

# Quotes from the Word: Looking for the Good in Others

## OLD TESTAMENT

He has shown you, O man, what *is* good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8)

And it was so, when he [David] had finished speaking to Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.... Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan took off the robe that was on him and gave it to David, with his armor, even to his sword and his bow and his belt (1 Samuel 18:1, 3-4).

Can two walk together unless they are agreed? (Amos 3:3).

Then the Lord sent Nathan to David. And he came to him, and said to him: "There were two men in one city, one rich and the other poor. The rich *man* had exceedingly many flocks and herds. But the poor *man* had nothing, except one little ewe lamb which he had bought and nourished; and it grew up together with him and with his children. It ate of his own food and drank from his own cup and lay in his bosom; and it was like a daughter to him. And a traveler came to the rich man, who refused to take from his own flock and from his own herd to prepare one for the wayfaring man who had come to him; but he took the poor man's lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him."

So David's anger was greatly aroused against the man, and he said to Nathan, "As the LORD lives, the man who has done this shall surely die! And he shall restore fourfold for the lamb, because he did this thing and because he had no pity."

Then Nathan said to David, "You *are* the man! Thus says the Lord God of Israel: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your keeping, and gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if *that had been* too little, I also would have given you much more! Why have you despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in His sight? You have killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword; you have taken his wife *to be* your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the people of Ammon.... So David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD" (2 Samuel 12:1-9, 13).

Teach me good judgment and knowledge, for I believe Your commandments (Psalm 119:66).

The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether (Psalm 19:9).

"I am the Lord, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight," says the Lord (Jeremiah 9:24).

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## NEW TESTAMENT

“Whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 7:12).

“This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you” (John 15:12-15).

“But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you?” (Matthew 5:44).

“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.” (Matthew 7:3-5).

“By their fruits you will know them” (Matthew 7:20).

“A good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. For every tree is known by its own fruit. For we do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they gather grapes from a bramble bush. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil” (Luke 6:43-45).

“What woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds *it*? And when she has found *it*, she calls *her* friends and neighbors together, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost!’ Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents” (Luke 15:8-10).

“Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you” (Luke 6:37-38).

“Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment” (John 7:24).

## HEAVENLY DOCTRINE

### Charity?

The life of charity consists in wishing well and doing well to the neighbor; in acting in every work justly and equitably, from what is good and true, and similarly in discharging every duty. In one word, the life of charity consists in the performance of uses (*Apocalypse Explained* 325:4).

The life of charity consists in thinking kindly of another and in wishing him well (*Arcana Coelestia* 2284:5).

People with whom no charity is present think nothing else than evil of the neighbor and speak nothing but evil. If they say anything good it is for the sake of themselves or of one with whom they seek to curry favor under an outward show of friendship. But people in whom charity is present think nothing else than good of the neighbor and speak nothing but good, and this not for their own sake or that of him with whom they seek to curry favor, but from the Lord thus at work within charity (*Arcana Coelestia* 1088:2).

The essence of charity is good, which is use, and the objects of charity...are the neighbor (*Doctrine of Charity* 0).

Since charity consists in having an affection for what is good, it also consists in feelings of mercy for those in distress. The good of charity holds such feelings within it because it comes down from the Lord's love towards the whole human race (*Arcana Coelestia* 5132:2).

### Friendship

Friendship is not the same as charity, civility even less so. They are steps down from charity, though the more they draw from charity the more genuine they are (*Arcana Coelestia* 1158:2).

Mutual love is different from friendship inasmuch as mutual love has a person's good in view, and in directing itself towards that good is directed towards the person in whom good is present. Friendship however has the person in view, which is also mutual love when it looks at that person from the point of view of, that is, on account of, that good. But when it does not look at him from the point of view of good or on account of that good but on account of self which it calls good, friendship is not in that case mutual love but something close to the love of self (*Arcana Coelestia* 3875:5).

With parents and children, husbands and wives, and friends with friends, there is a fear of injuring and respect. Such a fear with respect is in all love and in all friendship—love and friendship without such a fear and respect is like food not salted, which is insipid (see *Apocalypse Explained* 696:4).

## Friendly to What Is Good

Every person is the neighbor according to the quality of his good (*Doctrine of Charity* 73).

Friendship can harm someone's spiritual life if he pays attention to the person but not to what is good. Everyone may indeed be friendly to another, but he should be most friendly to what is good (*Arcana Coelestia* 4804).

To do good to a friend, regardless of his character and simply because he is one's friend, is a natural action that is unspiritual. But to do good to a friend on account of the good residing with him, all the more so when one regards good itself as the friend to whom one is to do good, is a natural action that is spiritual. When this attitude exists with a person, he realizes that he himself is a sinner if he does good to a friend who is evil. For in that case he does evil to others through that friend (*Arcana Coelestia* 4992:2).

