

- I. A woman really wants to get ahead at work, & pushes. She is very good at sales, knowing when to be nice, when to be aggressive, and she works long hours
 - A. She has a boyfriend, but doesn't see him that often because she spends lot of evening time with clients, & travels often. Even in this Covid time when she sees him more she feels the relationship fading
 1. But she's not too worried, because she's interested in someone else – a client who is married, but not happy in the marriage
 - B. Though she is successful in her work, she wants more. She wants win the award and bonus for the top seller in her company for the year
 1. She has a big client she is wooing. She knows they don't really need what she's offering, but she wants the sale badly.
 - C. Most days when she comes home she either collapses or does chores, or socializes with friends, ignoring social distancing rules
- II. What is her biggest problem?
 - A. She is facing some serious moral challenges: Considering dating a married man, selling unneeded goods to clients, her discontent with her life, her ambition, her lack of concern about the pandemic
 - B. But in many ways her biggest problem is that her life is so busy. She is spending so much of her life in activity that she has no perspective and so can't change
- III. The talk today is about the value of reflection in our lives
 - A. Reflection is a wonderful and powerful word. It is a Latin word that means to turn back on yourself, to look at yourself and your thoughts
 - B. We are told in New Church teaching that "Reflection is a sight of past events; hence it is self-knowledge," or possibly even self awareness. (SE 2107)
 - C. This is what distinguishes us from animals – we are capable of self knowledge
 - D. We can be in middle of task, step back, consider what to do next, and totally change what we are doing
 - E. Our regeneration or spiritual growth stems largely from this ability to step back, observe destructive behaviors and change them
 - F. We can lift out of ourselves & ask what it's like for another person to experience what they are
 - G. We're told that without reflection "we know nothing, except *that* we are and nothing else—not *what* we are" (SE 734). And we are further told that without reflection we have no life. (SE 1905)
 1. Maybe you can think of a part of your life that has operated on this kind of auto-pilot. Because you were not reflecting you just did what is in front of you almost in the way an animal would. A lot of our pain comes from this
- IV. Reflection, we're told, is a function of internal sight (SE 4627; AC 5684)
 - A. This inner sight is a "turning one's attention, which is the sight of one's understanding, to observe whether something is true, and having done this to

- observe that it is indeed so" (AC 5684)
- B. What happens when you reflect is that your mind does lift up to see from a new perspective
 - C. Here is a rule of the universe: "Nothing can look into itself; but it must be something more internal or higher that thinks about it, for this can look into it. (AC 1953)
 - D. When we are the middle of pain or confusion, we cannot see the way out
 - E. But we are able to see the way out by elevating our understanding, our mind, above the concerns of the world and over the desires of our heart
 - F. We engage in a two-step process: Our minds lift up, we see the reality, and then we start to change our lives so that our heart rises up to that new level.
 - G. Then the mind lifts up above that new level and the will applies that insight
 - H. Spiritual development occurs only when there is reflection, or elevation of the mind, in the light of the truth from the Lord's Word
 - I. This may seem like a simple idea, hardly worth talking about. Yet if it were so simple we'd have no problems in our lives, and never make poor choices
- V. On one level, we all reflect constantly. People today can, in fact, become rather neurotic at times by over-reflecting on every nuance of our spiritual path, but real reflection, the kind leading to spiritual growth, is more than feelings of guilt or unworthiness, or passing thoughts about how we should change
- A. How can we reflect most effectively? The Lord describes three elements present in reflection
- VI. Firstly, you need truth, because that acts as a mirror in which we reflect on ourselves
- A. "Teaching of faith accomplishes nothing with people unless the Lord gives them to reflect. For this reason people learn what is true and good from the Word of the Lord, in order that from it they may reflect upon themselves, whether they [match what is described there]. This reflection is given them at certain times, especially in times of distress. Therefore it is of the greatest importance to know truths, for without [an understanding of] concepts, there can be no reflection, thus no reformation." (SE 737)
 - B. One of our readings spoke of the truths we know as mirrors that reflect the face of God, and the deeper truths we need to see.
 - C. It is that deeper truth that shines in our life and enables us to see truly
 - 1. So much of the teaching in the Word asks us to reflect
 - a. Judge not that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged
 - (1) That is not an intuitively obvious statement so we have to ponder, and in pondering we will ask how we do this
 - D. If we lack truth we have more limited ability to see and so to reflect
 - E. Going back to the Word all the time leads to the truest kind of reflection
- VII. The second requirement for reflection is a desire to rise above worldly concerns
- A. To a large extent we see what we want to see, so if we are not ready for the truth, we will find excuses. Just look at any political debate. The will does not

