ability to refrain from them of the Lord is therefore provided, and that he may have this ability the freedom to think that which he wills and to pray to the Lord for help is granted him. He has this freedom because he is in the middle between heaven and hell, consequently between good and evil. And being in the middle he is in equilibrium; and he who is in equilibrium is able easily and as of his own accord to turn himself the one way or the other; and the more so because the Lord continually resists evils and repels them, and raises man up and draws him to Himself. And yet there is combat, because the evils which belong to man's life are stirred up by the evils that unceasingly rise up from hell; and then man must fight against them, and, indeed, as if of himself. If he does not fight as if of himself the evils are not set aside. (A.E., n. 938.)

#### IV. Cleansing the Inside

It is acknowledged that man's interior must be purified before the good that he does is good; for the Lord says,

"Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first the inside of the cup and of the platter, that the outside may be clean also" (Matt. xxiii. 26).

Man's interior is purified only as he refrains from evils, in accordance with the commandments of the Decalogue. So long as man does not refrain from these evils and does not shun and turn away from them as sins, they constitute his interior, and are like an interposed veil or covering, and in heaven this appears like an eclipse by which the sun is obscured and light is intercepted; also like a fountain of pitch or of black water, from which nothing emanates but what is impure. That which emanates therefrom and that appears before the world as good is not good, because it is defiled by evils from within, for it is Pharisaic and hypocritical good. This good is good from man and is meritorious good. It is otherwise when evils have been removed by a life according to the commandments of the Decalogue.

Now since evils must be removed before goods can become good the Ten Commandments were the first of the Word, being promulgated from Mount Sinai before the Word was written by Moses and the prophets. And these do not set forth goods that must be done, but evils that must be shunned. For the same reason these commandments are the first things to be taught in the churches; for they are taught to boys and girls in order that man may begin his Christian life with them, and by no means forget them as he grows up; although he does so. The same is meant by these words in Isaiah:

"What is the multitude of sacrifices" to Me? Your meat offering, your incense, "your new moons, and your appointed feasts, My soul hateth. . . And when you multiply prayer I will not hear. . . Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes; cease to do evil . . . Then though your sins were as scarlet they shall be white as snow; though they were red as purple they shall be as wool" (i. 11-19).

"Sacrifices," "meat offerings," "incense," "new moons," and "feasts," also "prayer," mean all things of worship. That these are wholly evil and even abominable unless the interior is purified from evils is meant by "Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings, and cease to do evil." That afterward they are all goods is meant by words that follow. (A.E., n. 939.)

When man's interior is purified from evils by his refraining from them and shunning them because they are sins, the internal which is above it, and which is called the spiritual internal, is opened. This communicates with heaven; consequently man is then admitted into heaven and is conjoined to the Lord.

There are two internals in man, one beneath and the other above. While man lives in the world he is in the internal which is beneath and from which he thinks, for it is natural. This may be called for the sake of distinction the interior. But the internal that is above is that into which man comes after death when he enters heaven. All angels of heaven are in this internal, for it is spiritual. This internal is opened to the man who shuns evils as sins; but it is kept closed to the man who does not shun evils as sins.

This internal is kept closed to the man who does not shun evils as sins, because the interior, that is, the natural internal, until man has been purified from sins, is hell; and so long as there is hell there heaven cannot be opened; but as soon as hell has been set aside it is opened. But let it be noted that in the measure in which the spiritual internal and heaven are opened to man, the natural internal is purified from the hell that is there. This is not done at once, but successively by degrees. All this makes clear that man from himself is hell, and that man is made a heaven by the Lord, consequently that he is snatched out of hell by the Lord, and raised up into heaven to the Lord, not without means but through means; and these means are the commandments just mentioned, by which the Lord leads him who wishes to be led. (A.E., n. 940.)

When the spiritual internal is opened, and through it communication with heaven and conjunction with the Lord are granted, enlightenment takes place with man. He is enlightened especially when he reads the Word, because the Lord is in the Word, and the Word is Divine truth, and Divine truth is light to angels. Man is enlightened in the rational, for this directly underlies the spiritual internal, and receives light from heaven and transfers it into the natural when it is purified from evils, filling it with the knowledges of truth and good, and adapting to them the knowledges (*scientiae*) that are from world, for the sake of proof and agreement. Thus man has a rational, and thus he has an understanding. He who believes

that man has a rational and an understanding before his natural has been purified from evils is deceived, for the understanding is seeing truths of the church from the light of heaven; and the light of heaven does not flow into those not purified. And as the understanding is perfected, the falsities of religion and of ignorance and all fallacies are dispersed. (A.E., n. 941.)

When a man has been admitted by the opening of his internal into heaven, and receives light therefrom, the same affections that angels of heaven have, with their pleasures and delights, are communicated to him. The first affection then granted is an affection for truth; the second is an affection for good; and the third is an affection for bringing forth fruits. For when a man has been admitted into heaven and into its light and heat he is like a tree growing from its seed. His first budding forth is from enlightenment; his blossoming before the fruit is from an affection for truth; the putting forth of fruit that follows is from an affection for good; the multiplication of itself again into trees is from an affection for producing fruit. The heat of heaven, which is love, and the light of heaven, which is the understanding of truth from that love, bring forth in subjects of life things like those that the heat of the world and its light bring forth in subjects not of life. That like things are brought forth is from correspondence. But in both cases the production is effected in springtime; and springtime in man is when he enters heaven, which is effected when his spiritual internal is opened; before that it is the time of winter to him. (A.E., n. 942.)

Man has affection for truth when he loves truth and turns away from falsity. He has an affection for good when he loves good uses and turns away from evil uses. He has an affection for bringing forth fruit when he loves to do goods and to be serviceable. All heavenly joy is in these affections and from them, and this joy cannot be described by comparisons, for it is supereminent and eternal. (A.E., n. 943.)

