

From Garden-Consciousness to Self-Consciousness

DWM Logopraxis Online Retreat - January 2024



The video of this presentation can be found here...

<https://youtu.be/YJjF8JgyPnM>

I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE by JOHN MICHAEL TALBOT

<https://youtu.be/Uhk42nq1jwE>

You are not who you take yourself to be...

Whoever you think you are, you can be sure of one thing - you are not that...

There are teachings that are difficult to accept, if not intellectually, certainly it's the case practically. In the Gospel of John we have such a teaching given by the Lord where He describes Himself as the Bread of Heaven. Here's the account...

35 And° Jesus said to them, I am the Bread of Life; he who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. 36 But I said to you that you also have seen Me, and do not believe...

41 The Jews then murmured at Him, because He said, I am the Bread which came down from heaven. 42 And they said, Is not this Jesus the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How then He says, I came down from heaven?

43 Then Jesus answered and said to them, Murmur not among yourselves. 44 No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draw him; and I will raise him again at the last day...

53 Then Jesus said to them, Amen, amen, I say to you, Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. 54 He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him again at the last day. 55 For My flesh is truly food, and My blood is truly drink. 56 He who eats My flesh, and drinks My blood, remains in Me, and I in him. 57 As the living Father has sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he who eats Me, he also shall live by Me. 58 This is the bread that came down from heaven. Not as your fathers ate manna and died, he who eats of this bread shall live forever.

59 These things said He in the synagogue, teaching in Capernaum.

60 Many therefore of His disciples, when they had heard, said, This word is hard; who can hear it?

61 But° Jesus, knowing in Himself that His disciples murmur at it, said to them, Does this offend you? 62 Then what if you behold the Son of Man ascending up where He was before? 63 It is the spirit that makes alive; the flesh profits nothing; the words° which I speak to you are spirit, and are life. 64 But there are some of you who believe not.

66 From that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him.

(John Chpt.6)

In general what this is saying is that spiritual or eternal life is only possible through ingesting the goods and truths of the Word which is the Bread of Life or the Lord's flesh and blood. The Lord's flesh and blood is another way of saying the Lord's proprium. This stands in contrast to the infernal proprium of a human being which, the Heavenly Doctrine states, is nothing but evil and falsity. So in these verses from John's Gospel we are taught that if we are to enter into the life of heaven we must derive our sense of self from the Word which, is the Divine Human, or another way of saying that is that we are saved when we live from the Lord's proprium and lost when we live from the infernal human proprium.

Does this cause you offence, I wonder? Probably not intellectually, if taken simply as a statement of doctrine. I don't think any of us would argue with the idea that we need to draw our sense of the self from the Word and not from what is evil and false. In the context of the Gospel narrative the stumbling block for those in the story is due to taking the statement of eating the flesh and blood of the Lord literally. We can see why that might give cause for offence. On face value it's a hard statement. But of course nothing in this story is to be taken literally for all teaching in the Word addresses spiritual or psychological realities. This particular Gospel narrative addresses the nature of the sense of self and what sustains it; the term for this in the Heavenly Doctrine is "proprium."

The question of what nourishes the human sense of self as a psychological reality is also addressed in the second chapter of the book of Genesis. There we find things described in the form of a mythic-poetic narrative that sees the newly formed human placed in a garden paradise. What we are told is that in the midst of that garden are two trees, the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Jehovah-Elohim tells the human that it is permissible to eat from all the trees of the garden with the exception of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil for, to eat of this tree, will result in the death of what is human through its separation from the source of its life, Life Itself.

This simple narrative holds profound psycho-spiritual truths within it that addresses those essential fundamental elements that provide insight into human existence. The term Jehovah-Elohim refers to the source of life Itself. The Divine Love and the Divine Wisdom which, enters into the very soul of the human mind. Its reception in the soul comes forth as "the breath of lives" that raises the human from "the dust of ground," animating every affection of the will and through that every thought of the

understanding faculty, bringing it into a state of where its delights are perceived and experienced in the perception of every good and truth. It is a paradisaal state called a garden which is given to the human to cultivate and tend. While the inflow of life into the soul is above conscious awareness its effects at the level of conscious awareness are experienced in the perception of heavenly delights, a state of garden-consciousness represented by the garden of Eden.

