

Summary of God and Evil, Episode 3

Is God Love? | Divine Design Explained By Emanuel Swedenborg | Are You Separate From God?

—A misuse of our sense of autonomy sets us up to twist the good thoughts and feelings that come from God to serve our own ego-centric purposes.

—All thoughts move through a network of connected spirits that change the content along its way before it reaches us.

—What starts in God as loving and wise can end up as its complete opposite.

Reflection exercise:

When you become aware of a thought that brings up fear, worry, anger, despair or any other upsetting or unsettling feeling, consider that the thought has traveled through particular spirits to reach your mind. How does that change your view on the validity of the thought or belief? In the quote below, it says that for every false idea that flows into our outer minds, God “answers it” with deeper truth through the channels of our deeper selves. That deeper message is more challenging to perceive than the loud “noise” in our outer minds, so it takes some effort to listen. What do you think God would say, or is saying, in response to that thought that is upsetting you? Write down the unsettling message, and then write down what you think God’s response to that message would be.

Secrets of Heaven 8159:3 - “As for times of trial or challenge, what happens during them is that the hells fight against us, and the Lord fights for us. Every time the hells foist a false thought on us, the Deity responds. Falsity from the hells is introduced into our outer, earthly self and influences it, but the Deity’s response works on our inner, spiritual self. The Deity’s influence does not intrude as much on our awareness as hell’s does, nor does it rouse specific thoughts, only general thoughts. It operates in such a way that we barely sense it except as a kind of hopefulness and resulting comfort, but the hope and comfort hold countless gifts to which we are oblivious. These gifts take a form that harmonizes with our passions or loves, especially our passion or love for the truth and goodness that form our conscience.”

Related videos to check out on YouTube:

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The Infinite in You - Swedenborg and Life

The Lies Evil Spirits Tell Us - Swedenborg and Life

Where Thoughts Come From - Swedenborg and Life

3 Kinds of Evil Spirits - Swedenborg and Life

Spirals of the Spirit - Swedenborg and Life

Quotes from this lesson in fuller context:

Divine Providence 286:1

Now since it is a law of divine providence that we can act freely and rationally (that is, availing ourselves of the two abilities called freedom and rationality), and since it is also a law of divine providence that whatever we do seems to be done by us and therefore to be ours, and since we can infer from these laws that evils have to be permitted, it follows that we can misuse these abilities. We can freely and rationally justify anything we please. We can take anything we please and make it rational, whether it is inherently rational or not. This leads some people to say, "What is truth? Can't I make anything true that I choose? Isn't that what the world does?" People do this by rationalizing if they can.

Take the most false proposition you can and tell clever individuals to justify it, and they will. For example, tell them to prove that we are nothing but animals, or that the soul is like a spider in its web, controlling the body by its filaments, or that religion is nothing but a restraint, and they will prove whichever you choose so that it actually seems true. Nothing could be easier, because they cannot identify an appearance or a false proposition that is taken in blind faith to be true.

Divine Providence 288

All of heaven's angels admit that no one can originate a thought, that all thinking comes from the Lord, while all the spirits of hell claim that thought cannot originate in anyone but themselves. Actually, these spirits have been shown any number of times that none of them are originating their own thoughts, that they cannot, and that it is all flowing in, but to no effect--they are unwilling to accept it.

However, experience will teach first of all that even for spirits in hell, every bit of thought and feeling is flowing in from heaven. The problem is that the inflowing good is being turned into evil in hell, and the truth is being turned into falsity. Everything becomes its opposite. This is how it was shown to me. Something true from the Word was let down from heaven and taken hold of by people in the upper levels of hell. They sent it on down to the lower hells all the way to the lowest. Step by step along this path the truth turned into falsity, finally into a falsity absolutely opposite to the truth. The people who were changing it thought they themselves were thinking up this falsity. That was all they knew, and yet the falsity was that truth flowing down from heaven on its way to the lowest hell, that truth falsified and distorted. Three or four times I have heard of this happening. The same thing happens to what is good. When this flows down from heaven it is turned step by step into the evil that is opposite to it.

This has enabled me to see that when what is true and good emanates from the Lord and is taken up by people who are devoted to what is false and evil, it is changed. It takes on another form so completely that its original form can no longer be seen. That is just what is going on with all who are evil, because in spirit they are in hell.