

Communities of Evil

QUESTIONS

What is evil like from the inside?

When does a community go wrong?

How can it be fixed?

A miniature Heaven, a miniature hell

A person who is governed by evil, and by falsity rooted in evil, is a miniature hell, whereas one who is governed by good, and by truth rooted in good, is a miniature heaven. But more, in the Lord's Divine mercy, will be stated elsewhere about these series. (*Secrets of Heaven*, paragraph 5339)

... all the things the person has thought, intended, or done since early childhood have entered into the composition of his life. They have also formed themselves into a network which is such that one cannot be moved without all of them together being moved. For a wicked person is an image of hell, and a good person is an image of heaven; and also the evils and falsities with a wicked person are interconnected in the same way as the communities of hell are with one another, of which that person is a part, while the forms of good and the truths with a good person are interconnected in the same way as heavenly communities are with one another, of which this person is a part. From this it is evident that the evils and falsities with a wicked person cannot be removed suddenly from where they are. They can be removed only in the measure that forms of good and truths in their proper order have been implanted more deeply within the person; for heaven with a person removes hell. If the removal were done suddenly the person would pass out, for the whole network of things, every single one, would be thrown into confusion and deprive him of his life. (*Secrets of Heaven*, paragraph 9334, section 2)

Heaven [and all levels within] appears as one person

The first heaven divides into countless communities, as do the second and the third, and each community consists of many individuals who, because of the harmony and unanimity that exist among them, in effect constitute one person. At the same time, all the communities in effect constitute one human being. ... Each individual therefore contributes to the happiness of all, and all to that of each individual. Consequently every angel and every community is an image of the whole of heaven and is so to speak heaven in miniature. (*Secrets of Heaven*, paragraph 684)

Hell appears as one devil

... the entire hell, like the entire heaven, is before the Lord as one man, but as a man-devil or a man-monster; and in this all things are in opposition to those that are in the Divine man-angel, ... So in the same way that each society of heaven, as has been said, is in the Lord's sight as one man-angel in the likeness of its affection, each society of hell is in the Lord's sight as one man-devil in the likeness of its evil affection. ... (Apocalypse Explained, paragraph 1224, section 4, also HH 553.3)

We each share the state of our own societies

... within a heavenly community into which they come good spirits take to themselves and come to possess the entire wisdom that everyone possesses in that community. This is what the sharing that takes place among them is like even though during their lifetime they had no knowledge at all of the kinds of matters they talk about in that heavenly community. (*Secrets of Heaven*, paragraph 5859)

... when in a community there many act as one, and also in organized groups, what one person thinks is also what another thinks, so that thought links them together. (*Secrets of Heaven*, paragraph 5975)

Hellish societies bound together by a common purpose

[ON GENESIS 11:7 - 'So that they do not hear each man the lip of his companion']
... evil spirits in the next life, ... are distinguished into separate communities just as good spirits are. But they are joined and held together by their having similar delusions and evil desires, so that they act together in persecuting truths and goods. So they have a common interest to hold them together. But as soon as that common interest ceases to exist one rushes at another, and their joy then consists in torturing one or more of their companions. **The same applies in the world where doctrine and worship of this kind exist.** People may be quite united in their acceptance of what is a matter of doctrine or religious practice, but the common interest holding them together is worship of self. And their acceptance is proportional to their ability to share in that common interest. But to the extent they cannot share or have any hope of sharing that common purpose they split up, for the reason mentioned just above, that not one of these people possesses any truth but every one has falsity in place of truth, and evil in place of good. (*Secrets of Heaven*, paragraph 1322)

When common purpose fails...

Picture a community made up of people like this, all totally in love with themselves, not caring about others unless they are allies, and you will see that their love is no different from that of thieves for each other. To the extent that they are acting in concert, they embrace each other and call each other friends; but once they stop cooperating, once anyone resists their control, they attack and butcher each other. If their deeper natures-their minds-are probed, it will be clear that they are full of virulent hatred for each other, that at heart they ridicule anything fair and honest and even ridicule the Deity, tossing it aside as worthless. This comes out even more clearly from their communities in the hells, which will be described below. (*Heaven and Hell*, paragraph 560)