The narrative describes the origin and purpose of what it is to be human. The form of the soul is human being the image and like of the Divine Human that brings it into being. The human soul is the archetypal human-form receptive of the Divine Human, also called Jehovah-Elohim, who works through this archetypal image and likeness in a constant effort to maintain the integrity of the human form throughout the whole mind. The human mind is multi-leveled consisting of discrete degrees or planes, often referred to as inmost, internal, and external. The external level, also called the natural, is made up of a rational, sensual, and corporeal or bodily plane. Conscious awareness for a human being is located on the most external level of the mind. The Hebrew word for garden (גן (gan)) here carries the meaning of a bounded area protected by a wall. This represents the limits circumscribed for the development of a genuine human being. The task that gives every human being meaning is stated; it is to work to cultivate the mind-garden and to protect what is being cultivated. To cultivate what is good and true is to engage the will in what is good while, to protect is to engage the truths of the understanding faculty to watch over the gift of life provided by the Lord. To consciously work to cultivate what is good and true in one's life and to protect this is the sacred life-task given to all who are becoming human. It is what it means to live a spiritual life which means, *to be lived by life* which instills a deep sense of purpose and meaning. At the core of this sacred responsibility is the lived acknowledgement that all that all the delights of life such a state holds does NOT belong to the human but is an effect of the Lord's inflowing presence with it **(AC 122)**.

This responsibility given to the human, to attend to the quality of its conscious life flows into its awareness where it presents as something instinctive. This is because it is something inherent in the flow of life entering the human soul from the Jehovah-Elohim. All the Divine Love and Wisdom seeks is the happiness of those it creates and that happiness requires that the human attend to what's needed for the cultivation of the garden of conscious life.

The Sacred Scripture states that;

"Jehovah-Elohim commanded the human, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof dying thou shalt die." (**Gen 2:16-17**)

This statement is not what a literal reading of it suggests; God having a person to person conversation with a human being. What it captures is the archetypal essence of human life, or what is at the core of what it means to be truly human - where by human is meant a state of spiritual consciousness that is completely aligned with the purpose and meaning of its existence as determined by the Lord. The statement captures in a single sentence the core values and principles that govern what is truly human. To go against this would mean to go against the very essence of life, hence the final phrase, "dying thou shalt die."

This statement isn't a threat of punishment but an internal dictate woven into the fabric of garden-consciousness, an inherent knowing in one's very soul that arises out of the reception of life flowing in through the human soul from Jehovah-Elohim. The infantile notion that it describes God operating like some strict parent laying down the law isn't helpful in understanding what's going on here. The statement describes the form the influx of life takes in that human state of mind described here. This can be seen in a comment on this verse in the Arcana Coelestia 125 which says that the human;

...had from the Lord (inflowing life) continual perception, so that when they reflected on what was treasured up in the memory they instantly perceived whether it was true and good, insomuch that when anything false presented itself, they not only avoided it but even regarded it with horror: such also is the state of the angels.

The integrity of the human form requires that the will faculty functions from what is good and the understanding faculty functions from what is true. Any departure from this leads to a disruption of the integrity of the human form and a deminishment of its spiritual capacities which brings us now to the two trees in the midst of the garden.

THE TWO TREES by WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

<https://youtu.be/vOfMpd31q-8>

Beloved, gaze in thine own heart,
The holy tree is growing there;
From joy the holy branches start,
And all the trembling flowers they bear.
The changing colours of its fruit
Have dowered the stars with merry light;
The surety of its hidden root
Has planted quiet in the night;
The shaking of its leafy head
Has given the waves their melody,
And made my lips and music wed,
Murmuring a wizard song for thee.
There the Loves a circle go,
The flaming circle of our days,
Gyring, spiring to and fro
In those great ignorant leafy ways;
Remembering all that shaken hair
And how the winged sandals dart,
Thine eyes grow full of tender care:
Beloved, gaze in thine own heart.

