

**What is Spiritual Murder? (Scriptural Lessons at the End)**

*And be not afraid of those who kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather be afraid of Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in gehenna. Matthew 10:28*

In the Gospel Jesus expanded the understanding of the 5<sup>th</sup> commandment, to show that it include hatred. He was teaching that having hatred towards others comes from a hellish influence that does come from a will to murder or destroy of other people. If we are angry and hateful we are allowing murder into our hearts, if not our actions.

What we learn in the spiritual sense of this commandment is that spiritual murder is not just an intention to kill others, but to condemn others to hell. This is what Jesus was talking about when warning about being more afraid for the life of our soul than our body.

Again even the literal meaning of the commandment we are told that it more broadly means harm to others.

*In the natural sense, this commandment "Thou shalt not kill" means not to kill a man, and not to inflict upon him any wound from which he may die, also not to maim his body. It means also not to inflict any deadly harm upon his name and fame, since with many fame and life go hand in hand. (TCR 309)*

The desire to destroy or cut-down someone's character is an aspect if this commandment that many people do break and even might think they are justified in doing so, when the other person has done something hurtful to them first.

It is perhaps evident though that this kind of attack, even though it does not kill the body, is potentially more hurtful to the soul of the other person. Spiritual murder is about harming and even destroying another soul.

Evil spirits are all about hated and killing. They cannot directly kill people, but they can

influence people who are living to harm others both in body and soul.

We are going to delve into the question of what is not murder, to show more clearly what is. Self defense is not murder, whether we are talking about individuals or countries. The teachings make a distinction between anger and zeal. Zeal is used to describe the fierceness of a good love in defense.

*CL 365. 1. The zeal of a good love is like a heavenly flame, which never lashes out against another, but only defends itself. Its defence against a wicked person is as if he rushes into the fire and gets burnt up. But the zeal of an evil love is like a hellish flame, which lashes out from itself and rushes at another, wishing to burn him up. 2. The zeal of a good love at once burns down and weakens, when the other leaves off attacking; but the zeal of an evil love lasts and is not quenched*

Zeal only looks to defense, and as soon as the danger is past, becomes gentle and even looks on the attacker as a neighbor. This is the attitude which we read about in the case of a good soldier engaged in a defensive war. In contrast hatred does not show mercy and will continue to attack until the opponent is destroyed, and will not be satisfied with merely self-defense, or apologies, but is fixed on revenge and annihilation of all opposition.

This shows that not all opposition, violence and even killing come from hatred, and can even come from love. Obviously though hatred is real, and what can seem like zeal, or start as real zeal, can be changed into anger and hatred, if we let the hells in.

Hatred wants to see others condemned instead of saved. The love of self doesn't like competition. Whenever we get angry about something, hell will try to get us to stay angry and work to keep the offence or resentment going. This inspires the tit-for tat kind of escalation. If you remember the last time someone made you upset, part of you revels in the feeling of anger and planning for revenge against them, even to the point of being disappointed if they apologize

before you are ready. Having justified anger feels like a moral superiority, even more so when the other person is completely wrong and worthy of disdain.

Condemning other people in a way of feeling better about ourselves, especially if they other person has been critical of us. If they are worthy of being condemned then, we don't need to reflect on our own failings.

Now just condemning or despising other people in comparison with ourselves doesn't harm them materially. It does hurt us. But it usually doesn't stop there. The way we treat other people can, and generally does, change how they act. If we tell people they are condemned that might have a chance of inspiring change in them. More likely though, if we go around condemning people, especially people outside the church. they will believe us, and either reject the church and/or confirm themselves in their own evils.

By itself, our condemning other people even publicly does not harm their souls. A worse and more effective form of spiritual murder can actually come from seemingly kind and merciful actions (SD 3596).

Allowing and encouraging people to remain in evil is very dangerous to their souls. It can seem like mercy and charity to pity someone who is caught up in some evil, seemingly beyond their ability to resist, but if our pity leads us to simply excuse the evil and believe they cannot repent or change we are helping to actually condemn them to that evil. A potent example of this is in an account from Heaven and Hell:

Heaven and Hell 344. *I was in the street of a large city, and saw little boys fighting with each other; a crowd flocked around and looked on with much pleasure; and I was told that little boys are incited to such fights by their own parents. Good spirits and angels who saw this through my eyes were so revolted at it that I felt their horror, and especially that parents should incite their children to such things, saying that in this way parents extinguish in the earliest age*

*all the mutual love and all the innocence that little children have from the Lord, and initiate them into hatred and revenge.*

*Consequently, by their own endeavors they shut their children out of heaven, where there is nothing but mutual love. Let parents therefore who wish well to their children beware of such things.*

It might look like the right thing to do to support your children and encourage them, but encouraging violence is not healthy parenting. Hopefully we would recognize that

TCR 459.14 *For a man may do evil by deeds of beneficence; and by what appear to be evil deeds he may do good. For example: One who gives to a needy robber the means wherewith to buy a sword, by a beneficent act is doing evil; although the robber in begging the money did not tell what he would do with it. So again, if one rescues a robber from prison and shows him the way to a forest, saying to himself, It is not my fault that he commits robbery; I have given succor to the man. Take as another example, one who feeds an idler, and prevents his being compelled to work, saying to him, Go into a chamber in my house, and lie in bed; why should you weary yourself? Such a one favors idleness. Or again, take one who promotes relatives and friends with dishonest inclinations to offices of honor, wherein they can plot many kinds of mischief. Who cannot see that such works of charity do not proceed from any love of justice combined with judgment?*