Loving the neighbor does not mean loving his person, but loving that in him by virtue of which he is a neighbor, consequently good and truth. They who love the person, and not that in a person from which he is a neighbor, love evil just as well as good. And they do good to the evil as well as to the good; when yet doing good to the evil is doing evil to the good, and this is not loving the neighbor. A judge who punishes the evil that they may be amended, and that the good may not be contaminated by them, loves the neighbor (*New Jerusalem and the Heavenly Doctrine* 106).

A person who loves the neighbor from charity conjoins himself with his good, and not with his person except insofar and for so long as he is in good. Such a person is spiritual, and loves his neighbor spiritually, whereas one who loves another from mere friendship, conjoins himself with his person, and at the same time with his evil, and after death he cannot without difficulty be separated from the personality that is in evil, but the former can (*Doctrine of Faith* 21).

Whoever does not distinguish the neighbor according to the quality of good and truth in him may be deceived a thousand times, and his charity become confused and at length no charity. A devil may exclaim, "I am a neighbor: do good to me." And if you do good to him he may kill you or others. You are placing a knife or a sword in his hand (*Doctrine of Charity* 51).

## Joy in Doing Good to Another

The essence of spiritual love is to do good to others, not for one's own sake, but for their sake (*Divine Love and Wisdom* 335).

They who are in genuine mutual love are in their delight and bliss when they are benefiting the neighbor, for they desire nothing more (*Arcana Coelestia* 6388).

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In the heavens there is joy in doing good to another, but no joy in doing good to self unless with a view to its becoming another's, and thus for another's sake. This is loving the neighbor more than oneself. The possibility of such a love is shown in the world in the marriage love of some who have suffered death to protect a partner from injury, in the love of parents for their children, as in a mother's preferring to go hungry rather than see her child go hungry; in sincere friendship, in which one friend will expose himself to danger for another; and even in polite and pretended friendship that wishes to emulate sincere friendship, in offering the better things to those to whom it professes to wish well, and bearing such good will on the lips though not in the heart; finally, in the nature of love, which is such that its joy is to serve others, not for its own sake but for theirs (*Heaven and Hell* 406).

## Desiring the Good of Another

Charity consists essentially in desiring the welfare of one's neighbor, in having an affection for what is good, and in acknowledging that since what is good is one's neighbor, those who are governed by good are consequently one's neighbor, but varyingly so, depending on the amount of good that governs the individual person (*Arcana Coelestia* 5132:2).

All love desires the good of another. The love of parents desires the good of their children; the love of the bridegroom and of the husband desires the good of the bride and of the wife; and friendship's love desires the good of friends (*Divine Providence* 324:6).

There is intercession in all love, consequently in all mercy; for mercy is of love. That he who loves, or who feels compassion, continually intercedes, can be seen from examples. A husband who loves his wife, wishes her to be kindly received by others, silently entreating it and interceding for her. Parents act in like manner in favor of their children whom they love. In like manner do those also who are in charity for their neighbor; and they who are in friendship for their friends (*Arcana Coelestia* 8573:2).

Those who are in the faith of charity observe what is good, and if they see anything evil and false, they excuse it, and if they can, try to amend it in him.... Where there is no charity, there is the love of self, and therefore hatred against all who do not favor self. Consequently such persons see in the neighbor only what is evil, and if they see anything good, they either perceive it as nothing, or put a bad interpretation upon it. It is just the other way with those who are in charity.... In the other life, those who have charity hardly notice the evil in another person, but instead notice all the goods and truths that are his; and on his evils and falsities they place a good interpretation. Of such a nature are all angels, it being something they have from the Lord, who bends everything evil into good (see *Arcana Coelestia* 1079).

## Judging Another

It is not angelic to search for the evils with a person unless one also looks for what is good (see *Arcana Coelestia* 10381).

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To love the neighbor is not alone to wish well and do good to a relative, a friend, or a good person, but also to a stranger, an enemy, or a bad person. But charity is to be exercised toward the latter in one way and toward the former in another—toward a relative or friend by direct benefits and toward an enemy or a bad person by indirect benefits, which are rendered by exhortation, discipline, punishment, and consequent amendment. For example, a judge who punishes an evil-doer in accordance with law and justice, loves his neighbor; for so he makes him better, and consults the welfare of the citizens that he may not do them harm. Everyone knows that a father who chastises his children when they do wrong, loves them, and that, on the other hand, he who does not chastise them therefore, loves their evils, and this cannot be called charity. Again, if a person repels an insulting enemy, and in self-defense strikes him or delivers him to the judge in order to prevent injury to himself, and yet with a disposition to befriend the person, he acts from a charitable spirit.... The end in view declares whether it is charity or not (*True Christian Religion* 407).