The brain, like heaven, belongs to the realm of ends which are uses, for whatever flows in from the Lord is an end looking towards the salvation of the human race. This is the end which reigns in heaven, and also which as a result reigns in the brain, for the brain, where man's mind is seated, looks to ends in the body, that is to say, so that the body may serve the soul and that the soul may be eternally happy. But some communities exist which have no end that has any use in view apart from mixing with friends, male and female, and enjoying themselves there; thus they are wholly self-indulgent and care about no one else but themselves. Whether at home or in public their end in view is the same. More communities of spirits such as these exist at the present day than one can possibly imagine. As soon as they arrive their sphere gets to work and destroys in others their affections for truth and good. And once these have been destroyed those spirits experience the delight which they share as friends with one another.

These are obstructions in the brain, and they cause nonsensical confusions there. Many communities of such spirits have been with me, and I have perceived their presence from a dullness, slowness, and loss of emotional feeling. I have also talked to them on several occasions. They are pestilential and pernicious, though in everyday life when they were in the world they had apparently been good, pleasant, well-mannered, and also clever people, for they know how to behave correctly and how to worm their way in by such behaviour, especially into friendships. What is meant by being a friend to good, or by the friendship that is concerned for what is good, they neither know nor wish to know. A sad fate awaits them. In the end they live in squalor and in such stupidity that scarcely anything

at all of their human ability to understand things is left to them. For the end he has in view is what makes a person, and the essential nature of his end determines the nature of him as a person and therefore of his human ability to understand after death. (*Secrets of Heaven*, paragraph 4054)

Since hellfire means all the craving to do evil that flows from love for oneself, that same fire also means the kind of torment that occurs in the hells. This is because the impulses that arise from that love are urges to wound people who do not offer respect and deference and reverence. To the extent that rage takes charge, and the hatred and vengefulness that come from rage, people are driven to attack others viciously. When this impulse is inherent in everyone in a community where there are no external restraints, no fears of the law or of loss of reputation or position or profit or life, everyone attacks everyone else out of sheer malice. The strong conquer and subject the rest to their tyranny, cheerfully torturing any who do not surrender. This latter delight is integral to the delight in tyranny to the point that they are of equal intensity. This is because sadism is inherent in hostility, envy, hatred, and vengefulness, which as already noted are the evils of a love of cruelty.

All the hells are communities like this, so everyone there cherishes hatred toward others in her or his heart and bursts out in savagery whenever there is the strength to do so. These acts of savagery and torture are what are meant by hellfire, because they are the results of their obsessions. (*Heaven and Hell*, paragraph 573)

When societies of the evil are broken up.

In the next life something of a Last Judgement sometimes takes place before the eyes of the evil when their communities are dissolved and before the eyes of the good when they are being admitted into heaven. Let some personal experiences of both such events be given.

... When the spirits around me had so amalgamated into destructive communities that they were in the ascendancy and did not allow themselves, by the law of equilibrium which order ensures, to be controlled in such a way that they did not vex other communities excessively or begin to do them harm from their superior strength, a sizable squadron of spirits then appeared on the scene from the quarter in front, slightly to the right and above. As they approached a tumultuous sound was heard, as if coming in waves and roaring. When they heard it the spirits were filled with dismay and terror, and confusion resulted. At that point the spirits within those communities were scattered, one this way and another that, so that they melted away from one another and did not know one another's whereabouts. ...

There are also other types of tumults, or rather of conflicts, which also convey the idea of a Last Judgement and by which communities harmfully joined together as regards their interiors are dissolved. Concerning them let the following be mentioned: Such spirits are driven into a condition in which they do not think in their normal way as a community, that is, one with another, but each one independently. As a result of their thinking, each at variance with the others, and of each muttering something different from the rest, an uproar is produced which sounds like that of many waters; and conflict with one another takes place such as defies description which arises out of the mishmash of opinions concerning firmly established truths, which are at the time the substance of their thoughts and speech. That mishmash is such as may be called spiritual chaos. (*Secrets of Heaven*, paragraph 2127-2129)

Self-love.

By nature, self-love runs wild to the extent that its reins are loosened, that is, to the extent that the outward restraints constituted by fears of the law and its penalties, fears of losing reputation, esteem, profit, position, and life are taken away. It runs wild even to the extent of wanting to rule not only over the whole globe but even over all heaven and the Lord himself. It knows no bound or limit. This is latent in everyone who is focused on self-love even though it may not show in the world, where the restraints we have mentioned hold it back.

