

Sermon on What Makes Doctrine Genuine

Lessons: Genesis 44:1-6, 12, 14, 16-23, 27- 31, 34
Matthew 22:34-40
Arcana Coelestia 5826

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You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment.

And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.

(John 6:28-29)

"...all things of the doctrine of the New Jerusalem relate to love to the Lord and to love towards the neighbor.

(AR 903)

All things of genuine doctrine have reference to these two loves -- love to the Lord and love towards the neighbor. These two loves are the essentials of all true doctrine. All genuine doctrine or teaching must have as its goal or purpose leading a person and the church into those two loves. Love to the Lord and love toward the neighbor must be the soul and life of all the Church's doctrine. Without these two things as the end to which doctrine looks, doctrine is neither true nor good nor genuine, but is false and leads people astray. Doctrine is meant to be of life. Apart from life, that is, apart from living according to what the Lord teaches in His Word, doctrine is only an abstraction, a distraction, or worse. To merely talk about doctrine and not live according to it, is about as useful as talking about when the sun is going to someday burn out. It makes for interesting talk, but it's hardly useful!

In Apocalypse Revealed 903, it is said:

"...all things of the doctrine of the new Jerusalem relate to love to the Lord and to love towards the neighbor. Love to the Lord is to have faith in the Lord and to do His Commandments, and to do His Commandments is love towards the neighbor, because to do His Commandments is to do uses to the neighbor."

All genuine doctrine in the Church looks to these loves and thus to use. No one can be in a true love of the doctrine of the Church who neglects to live according to the Lord's Commandments, because the doctrine is from, of, and looks to His Commandments. For anyone to say he or she loves the doctrine of his or her church, but fails to live according to what it teaches, is like saying we

love the Lord when we will not live according to what He teaches. In such a case, there is no real love of the doctrine, of the Church, of the neighbor, or of the Lord, but only a false and self-centered love. And in such a case, the doctrine, the Church, and the neighbor are loved not for any spiritual reasons, but only for natural and proprial reasons, which look only to one's own benefit and reputation.

When we think about the teachings of the doctrine of the church, we need to consider what is in our own love for the doctrine and for the Church. Do we regard the doctrine and the Church as something that we need to live according to, and help others to live according to; or do we really concern ourselves only with what the doctrine and the Church can do for us in terms of income, reputation, security, self esteem, or fellowship? Are we regarding the church primarily for what it can do for us in this world, and not looking to what the church teaches us in regard to loving and being of use to the neighbor and to shunning evils as sins against the Lord?

Genuine doctrine *is not* about whether certain books are part of the Word, nor about whether the Doctrine concerning the Sacred Scripture applies to those books. Those are matters of faith over which good people can and do differ. Genuine doctrine *is* about the life that leads one to heaven. Genuine doctrine always looks to love to the neighbor and love to the Lord and how these two loves may be put into practice in our lives. We can see this plainly taught in these passages from the Arcana Coelestia:

In order that the Church may exist, there must be doctrine from the Word, because without doctrine the Word is not understood; yet doctrine alone in a person does not make the Church in him; but a life according to it. From this it follows that faith alone does not make the Church; but the life of faith which is charity.

The genuine doctrine of the Church is the doctrine of charity and faith together, and not the doctrine of faith without that of charity; for the doctrine of charity and faith together is the doctrine of life; but not the doctrine of faith without the doctrine of charity. (AC 10763-10764)

We may add to this what is said in Arcana Coelestia 809:

The knowledge and rationality of faith by no means make the church or the man of the church, but charity which is of the will does this. All that is essential comes from the will. Consequently neither does what is

doctrinal make the church, unless both in general and in particular it looks to charity, for then charity becomes the end. From the end it is evident what kind of doctrine it is, and whether it is of the church or not. The church of the Lord, like the kingdom of the Lord in the heavens, consists of nothing but love and charity. (AC 809)

Among the leading doctrinal principles of the Lord's New Church is the idea that "the Latin Word without doctrine is as a candlestick without light, and those who read the Latin Word without doctrine, or who do not acquire for themselves a doctrine from the Latin Word, are in darkness as to all truth." (Second leading thesis set forth in *De Hemelsche Leer*.) This principle is later restated in the church's Principles of Doctrine with the change that the Latin Word is now called the Third Testament (Handbook, page 44). But knowing this doctrinal principle does not make the church in us, nor are we true members of the church because we ascribe to this doctrinal principle or any of the other doctrinal principles found in *De Hemelsche Leer* or the Handbook of the Lord's New Church.

This is because, as was stated in AC 10763, doctrine alone does not make the church in a person. Doctrine helps us to understand the Word, and as the church is according to its understanding of the Word, so also is the church within us according to our understanding of the Word. But what makes the church is a life according to doctrine. Therefore the passage emphasizes that faith alone, or doctrine alone, does not make the Church; but the life of faith which is charity.

And note also what is said concerning the genuine doctrine of the church, that "*the genuine doctrine of the Church is the doctrine of charity and faith together.*" And this doctrine, the doctrine of charity and faith together, is the doctrine of life. This doctrine of life means living according to what doctrine teaches. And what doctrine ultimately teaches is living according to the precepts of the Decalogue and the two great commandments of loving the Lord and loving the neighbor.

We can have no love to the Lord apart from love towards the neighbor. We can have no love to the neighbor apart from shunning evils as sins against the Lord. Everything of genuine doctrine and of the Church looks to these two loves. There can be no genuine love of doctrine and of the Church apart from shunning evils as sins, from which comes love towards the neighbor, and thus love to the Lord. By means of a life according to the Commandments, thus, according to all

that genuine doctrine teaches, we can be led into a true love of that doctrine, and thus into love towards the neighbor and into love to the Lord.