[15] *On the other hand, a man may do good through what appear to be evil deeds. Take as an example a judge who acquits an evil-doer because he sheds tears, pours out words of piety, and begs the judge to pardon him because he is his neighbor. But in fact a judge performs a work of charity when he decrees the man's punishment according to the law; for he thus guards against the man's doing further evil and being a pest to society, which is the neighbor in a higher degree, and he prevents also the scandal of an unjust judgment. Who does not know also, that it is*

*good for servants to be chastised by their masters, or children by their parents, when they do wrong? The same is true of those in hell, all of whom are in the love of doing evil. They are kept shut up in prisons, and when they do evil are punished, which the Lord permits for the sake of their amendment. This is so because the Lord is justice itself, and does whatever He does from judgment itself.*

By seemingly kind and generous actions people of good intentions can actually be working towards the eternal damnation of another soul. This is actually from hell. Not necessarily the instinct to mercy, but the actions that are seemingly inspired by mercy can come from hell. Hell wins by two different tactics and sometimes both at the same time. One is to entice us into evils so that we love them and justify them and finally identify as those evils because we don't wish to change. The second is to condemn us for our evils such that we lose hope of ever changing and therefore don't try, and identify as being evil and beyond salvation. This is expressed in how they work on us in temptations: *Temptations are nothing else than combats of evil spirits with the angels who are with a man. Evil spirits call up all the wrong things that from his infancy a man has either done or even thought, thus both his evils and his falsities, and condemn him, and there is nothing that gives them greater delight than to do this, for the very delight of their life consists therein. But through angels the Lord guards the man, and restrains the evil spirits and genii from ranging beyond bounds and inundating the man beyond what he is able to sustain. (AC 741)*

Hell first inspires us to do evil, then condemns us for it. If they get us to love evil they win, if they get us to be miserable from evil and despair of ever changing, they also win. They know that the good news of salvation is that the Lord can remove evil from us. This is why we need the Lord. We need His love and guidance to save us from hell and to show us how to love other people wisely. The salvation of everyone, ourselves included, depends on the Lord's power

to help us come out of evil. There is no evil so large or small, so mild or so heinous, that the Lord doesn't not have the power to help us resist. *"Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear."* (Isaiah 59:1)

*Amen*

*THE LORD GOD JESUS CHRIST reigns, whose kingdom shall be for ages and ages. Amen.*

### **Readings:**

**Exodus 20:13; Matthew 5:21; Jonah 3&4; SD/SE 3114; HH 522; Charity 166.**

**Exodus 20:13** *"You shall not murder."*

**Matthew 5:21** *"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' 22 But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire. 23 Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.*

**Jonah 3:** *4 And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day's walk. Then he cried out and said, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"*

*5 So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them. 6 Then word came to the king of Nineveh; and he arose from his throne and laid aside his robe, covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes. 7 And he caused it to be proclaimed ... let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God; yes, let every one turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. 9 Who can tell if God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish? 10 Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it.*

*4:1 But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry. 2 So he prayed to the Lord, and said, "Ah, Lord, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm. 3 Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live!"*

**SE/SD 3114.** Spirits imagine that they could have been led differently, and so have become better than they are, thus kept from evils in act, and more such things. The evil cast the blame on the Lord, but they were told that the blame is theirs. By a spiritual mental image I saw that they can never be better led, so there are necessities all the moments of their life. And it has been foreseen from eternity, and thus provided, that all things down to the very least tend toward the final purpose that they may be parts in the grand Man, that is, in the Kingdom of the Lord.

**HH 522.** But first it will be told what the Divine mercy is. The Divine mercy is pure mercy

towards the whole human race, to save it; and it is also unceasing towards every man, and is never withdrawn from anyone; so that everyone is saved who can be saved. And yet no one can be saved except by Divine means, which means have been revealed by the Lord, in the Word. The Divine means are what are called Divine truths, which teach how man must live in order to be saved. By these truths the Lord leads man to heaven, and by them He implants in man the life of heaven. This the Lord does with all. But the life of heaven can be implanted in no one unless he abstains from evil, for evil obstructs. So far, therefore, as man abstains from evil, the Lord leads him out of pure mercy by His Divine means, and this from infancy to the end of his life in the world and afterwards to eternity. This is what is meant by the Divine mercy. Hence it is clear that the mercy of the Lord is pure mercy, but not immediate, that is, it does not look to saving all out of mere good pleasure, however they may have lived.

**Charity 166.** Charity in the Common Soldier. If he looks to the Lord and shuns evils as sins, and sincerely, justly, and faithfully does his duty, he also becomes charity; for as to this there is no distinction of persons. He is averse to unjust depredation; he abominates the wrongful effusion of blood. In battle it is another thing. There he is not averse to it; for he does not think of it, but of the enemy as an enemy, who desires his blood. When he hears the sound of the drum calling him to desist from the slaughter, his fury ceases. He looks upon his captives after victory as neighbors, according to the quality of their good. Before the battle he raises his mind to the Lord, and commits his life into His hand; and after he has done this, he lets his mind down from its elevation into the body and becomes brave; the thought of the Lord--which he is then unconscious of remaining still in his mind, above his bravery. And then if he dies, he dies in the Lord; if he lives, he lives in the Lord.