We cannot fail to see this in people in power and kings who are not held back by any such restraints. They run wild and conquer as many territories and kingdoms as they can and aspire to boundless power and glory. This is even clearer in the modern Babylon, which extends its control into heaven and transfers all the Lord's divine power to itself and even craves more.

The reader may see in the booklet Last Judgment that people like this are diametrically opposed to the Divine and to heaven and that they favor hell when they arrive in the other life after death. (*Heaven and Hell*, paragraph 559)

Self-love destructive of society.

Man is born for the sake of others otherwise there would be no society that would hold together. (*True Christian Religion*, paragraph 406)

Self-love is the source of all the evils that destroy civilized society. From it, as from a filthy pit, all forms of hatred, revenge, and cruelty stream forth, and indeed of adultery. For anyone who loves himself either holds in contempt or reviles or hates everybody else who does not serve him or who does not further his interests or who fails to show him favour; and in hating he breathes nothing but revenge and cruelty - doing so in the measure that he loves himself. Such love is for these reasons destructive of society and of the human race. (*Secrets of Heaven*, paragraph 2045, section 2)

... regarded in itself evil, and sin too, is nothing else than being parted from good. Also, evil exists essentially in disunion, as is evident from what good is. Essentially good is a joining together because all good stems from love to the Lord and love towards the neighbour. The good of love to the Lord joins a person to the Lord and consequently to all good that goes forth from the Lord; and the good of love towards the neighbour joins him to heaven and the communities there, so that by means of this love as well he is joined to the Lord. For properly speaking, heaven is the Lord since He is the All in all there.

[2] But with evil the opposite applies. Evil stems from self-love and love of the world. Evil stemming from self-love sets a person apart not only from the Lord but also from heaven, for he loves no one but himself and others only insofar as he sees them as part of his self-interest, or as they identify themselves with him. Consequently he turns everyone's attention towards himself and entirely away from others, most of all away from the Lord. When a large number act like this within a single community it follows that all are set apart from one another; inwardly each sees another as his enemy. If anyone acts contrary to his self-interest he hates that person and takes delight in his destruction. The evil of the love of the world is not dissimilar, for this consists in a longing for other people's wealth and goods, and in a longing to gain possession of everything owned by others; and these longings too lead to all kinds of enmity and hatred, though in a lesser degree. For anyone to come to know what evil is, and so what sin is, let him merely try to see what self-love and love of the world are; and to come to know what good is, let him merely try to see what love to God and love towards the neighbour are. By trying to do this he will come to

see what evil is, and as a consequence what falsity is; and from this he will come to see what good is, and as a consequence what truth is. (*Secrets of Heaven*, paragraph 4997)

If everyone is for himself, society is destroyed.

Because the love that is derived from Him and returned to Him through the acceptance of it, and also mutual love, make heaven one, heaven is therefore called a marriage, which gives it its 'being'. One would be able to say the same of the Church if love and charity existed there as its essential being. Therefore where no togetherness or unity exists, the Church has no 'being', for unless something were present there to unite its members or make them one, the Church would disintegrate and cease to exist.

[2] The same happens to civil society if everyone there is out only for himself and nobody, except for his own purposes, takes any interest in anyone else. Without laws to unite its members, and without any fears for loss of gain, position, reputation, or life, society would fall completely to pieces. Therefore the 'being' of such a society in which everyone is out for himself consists in its members being joined or united together, but at a purely external level. Internally that society does not have any 'being'! Consequently in the next life people like this are confined to hell, where in a similar way they are kept in check by external restraints, especially by fears. But as often as those restraints are eased, one individual hastens to destroy another, there being nothing he wants to do more than to destroy another completely. It is different in heaven, where love to the Lord and mutual love deriving from that love join its members together at an internal level. When external restraints are removed there, angels become even more closely joined to one another. And being thereby drawn nearer to the Divine Being (Esse) coming to them from the Lord, they are filled deeper still with affection, and from this with a sense of freedom, and as a consequence with feelings of blessedness, happiness, and joy. (*Secrets of Heaven*, paragraph 5002, section 2)

Two kinds of the love of dominion.