have to choose to follow what the understanding sees. In fact the will can control the intellect and allow us to convince ourselves of genuine falsity.

- B. The spiritual quality we need in this situation is called an affection for seeing truth because it is truth. Do you *want* to see the truth?
 - C. "When we are moved by an affection for truth for truth's own sake, that is, for the sake of the Lord's kingdom (where Divine Truth is present) and so for the Lord's sake, we are among angels. We do not in this case despise material gain insofar as it enables us to lead our life in the world. But such gain is not our end in view, only the useful purposes it serves which are seen by us as intermediate ends leading on to an ultimate heavenly one. This being so, our heart is by no means at all set on material gain." (AC 5433:2)
 - D. This is what the Lord was urging us toward when He said to consider the lilies of the field, and to trust that if He clothed them He would clothe us.
 - 1. Seeing truth requires that we step back from the situation in front of us, which in point of fact means that we lift our minds up above our current thoughts and feelings
- VIII. The final quality is that we must slow our lives down in order to reflect
- A. One of the 10 commandments is to remember the Sabbath and the teaching in Scripture places an enormous amount of emphasis on stopping daily life to give time to the Lord
 - 1. "Six days are for a person and his work, and the seventh is for the Lord, and for Him to give a person rest" (TCR 301).
 - 2. And because of this the Sabbath is called a day of "meditation on matters related to salvation and eternal life" (TCR 301).
 - B. You can't change course when you are going too fast. This is implied by the definition we saw earlier about reflection happening when we think about things past. You can't move forward when you are looking behind you, or when you are looking as if in a mirror to see a truth
 - C. Listen to this: "But this [process of receiving the truth from the Word] takes place only with those who because they are not distracted with worldly affairs are able to exercise discernment" (SS 59)
 - D. It might be said that the pace of life is inversely proportional to the depth of our thought
 - 1. One of the possible benefits of Covid is that people have had more time on their hands and might use it to reflect on their lives and what the Lord might be urging them toward
 - E. The Lord slowed down regularly in the world
 - 1. He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane; after feeding the 5000, He went up on a mountain alone; He prayed alone to the Divine soul within
 - 2. He, the God of heaven and earth stopped many times, as an example of what we need to be doing daily and many times a day
 - 3. At least 8 instances of the Lord's going aside to pray are described
 - a. There are few things in the Gospels the Lord is said to have done 8 different times, and is described as doing frequently.

