

Blessed are the Meek
A Sermon on Matthew 5:5

Lessons:

Isaiah 7:14-16, 21-22

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Matthew 11:20-30;

Apocalypse Explained 304-[44]

December 28, 2008

Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the land. (Matthew 5:5)

Every one of us has met at least one person who could be called a *meek* person. A meek man is not hard to identify. He is the last to quarrel, and the first to apologize; he is the one who tries to avoid arguments at any price, and cannot stand conflicts between his friends; he is the first to provide conflict mitigation; and he is often considered a peacemaker because he appears to be peaceful all the time.

And yet, the question of who is meek in the spiritual sense, that is, who are those which are called *meek* by the Lord, has never ceased to intrigue every serious and thinking Christian, especially because the Lord called Himself meek, but also said that He came not to bring peace on earth but strife and opposition. (Luke 12:51-53.) When the natural and literal interpretation of the blessing, *the meek shall inherit the land*, is combined with the literal interpretation of *to turn the other cheek*, (Matthew 5:39; Luke 6:29), then every Christian has to resolve an overwhelming difficulty - how to reconcile his life as a moral and civil man with his life as a Christian. Every literal application of the recommendation, *turn the other cheek*, would run counter to the basic moral, civil, and also religious law, namely, that every man is to be responsible for his deeds. (Luke 23:41; Apoc. 14:13 and 22:12.)

Fortunately, for those who accept the truths of the Second Coming, such a difficulty is solvable, namely, that there is a difference between natural and spiritual meekness, and also between natural and spiritual *turning the other cheek*. Spiritual meekness is the state of the good of charity. We read that by the *meek* in Matthew 5:5 are meant those who are in the good of charity. (See Apocalypse Explained 304[44].)

At this juncture, we ask ourselves what connection there is between being a meek person and being in the good of charity. Does that mean that every person who is meek is at the same time in the good of charity? Or, rather, does it mean that no man can be meek in the spiritual sense of that word without being at the same time in the good of charity?

The entire problem may be reduced to the question of what is the moving force, or what is the motive, standing behind a man conducting himself in a meek fashion? The Lord looks at everything from the point of view of eternity (sub specie aeternitatis). Thus, the Lord looks to the internal of man first. The external of man, whether good or bad, is of secondary significance in the spiritual life. There are people who are extremely polished and beautifully mannered, so that with them no argument seems possible. On the other hand, there are people who are unpleasant and quick to start an argument, but who are soft and meek inside. Their softness and meekness comes always as a wonderful surprise. Every person has an internal and an external. It is desirable that those act in harmony and correspond one to another. However, they rarely do, and that is why there is such a great difference between those who are naturally meek and those who are spiritually meek.

Natural meekness has natural causes. It is inherited from parents, or it is a meekness motivated by the love of *self* and of the world, as are all other good external qualities of man until he is given a new internal by the Lord. Spiritual meekness has spiritual causes. It is a meekness and obedience to the Divine Truths of the Lord's Word, motivated by man's love of the Lord. Natural meekness is directed to other men, and to their propriums. Spiritual meekness is directed toward the Lord, and makes it possible for the Lord to give to man a new, spiritual proprium from His Divine Proprium.

We find the best model of spiritual meekness in the life of our Lord. He was severe and strict with those who were profaning the goods and truths of the Church, but he was soft and meek when it came to His obedience to the Divine in Himself and to the Holy Scripture which He alone fulfilled to the last jot. Thus He united His Human Essence to His Divine Essence, and brought about the Salvation of the human race. The Gospels abound in examples of the Lord's meekness and submission to the Scripture:

It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God, He answered to the devil in the wilderness.

(Matthew 4:7.)

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise

pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

(Matthew 5:17, 18.)

Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all justice, He said to John before being baptized in the waters of Jordan.

(Matthew 3:15.)

And, lastly, in His prayer to the Divine,

O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.

(Matthew 26:39.)

It is by being meek toward the Scripture, that is, by fulfilling all the law and the prophets, that the Lord *inherited the land* in the celestial sense. Namely, by uniting His Divine to His Human and His Human to His Divine, He saved the universal human race, and made it possible for every person to be saved. At the same time, the Lord became the Heir and Possessor of the Heavens, which were made up of those who had lived in the Most Ancient and Ancient Church, and who were yearning to see His coming into the world.

At this point, it seems necessary to show how a good internal, or a spiritually *meek* internal, affects the external man and brings about its transformation, so that the internal and external can be harmoniously conjoined and ordered.

In Divine Providence no. 86, we are taught that when goods with truths are in the center, while evils and falsities are at the circumference, then the things in the center spread out even to the circumference, as heat spreads from a central fire. In this manner, evils at the circumference are moderated by what is good from the center. Naturally, all this [occurs] provided the evils and falsities at the circumference are not directly opposed to the goods and truths in the center. This is explained further in the Arcana Coelestia no. 8311 [1], where we are taught as follows:

Those who are in falsities and at the same time in good are, within the church, those who are in heresies and in a life of good; and, without the church, all who are in good. But with these, falsities do not condemn, unless they are such falsities as are contrary to good, and destroy the very life of good. But the falsities which are not contrary to good are indeed in themselves falsities, but relatively to the good of life, to which they are not contrary, they almost put off the quality of falsity, which is effected by application to good. For such falsities can be applied to good, and they can be applied to evil. If they are applied to good, they become mild; but if to evil, they become hard.

There is a danger in thinking that every person while being regenerated, and even after that, distorts the nature of truth and good simply because he is a person. Namely, it is dangerous to think that people cannot receive the true and good from the Lord as they are because their minds are finite while the Lord's truth and the Lord are infinite. Indeed, man can never receive the true as it is in itself fully, but not because he is a man. The reason is that the Lord accommodates His Truth and His Good to man's condition. Thus the quantity and quality of true and good received from the Lord is ever more purified as people advances in their spiritual lives.

The true meaning of *the meek shall inherit the land*, when applied to the man of the Church, is that man ought to strive to obey the Word of the Lord to his best ability so that he may be given a new spirit and a new heart, free from the loves of self and of the world. From this new spirit and new heart, which is his new internal, will come about moderation of the evils and falsities in his external man so that at the end his external man will be ordered and ruled by his internal man. Thus, his *meek* internal will *inherit and possess* his *meek* external.

Similarly, the Church as the Bride is the external in respect to the Lord, Who is its internal or her Bridegroom. Thus, in the Church there should be harmony between the external and the internal, just as there is harmony, a perfect union, between the Lord's Human and His Divine.

May we men and women of the Church conduct ourselves in accordance with the principles which governed the Lord of our lives, in being meek in the manner in which He was meek, and may we also see our external and natural man being transformed into His inheritance, so that the two may be one, the internal and the external, in a joint partnership of commitment and devotion to Him who is our Redeemer and our Savior, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen