

**"It is not so difficult to live the Life
that leads to Heaven as is believed."**

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There are times when those of the Church regard the things which the Church teaches out of the Word for their salvation as being too complex and too difficult. The thought enters that the way to heaven must be far simpler than the Church teaches, not so involved for the understanding of man, and not involving so many things of his life. And the thought also may enter that the Priests multiply heavy burdens, grievous to be borne, whereas the real life that saves man is simple and easy. In general, this feeling and thought gives rise to two objections: first, that the burden placed on the understanding in reading and devoting oneself to the Word is too great, and second, that the burden placed on the will and the life in separating and withdrawing from the life of the world is too great, and that neither of these burdens are actually taught in the Word as being necessary to the life that leads to heaven.

When such thoughts come to a man it is necessary that he be very careful to consider the truth or falsity of them, and that he reflect both upon the quality of the teachings of the Church and upon the quality of his own feelings and thoughts. For if it is true that the Church teaches something false about the life that leads to heaven, that is a very terrible thing that cannot be passed by. And on the other hand, if these feelings and thoughts about the Church teaching are not true, then one must see why such thoughts arise in his heart, because they stand in the way of his acceptance of the way that leads to heaven, and somewhere in them there is the denial of the Divine Human of the Lord, who is the Way.

The Word teaches that it is not so difficult to live the Life that leads to heaven as is believed. Does this mean that there is a way to heaven far easier than the way which the Church teaches out of the Word? or does it mean that the way which the Church teaches out of the Word is not as difficult as you think it is? What is actually taught in this chapter of Heaven and Hell about the way to heaven, and why it is not as difficult as many suppose it to be?

It is said that some think the life that leads to heaven is difficult because they have heard that man must renounce the world and the concupiscences of the flesh, and their idea of renouncing the world is to give up all honors and riches, and to go continuously in pious meditation about God, about salvation and eternal life, and to spend their life solely in prayers and in reading the Word and pious books. And it is shown that this is not true, and that the spiritual life can be formed in man only when he lives in the world, in offices and business there, and through a moral and civil life lived in the world. (Heaven and Hell 528). It is next shown that everyone, the evil as well as the good, can and do live a moral and civil life, since everyone wishes to be thought sincere and just. It is just as easy for a spiritual man to live such a life as for a merely natural man to do it. And the difference between them is that the merely natural man lives such a life out of the love of self and the world, whereas "the spiritual man believes the Divine, and that he acts sincerely and justly not only because it is according to civil and moral laws, but also because it is according to Divine laws; for he because he thinks concerning Divine things when he acts, communicates with the angels of heaven; and as far as he does this, he is conjoined with them, and thus his internal man is opened." (Heaven and Hell 530)

When we read something from the Word, we must reflect carefully on how we understand it. For it is possible that we use the scientific of the Word to confirm the loves of self and the world in ourselves, in which case we destroy their genuine use. Their genuine use is to embody and nourish and protect the celestial life in man, and not to do these things to the life of self and the world. In the teachings quoted above, what is meant by living in the world? Does that mean that a man of the Church can live just like a man of the world, accepting the world around him, only adding to it a kind of inner compartment in which his acknowledgment of the Lord and heaven dwells? Does it mean that we can live in the world in the sense of accepting its values as to what is good and evil as our own values of what is good and evil? Can we live in the world and accept its passions, its loves, its hatreds, as our own? That is not what is said in this chapter. What is taught is that a man must have a moral and civil life, and that that moral and civil life must be in the world. He must have an external life. But it is not taught that this external life must be that of the world around us. To the contrary, it is taught that a spiritual man in his moral and civil life acts sincerely and justly out of a spiritual origin, according to Divine laws, and that he thinks concerning Divine things when he acts and thus communicates with the angels of heaven.

To lead a moral and civil life in the world does not mean to live the world's moral and civil life. It means that from the love of the Lord one enters into those external relationships which constitute the moral and civil life, such as one's employment and sees therein the things which can nourish and support the spiritual life and those which cannot because they are opposed to it, and to work in that moral and civil plane to make it live as one with the spiritual plane of life.

Further it is taught in this chapter "that the only need is that when anything presents itself which he knows to be insincere and unjust, to which his animus is carried, he should think that it must not be done because it is against the Divine precepts. If man is accustomed so to think, and out of custom draws some habit of so thinking, then gradually he is conjoined to heaven; and as far as he is conjoined to heaven; and as far as he is conjoined with heaven so far the superior things of his mind are opened; and as far as these are opened, so far he sees what is insincere and unjust; and so far as he sees these, so far can they be dispersed; for not any evil can be dispersed unless after it is seen. This state it is into which a man can enter out of freedom; for who cannot so think out of freedom? But when he has been initiated, then the Lord operates all goods with him, and makes not only that he sees the evils, but also that he does not will them and finally that he is averse to them. This is what is meant by the Lord's words, "My yoke is easy and my burden light." (Heaven and Hell 533)

This then is the way that is not so difficult as is believed. And you can see that it is the way which the Church teaches out of the Word. For it begins by the shunning of evils that are against the Divine precepts, externally understood, and by this shunning the internal man is opened, and then out of the internal man, the real evils of insincerity and injustice are seen in the moral and civil plane, and can be dispersed there.

There are two reasons given in this chapter why man thinks that the way to heaven is difficult. First is a false idea of what is meant by giving up the world, namely that it means giving up what is good in the moral and civil plane as well as what is evil, whereas what is really meant is the giving up of the moral and civil which is out of the loves of self and the world. The second is that the difficulty of thinking that evil is evil in the moral and civil plane and of resisting it, grows as man does evils out of the will. For then man grows accustomed to them, so that finally he does not see them, and out of delight of love excuses them. (Heaven and Hell 533) And this is done with those who in adolescent age rush into evils without restraint, and at the same time reject Divine things from the heart.

If a man of the Church lives in the world in the sense of partaking of the world's love and passions and hates, and of its standards of good and evil in moral and civil things, then he comes to the love of moral and civil things out of the love of self and the world. That is what interiorly lies within the moral and civil life of the world. A man of the Church can

not accept anything of the motivation of the moral and civil life of the world because it is against the motivation of that life out of the love of the Lord and heaven. This false motivation is just as much in the natural of the man of the Church as it is the world, and for this reason if he conjoins himself with anything of it in the world he confirms it in himself, and the life of heaven is thus prevented from finding its place in the moral and civil life with him. The Word does not teach that a man must withdraw from the moral and civil life, nor does the Church teach such a withdrawal. But it does teach that a man must withdraw from the moral and civil life that is led out of the love of self and the world, and come to a leading of that life out of the love of the Lord and of heaven.

The difficulty is that many do not believe what the Word teaches about the moral and civil life of the world, and they see in it a spiritual content with which they think they can conjoin themselves, which they can accept as their own.

The evils into which many rush without bond from the age of adolescence are not only the pleasures of the world and of the flesh, but also those evils of an insincere and unjust moral and civil life, which is led because of self and the world alone. What is more insincere and unjust than that a man should lead a life of apparent sincerity and justice without the love of the Lord? To be in the moral and civil life without internal bonds is, interiorly considered, to rush into all evils without bond, and to make them allowable. This is most evident from what the Word says about those apparently moral and civil people when they come into the spiritual world where external bonds are removed. Because then the external bonds of their love of gain and honor and reputation are removed, and because they never found internal bonds, they rush into all wickedness.

From this it can be seen that we need to come to a deeper feeling with regard to all things of our lives. In every relationship, in every function and work, we need to come to a deeper feeling, to see what it is to be in those things from the love into the Lord and the love of heaven, and to shun the being in them out of the insincere and unjust motivation of the loves of self and the world. In this way we can see what is against the Divine commandments in what is moral and civil, and can turn against those things and enable the Lord to open our internal man. And progressively then we can see more and more of the actual disorder of our minds out of which that insincere and unjust moral and civil life proceeds, and be cleansed from it. It cannot be done in any other way, for where the evil is not seen it cannot be dispersed. By this the hereditary evil also is broken, and a new natural love given to man. If a man of the Church is to be in that circle of life which will lead to heaven, it is necessary that he be and remain in the sphere of the Word and of the Church. It is necessary that he devote his life to the Spirit of the Word. To do this it is necessary that he restrict himself to the essentials of natural life - to the Word, its study - to his family, to his occupation, and to the things necessary for recreation - not that other things are evil, but that they are distractions. But this also is not difficult. Any man who ever gets anywhere in any field of endeavor in the world has restricted himself.

In number 534 there is a description of the way which leads to heaven, and how all, the good and evil, went together in that way to a certain stone, at which the way divided. And then the good chose the straitened way to the left which led to heaven and the evil took the broad way to the right that led to hell. The good saw the stone and went to the left. The evil did not see it, and fell upon it and went to the right. By that first way in which all went together is meant the moral and civil life, which all lead. The stone is the acknowledgment of the Divine Human of the Lord. The good which took the way to the left are they who bring the acknowledgment of the Divine Human into the moral and civil life, they who think about Divine things in relation to that life, they who reject the insincere and unjust moral and civil life and strive to live such a life from the Lord. The evil are they who live the moral and civil life out of the external bonds of their own loves, for the sake of honor, reputation and gain. They take the way to the right, towards hell, which is the way of their own loves.

We are free and able to live the life that leads to heaven. It is no more difficult to live that moral and civil life than it is to lead the other moral and civil life that leads to hell. It is no more difficult to shun evils out of love unto the Lord than out of love of self. True, we have to think and reflect. Not only on the Word, but on the life as well. But is it so difficult to think about the Lord, about Divine things, as they are set forth in the Word, and as they ought to be in the life? Is it not rather the highest delight of the understanding so to think? We may in so thinking feel sharply the limitations of our own minds, and the burden of our darkness, but let us see that as the burden, and not the fact that we are called upon to enter and enjoy the angelic delights of the understanding of spiritual truth. And again, is it a burden to give up the insincerity and injustice of a worldly life that apes and counterfeits the moral and civil life? Is it a burden to enter a moral and civil life in which heaven can be opened to us, and in which we can be changed to live as a man angel? If so, then heaven itself is to us a burden, and all its joys to us are dry and sorrowful. Let us look to the Stone, the Divine in the natural, to the Divine Human of the Lord Himself, let us see Him in the Way in which we are to go, and then we will see that it is not so difficult to walk in the way that leads to heaven as is believed.

AMEN

Lessons: I Psalm 119:25-40
 II Matthew 11:16-30
 III Heaven and Hell 533, 534.