- F. This is such an important requirement for reflection, because many people 1) know enough truth and 2) say they want to see it, but have not yet have not created the time in their lives for reflection
 - 1. It takes effort to live beyond the superficial plane because the here and now always presents more things to do or think about
 - 2. We have to cultivate an attitude of saying no to perfectly good things because they distract us from what is important
- IX. It is obvious that reflection is important to the Lord, and in many ways He has set up life it ways that force reflection upon us if we choose to avoid it
 - A. The woman in our story was creating her own need for reflection
 - 1. She was ignoring too many rules, and was going to crash sometime
 - a. That would provide an opportunity she may or may not use
 - b. But how much better would her life be were she to stop and reflect about even one of the areas of concern in her life and make some constructive steps
 - 2. Of course, we can fail to reflect even then, and we do this by blaming everyone else for our problems, or blaming ourselves without an effort to fix it and so falling into a deep depression
 - 3. And if we do reflect, how much? Will we lift our mind just high enough to make a minor adjustment, or are we willing to reconsider our lives
 - 4. In the old cartoons, when characters fought it would be shown as a cloud with fists and feet protruding at times. Every now and then a head would peer out for a moment only to get drawn back into the maelstrom.
 - a. Without conscious effort, our efforts at reflection can be like this.
- X. The Lord speaks about taking the time to reflect on our lives every day (Josh 1:8), and then on the Sabbath taking time to do the same, presumably at a deeper level.
 - A. This suggests that He's telling us to schedule in slow time
 - 1. Busy work is useful to do, but reflection requires time without electronics on, or possibly even nearby.
 - 2. Just as our spiritual development starts when we say no to evil, so reflection starts when we look at our lives and learn to say no to the things that distract us from thinking about what's most important.
 - B. It's interesting that each of the spiritual practices the Lord talks about – prayer, reading the Word, attending church and taking Holy Supper – all lead to or require reflection to do well.
 - C. And since the capacity to reflect is part of what separates us from animals, we can understand why they are so valuable.
- XI. Without reflection our lives become unmanageable & those we love will suffer
 - A. Taking the time to reflect allows us to set priorities. It is the place where we “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness,” so the Lord can add all the other things we need in
 - B. It is touching heaven. The Lord said, “The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the

kingdom of God is within you."

Opening sentence: This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you[a] shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Josh 1:8

Matt 6:25-34 "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."

Mat 7:1-5 "Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."

TCR 6. *The Whole of the Sacred Scripture and All the Doctrines Extracted From it by Churches Throughout Christendom Teach That There is A God and He is One.*

The reason why the whole of the Sacred Scripture teaches the existence of God is that its inmost meaning is concerned with nothing but God, that is, the Divine proceeding from God. For Scripture was dictated by God, and nothing can proceed from God except what He Himself is, and this we call the Divine. This resides in the inmost meaning of Scripture. However, in its lower forms which are derived from the Divine, the Holy Scripture is adapted to the grasp of angels and men. In these forms it is likewise Divine, but in a different guise; in this case the Divine is called Celestial, Spiritual and Natural. These are merely the veils of God, since God Himself, as He exists in the inmost meaning of the Word, cannot be looked on by any created being. For when Moses begged to see the glory of Jehovah, God told him that no one can see God and live. It is the same with the inmost meaning of the Word, in which God is in His Being and Essence.

[2] Still the Divine, which is inmosty contained in it and is protected by such veils as adapt it to the grasp of angels and men, shines out like light passing through crystalline structures, but the light appears to differ according to the state of mind which a person has acquired from God or from himself. For everyone who has acquired his state of mind from God, the Sacred Scripture is like a mirror, in which he sees God, everyone in his own fashion. This mirror is composed of the truths which he learns from the Word and absorbs by living his life in accordance with them. A first conclusion from this is that the Sacred Scripture is the fulness of God.

[3] This teaches not only the existence of God, but also that He is one. This is evident from the fact that the truths, which, as I have said, compose that mirror, are held together in a single bond and prevent a person from thinking about God except as one. That is why every person, whose reason has absorbed some holiness from the Word, knows, as if of himself, that God is one, and regards talking about several gods as a kind of madness. Angels cannot open their mouths to say 'Gods', because the aura of heaven in which they live offers resistance.

AC 6384. [For external people] life resides in the external or natural self, with some people in the lowest part of the natural, which is the level of the senses; for with them the truths of faith have been tied to factual knowledge in such a way that they cannot be raised above it. This also explains why they are in greater obscurity than anyone else in the spiritual Church; for they receive little light from their understanding, since it is preoccupied with factual knowledge and sensory impressions. It is different with those who have had an affirmative attitude of mind and have used factual knowledge to corroborate the truths of faith, but in such a way that they can be raised above factual knowledge, that is, above the natural, where that knowledge resides. These people have an enlightened understanding and so enjoy some perception of spiritual truth, which is served by factual knowledge beneath. That knowledge acts as a mirror in which the truths of faith and charity are seen and recognized, even as affections are seen in the face.