AMEN.

Prayer: *O Lord, lead us and guide us to know and love that all things of the doctrine of the church relate to love to You and to the neighbor; that we may come to love to do Your commandments and be of use to the neighbor. Amen*
(cf. AR 903)

LESSONS

Genesis 44:1-6, 12, 14, 16-23, 27- 31, 34 (NKJV)

¹ And he (Joseph) commanded the steward of his house, saying, "Fill the men's sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put each man's money in the mouth of his sack.

² Also put my cup, the silver cup, in the mouth of the sack of the youngest, and his grain money." So he did according to the word that Joseph had spoken.

³ As soon as the morning dawned, the men were sent away, they and their donkeys.

⁴ When they had gone out of the city, *and* were not *yet* far off, Joseph said to his steward, "Get up, follow the men; and when you overtake them, say to them, 'Why have you repaid evil for good?'"

⁵ *Is not this the one* from which my lord drinks, and with which he indeed practices divination? You have done evil in so doing.' "

⁶ So he overtook them, and he spoke to them these same words.

¹² And he searched. He began with the oldest and left off with the youngest; and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack.

¹⁴ So Judah and his brothers came to Joseph's house, and he *was* still there; and they fell before him on the ground.

¹⁶ Then Judah said, "What shall we say to my lord? What shall we speak? Or how shall we clear ourselves? God has found out the iniquity of your servants; here we are, my lord's slaves, both we and *he* also with whom the cup was found."

¹⁷ But he said, "Far be it from me that I should do so; the man in whose hand the cup was found, he shall be my slave. And as for you, go up in peace to your father."

¹⁸ Then Judah came near to him and said: "O my lord, please let your servant speak a word in my lord's hearing, and do not let your anger burn against your servant; for you *are* even like Pharaoh.

¹⁹ My lord asked his servants, saying, 'Have you a father or a brother?'"

²⁰ And we said to my lord, 'We have a father, an old man, and a child of *his* old age, *who is* young; his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother's children, and his father loves him.'

²¹ Then you said to your servants, 'Bring him down to me, that I may set my eyes on him.'

²² And we said to my lord, 'The lad cannot leave his father, for *if* he should leave his father, *his father* would die.'

²³ But you said to your servants, 'Unless your youngest brother comes down with you, you shall see my face no more.'

²⁷ Then your servant my father said to us, 'You know that my wife bore me two sons;

²⁸ and the one went out from me, and I said, "Surely he is torn to pieces"; and I have not seen him since.

²⁹ But if you take this one also from me, and calamity befalls him, you shall bring down my gray hair with sorrow to the grave.'

³⁰ Now therefore, when I come to your servant my father, and the lad *is* not with us, since his life is bound up in the lad's life,

³¹ it will happen, when he sees that the lad *is* not *with us*, that he will die. So your servants will bring down the gray hair of your servant our father with sorrow to the grave.

³⁴ For how shall I go up to my father if the lad *is* not with me, lest perhaps I see the evil that would come upon my father?"

Matthew 22:34-40 (NKJV)

³⁴ But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together.

³⁵ Then one of them, a lawyer, asked *Him a question*, testing Him, and saying,

³⁶ "Teacher, which *is* the great commandment in the law?"

³⁷ Jesus said to him, "*You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.*'

³⁸ This is *the* first and great commandment.

³⁹ And *the* second *is* like it: '*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*'

⁴⁰ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

AC 5826. (on Genesis 44:27)

'You know that my wife bore me two sons' (*Gen. 44:27*) This signifies that if there be spiritual good which is of the church, there will be internal good and truth

[2] In regard to this, that there will be internal good and truth if there be spiritual good which is of the church, the case is this. The spiritual good which Israel represents is the good of truth, that is, truth in the will and in act. This truth, or this good of truth, in a person, makes him to be the church. When truth has been implanted in the will (which is perceived by the fact that a person is affected with truth for the sake of the end that he may live according to it), then there is internal good and truth. When a person is in this good and truth, then the kingdom of the Lord is in him, and consequently he is the church, and together with others like him makes the church in general.

From this it may be seen that in order that the church may be the church, there must be spiritual good, that is, the good of truth, but by no means truth alone ... Let everyone think within himself whether truth would be anything unless it had life as its end. What are doctrinal things without this end? and what the precepts of the Decalogue without a life according to them? For if anyone is acquainted with these, and with all their meaning in its fullness, and yet lives contrary to them, of what benefit are they? have they any effect at all? except, with some, damnation?

The case is similar with the doctrinals of faith from the Word, which are precepts of Christian life, for they are spiritual laws. Neither do these lead to anything unless they become of life. Let a person consider within himself whether there is anything in him that is anything except what enters into his very life; and whether a person's life ... is anywhere else than in his will.

[3] From this then it is that it is said by the Lord in the Old Testament, and confirmed in the New, that all the Law and all the Prophets are founded in love to God, and love to the neighbor, thus in life itself, but not in faith without life; therefore by no means in faith alone....

[5] Moreover in order that a person may be regenerated and become the church, he must be introduced through truth to good; and he is introduced when truth becomes truth in the will and in act. This truth is good, and is called the good of truth, and produces new truths continually; for then for the first time it makes itself fruitful. The truth which is thence brought forth or made fruitful is what is called internal truth, and the good from which it is, is called internal good; for nothing becomes internal until it has been implanted in the will, because what is of the will is the inmost of a person. So long as good and truth are outside of the will, and in the understanding only, they are outside of a person; for the understanding is without, and the will is within. **AMEN.**