The simple say every person is equally a neighbor, and that they deem it no business of theirs to search into his quality; but God looks to that; I may only render assistance to a neighbor. But this is not loving the neighbor. He who from genuine charity loves the neighbor inquires what the quality of a person is, and does good to him discreetly, and according to the quality of his good (*Doctrine of Charity* 52).

## The Kind of Judgments We Can Make

The Lord says, “Judge not, that you be not condemned” (Matthew 7:1). This cannot in the least mean judging of someone’s moral and civil life in the world, but judging of someone’s spiritual and heavenly life. Who does not see that if people were not allowed to judge of the moral life of those dwelling with them in the world, society would collapse? What would become of society if there were no public courts of law, and if no one was permitted to have his judgment of another? But to judge what the inner mind or soul is like within, thus what a person’s spiritual state is and so his fate after death—of this one is not permitted to judge, because it is known to the Lord alone (*Conjugal Love* 523)

One is never allowed to judge the nature of another person’s spiritual life, for the Lord alone knows this. But one is allowed to judge the nature of another person’s life, private and public, since this is of importance to society (*Arcana Coelestia* 2284:4).

A general judgment is allowed, such as the following, “If you are in your inward qualities as you appear in your outward ones, you will be saved or condemned.” But a specific judgment—as for example to say, “You are of this or that character in your inward qualities, therefore you will be saved or condemned”—is not allowed (*Conjugal Love* 523:2)

## Judging or Examining Ourselves

To repent, a person must examine himself, recognize and acknowledge his sins, pray to the Lord, and begin a new life. And unless evils are removed by repentance, a person cannot love his neighbor, still less God (*True Christian Religion* 530).

“Why do you notice the speck which is in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank that is in your own eye?” (Matthew 7:3-5). ‘Noticing a speck in a brother's eye’ means seeing something erroneous in a person's understanding of truth, and ‘the plank in one's own eye’ is huge evil of falsity (see *Apocalypse Explained* 9051:3).

He who acknowledges that a sin is a sin can see the sins within him. But he who makes them allowable in thought, and not allowable in the body [in his actions] on account of the world, cannot see them. It is as if one should turn the mirror away that he may see his face; or as if one who would see his face should put a veil before it (see *Doctrine of Charity* 5).

A person who examines himself for the purpose of practicing repentance, should explore his thoughts, and the intentions of his will. There he ought to examine what he would do, if he were at liberty; that is, if he were not afraid of the laws, and the loss of reputation, honor, and gain. A person's evils are in his thoughts and intentions; and the evils which he does with the body are all from thence. Those persons who do not explore the evils of their thoughts and of their will cannot practice repentance; for afterwards they think and will just as they did before; and yet willing evils means doing them. This is meant by self-examination (*New Jerusalem and the Heavenly Doctrine* 164).

## Love of Self

That the love of self is the opposite of love to the neighbor can be seen from the origin and essence of both. The love of the neighbor of one who is in the love of self begins with oneself, for he claims that everyone is neighbor to himself; and it goes forth from him as its center to all who make one with him, diminishing in accordance with the degree of their conjunction with him by love. All outside of this circle are regarded as of no account; and those who are opposed to those in the circle and to their evils are accounted as enemies, however wise, upright, honest, or just they may be (see *Heaven and Hell* 558).

The evils belonging to those who are in the love of self, are, in general, contempt of others, envy, enmity against those by whom they are not favored, and hostile actions on this ground, hatreds of various kinds, revenges, cunning, deceit, mercilessness, and cruelty (*New Jerusalem and the Heavenly Doctrine* 5).

## Love of the Neighbor

Love consists in willing what one has to be another's, and in feeling the other's delight as delight within oneself. That is what it is to love. In contrast, to feel one's own delight in another, and not the other's delight within oneself, is not to love; for this is loving self, whereas the first is loving the neighbor (*Divine Love and Wisdom* 47).

Spiritual love to the neighbor begins with the Lord, and goes forth from Him as its center to all who are conjoined to Him by love and faith, going forth in accordance with the quality of their love and faith (*Heaven and Hell* 558).

The person who loves good because it is good, and truth because it is truth, loves the neighbor eminently, because he loves the Lord who is good itself and truth itself (*True Christian Religion* 419).

He who is in mutual love acknowledges and believes that all that is good and true is not his, but the Lord's. His ability to love another as himself—and if he is like the angels, his ability to love another more than himself—he acknowledges and believes to be the Lord's gift (see *Arcana Coelestia* 1594:5).