

THE BROAD WAY AND THE NARROW WAY

The way that leads to heaven, and the way that leads to hell were once represented to me. There was a broad way tending towards the left or the north, and many spirits were seen going in it; but at a distance a large stone was seen where the broad way came to an end. From that stone two ways branched off, one to the left and one in the opposite direction to the right. The way that went to the left was narrow or straitened, leading through the west to the south, and thus into the light of heaven; the way that went to the right was broad and spacious, leading obliquely downwards towards hell. All at first seemed to be going the same way until they came to the large stone at the head of the two ways. When they reached that point they divided; the good turned to the left and entered the straitened way that led to heaven; while the evil, not seeing the stone at the fork of the ways fell upon it and were hurt; and when they rose up they ran on in the broad way to the right which went towards hell....

The first way that was broad, wherein many both good and evil went together and talked with each other as friends, because there was no visible difference between them, represented those who externally live alike honestly and justly, and between whom seemingly there is no difference. The stone at the head of the two ways or at the corner, upon which the evil fell and from which they ran into the way leading to hell, represented the Divine truth, which is rejected by those who look towards hell; and in the highest sense this stone signified the Lord's Divine Human. But those who acknowledged the Divine truth and also the Divine of the Lord went by the way that led to heaven. By this again it was shown that in externals the evil lead the same kind of life as the good, or go the same way, that is, one as readily as the other; and yet those who from the heart acknowledge the Divine, especially those within the church who acknowledge the Divine of the Lord, are led to heaven; while those who do not are led to hell.

To certain spirits...there were represented the broad road and the narrow road mentioned in the Word - the broad road which would lead them to hell, and the narrow to heaven. The broad road was planted with trees and flowers, and other such things as in outward appearance looked beautiful and delightful. But various types of snakes and serpents which they did not see had been concealed there. The narrow road was not adorned in the same way with trees and flower-beds for the eye to see but looked sad and dreary. Yet there were along that road young angel-children adorned most attractively among very lovely tree-gardens and flower-gardens, which those spirits however did not see. They were at that point asked which road they wished to take. They said, "The broad one." But all of a sudden their eyes were opened and they saw the serpents along the broad road, but the angels along the narrow one. They were then again asked which road they wished to take. This time they were at a loss and remained silent. As long as their sight was opened they said that they wished to take the narrow road; but as long as it was closed they said that they wished to take the broad one (*Arcana Coelestia* 3477).