Into this state the man comes who shuns evils because they are sins, and looks to the Lord; and so far as he comes into this state he turns away from and hates evils as sins, and acknowledges in heart and worships the Lord only, and His Divine in the Human. This is a summary. (A.E., n. 944.)

When a man is in that state he is raised up from what is his own (proprium); for a man is in what is his own (proprium) when he is only in the natural external, but he is raised up from what is his own (proprium) when he is in the spiritual internal. This raising up from what is his own man perceives only by this, that he does not think evils, and that he turns away from thinking them, and takes delight in truths and in good uses. And yet if such a man advances further into that state he perceives influx by a kind of thought; but he is not withheld from thinking and willing as if from himself, for this the Lord wills for the sake of reformation. Nevertheless, man should acknowledge that nothing of good or of truth therefrom is from himself, but all is from the Lord. (A.E., n. 945.)

It follows from this that when man shuns and turns away from evils as sins and is raised up into heaven by the Lord, he is not longer in what is his own (proprium), but in the Lord, and thus he thinks and wills goods. Again, since man acts as he thinks and wills, for every act of man goes forth from the thought of his will, it follows that when he shuns and turns away from evils he does goods from the Lord and not from self; and this is why shunning evils is doing goods. The goods that a man does in this way are what are meant by good works; and good works in their whole complex are what are meant by charity. Man cannot be reformed unless he thinks, wills, and does as if from himself, since that which is done as if by the man himself is conjoined to him and remains with him, while that which is not done as if by the man himself, not being received in any life of sense, flows through like ether; and this is why the Lord wills that man should not only shun and turn away from evils as if of himself, but should also think, will, and do as if of himself, and yet acknowledge in heart that all these things are from the Lord. This he must acknowledge because it is the truth. (A.E., n. 946.)

#### V. What Religion Consists In

Religion with man consists in a life according to the Divine commandments, which are contained in a summary in the Decalogue. He that does not live according to these can have no religion, since he does not fear God, still less does he love God; nor does he fear man, still less does he love him. Can one who steals, commits adul-

tery, kills, bears false witness fear God or man? Nevertheless everyone is able to live according to these commandments; and he who is wise does so live as a civil man, as a moral man, and as a natural man. And yet he who does not live according to them as a spiritual man cannot be saved; since to live according to them as a spiritual man means to live so for the sake of the Divine that is in them, while to live according to them as a civil man means for the sake of justice and to escape punishments in the world; and to live according to them as a moral man means for the sake of honesty, and to escape the loss of reputation and honor; while to live according to them as a natural man means for the sake of what is human, and to escape the repute of having an unsound mind.

All laws, civil, moral, and natural, prescribe that one must not steal, must not commit adultery, must not kill, must not bear false witness; and yet a man is saved not by shunning these evils from these laws alone, but by shunning them also from spiritual law, thus shunning them as sins. For with such a man there is religion, and a belief that there is a God, a heaven and a hell, and a life after death; with such a man there is a civil life, a moral life, and a natural life; a civil life because there is justice, a moral life because there is honesty, and a natural life because there is manhood.

But he who does not live according to these commandments as a spiritual man is neither a civil man, nor a moral man, nor a natural man; for he is destitute of justice, of honesty, and even of manhood, since the Divine is not in these. For there can be nothing good in and from itself, but only from God; so there can be nothing just, nothing truly honest or truly human in itself and from itself, but only from God, and only when the Divine is in it. Consider whether anyone who has hell in him, or who is a devil, can do what is just from justice or for the sake of justice; in like manner what is honest, or what is truly human. The truly human is what is from order and according to order, and what is from sound reason; and God is order, and sound reason is from God. In a word, he who does not shun evils as sins is not a man. Everyone who makes these commandments to belong to his religion becomes a citizen and an inhabitant of heaven; but he who does not make them to belong to his religion, although in externals he may live according to them from

natural, moral, and civil law, becomes a citizen and an inhabitant of the world, but not of heaven.

Most nations possess a knowledge of these commandments, and make them the commandments of their religion, and live according to them because God so wills and has commanded; and through this they have communication with heaven and conjunction with God, consequently they are saved. But most in the Christian world at this day do not make them the commandments of their religion, but only of their civil and moral life; and they do this that they may not appear in external form to act fraudulently and make unlawful gains, commit adulteries, manifestly pursue others from deadly hatred and revenge, and bear false witness, and do not refrain from these things because they are sins and against God, but because they have fears for their life, their reputation, their office, their business, their possessions, their honor and gain, and their pleasure; consequently if they were not restrained by these bonds they would do these things. Because, therefore, such form for themselves no communication with heaven or conjunction with the Lord, but only with the world and with self, they cannot be saved.

Consider is respect to yourself, when these external bonds have been taken away, as is done with every man after death, if there are no internal bonds, which are from fear and love of God, thus from religion, to restrain and hold you back, whether you would not rush like a devil into thefts, adulteries, murders, false witnesses, and lusts of every kind, from a love of these and a delight in them. That this is the case I have both seen and heard. (A.E., n. 948.)

So far as evils are set aside as sins so far goods flow in, and so far does man afterward do goods, not from self, but from the Lord.

As, first, so far as one does not worship other gods, and thus does not love self and the world above all things, so far acknowledgment of God flows in from the Lord, and then he worships God, not from self but from the Lord.

Secondly, so far as one does not profane the name of God, that is, so far as he shuns the lusts arising from the loves of self and of the world, so far he loves the holy things of the Word and of the church; for these are the name of God, and are profaned by the lusts arising from the loves of self and of the world.