At this point I was led to talk to the angels present with me about dominion. There are two kinds, one being that which belongs to love towards the neighbour, the other that which belongs to self-love. Dominion belonging to love towards the neighbour exists among those who dwell separated into households, families, and clans, whereas dominion belonging to self-love exists among those who dwell together in society. Among those who live separated into households, families, and clans, the one who is father of the clan has dominion, as do the heads of families under him, and as do the fathers of each household under these; 'father of the clan' describes one from whom families descend, and from those families households. But in the exercise of dominion all these leaders are moved by a love like that of a father towards his children, who teaches them how they must live, does what is good to them, and as far as he can gives them what is his. It never enters his mind to make them subordinate to himself as subjects or as domestic servants; rather, he loves them to obey him like sons obedient to their father. And since, as is well known, this love increases as it descends, the father of the clan is moved to action by a love more internal than that of the actual father from whom the sons directly spring. This kind of dominion also exists in the heavens because it is the kind of dominion that is the Lord's. His dominion arises out of Divine Love towards the whole human race.

[2] But dominion belonging to self-love, which is the opposite of dominion belonging to love towards the neighbour, came into being when people alienated themselves from the Lord; for to the extent that people do not love and worship the Lord they love and worship themselves, and also love the world rather than heaven. At this point it became necessary, for their own safety, for the clans consisting of families and households to come together in

a single body and institute various forms of government. For to the extent that this love increased, so did evils of every sort, such as enmity, envy, hatred, vengeance, deceit, and brutality directed against all who opposed them. Furthermore the nature of that love is such that so far as it is given rein it rushes along, till at length everyone ruled by it wishes to have dominion over all others throughout the world, and everyone wishes to possess all the goods belonging to others. Nor indeed does it stop there; everyone wishes to have dominion as well over the whole of heaven, as may be recognized from the present-day Babylon. Such then is dominion belonging to self-love, dominion belonging to love towards the neighbour being as different from it as heaven is from hell.

[3] But although dominion belonging to self-love is such among people living in society, dominion belonging to love towards the neighbour nevertheless exists, even in kingdoms, among those who are wise on account of their belief in and love to God; for these love their neighbour. These too dwell in heaven divided into clans, families, and households, even though they live together in society; but they do so in accord with spiritual relationships, which are those of the good of love and the truth of faith. These in the Lord's Divine mercy will be spoken of elsewhere. (*Secrets of Heaven*, paragraph 10814)

How can you tell the difference?

"The whole of heaven, in short, is nothing but a world of useful service, from the firsts to the lasts of it. What is useful service but love of the neighbor in act? And what holds the heavens together except this love?"

[4] Having listened to this, I inquired, "How can anyone know whether he performs useful services from a love of self or whether he does so from a love of accomplishing useful ends? Everyone, be he good or evil, performs some useful services, and he is prompted to do them because of some love. Suppose that there were in the world a society composed only of devils, and another society composed only of angels. Moved by the fire of their love of self and the splendor of their own glory, the devils would perform, I think, as many useful services in their society as the angels would in theirs. Who can know, therefore, from what love and from what origin these services flow?"

[5] To this the two angels replied, "Devils perform useful services for the sake of themselves and their reputation, in order to be promoted to positions of honor or gain wealth. Angels, on the other hand, do not perform useful services on that account, but for the sake of the services, from a love of them. A person cannot distinguish the one and the other kinds of service, but the Lord sees the difference. Everyone who believes in the Lord and refrains from evils as sins performs useful services from the Lord. But everyone who does not believe in the Lord and does not refrain from evils as sins performs the services he does from himself and for the sake of himself.

"That is the difference between services performed by devils and services performed by angels." (*Conjugal Love*, paragraph 266)

... unless the general whole consists of parts so to speak like itself, it is not something general making one. (*Secrets of Heaven*, paragraph 1013, section 4)

No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. (Matthew 6:24 [Luke 16:13])

OTHER PARAGRAPHS

1285.2, 2982, 3519.2, 3815, 3986.3,
6605,
7396,
10811,
HH51, 62, 68, 69, 71,
DLW 79
TCR 412, 608,
SD 2324, 2716,
AE 1222.3, 1224.e
C 82,

Hellfire

(AC 5798.7 - equilibrium, HH 541-543, 588, 594)