Gaze no more in the bitter glass
The demons, with their subtle guile,
Lift up before us when they pass,
Or only gaze a little while;
For there a fatal image grows
That the stormy night receives,
Roots half hidden under snows,
Broken boughs and blackened leaves.
For all things turn to barrenness
In the dim glass the demons hold,
The glass of outer weariness,
Made when God slept in times of old.
There, through the broken branches, go
The ravens of unresting thought;
Flying, crying, to and fro,
Cruel claw and hungry throat,

Or else they stand and sniff the wind,
And shake their ragged wings; alas!
Thy tender eyes grow all unkind:
Gaze no more in the bitter glass.

The Divine life flows in by an inward way seeking reception on the conscious plane of the human mind. Its reception requires the human to take responsibility for its sacred life-task, that of cultivating and protecting the life it is given, for in this life-task is the source of all purpose and meaning. The sense of self that accompanies this human form of mind, while definitely conscious, is so without being self-conscious. It is a consciousness whose life is grounded in a deep sense that the Lord alone IS. This state of humanness is almost impossible to describe from the level of consciousness we are immersed in, a state that is almost entirely self-conscious. But it can be a useful thing to meditate on if only to get a sense of how far we are from what it is to be truly human. It may be that we get a glimpse of just how dead we are spiritually in relation to the state of humanness described here in the book of Genesis. The closest experience most people can connect with that provides a sense of this garden-like-consciousness, are in those moments when they are so engaged in some useful activity, for the benefit of others, that they forget themselves so that their sense of self becomes one with the activity itself. For as long as this state is active our sense of self has merged to become one with the use, you could say we have become the use itself.

...all the angels are forms of charity (or uses), the beauty of which is from the truths which are of faith, and the life of this beauty is from the good which is of charity. **(AC 5133; see also HH 389)**

All things in the heavens are organized in accordance with Divine order, which is everywhere guarded by the services performed by angels, those things that pertain to the general good or use by the wiser angels, those that pertain to particular uses by the less wise, and so on. They are subordinated just as uses are subordinated in the Divine order; and for this reason a dignity is connected with every function according to the dignity of the use. Nevertheless, an angel does not claim dignity to himself, but ascribes all dignity to the use; and as the use is the good that he accomplishes, and all good is from the Lord, so he ascribes all to the Lord. Therefore he who thinks of honour for himself and subsequently for the use, and not for the use and thereby for himself, can perform no duty in heaven, because this is looking away backwards from the Lord, and regarding self in the first place and use in the second. When use is spoken of the Lord

also is meant, because, as has just been said, use is good, and good is from the Lord.

(HH 389)

While it is the continuous inflow of life that animates the human so that it becomes a conscious living soul, it is conscious within the bounds of what's described as a walled-garden. We've already touched on the idea that the Hebrew word for garden carries the meaning of a protected space. This protective space is a psychological structure that allows for the appearance of life to arise in another being so that it can have the experience of being conscious. The wall implied in the Hebrew word for garden represents what protects and maintains this apparent separate consciousness through preventing the inflow of life from Jehovah-Elohim overwhelming the human to the point where it would lose all sense of being a conscious being. The walled-garden makes human consciousness possible through protecting it so that the inflowing life isn't experienced directly as coming from a source outside that state of garden-consciousness. This creates the necessary conditions by which the Divine Love and Wisdom can bring into being a conscious being other than Itself that has freedom in spiritual matters allowing for a reciprocal relationship without which love can't exist. By definition for love to exist it can't be coerced; to force another to love is not love but a form of slavery because there is no freedom or possibility for a reciprocal exchange in such a state.

Hopefully, we can now see that within this state of garden-consciousness there exists the potential for doubting the nature of reality. The human feels life as something arising from within itself, this is unavoidable if human consciousness is to exist, yet perceives, while it is in the order of its life, that this feeling is an appearance. The order of human life is to acknowledge the Lord as the source of all that is, to cultivate what is good and true and to watch and protect the state of garden-consciousness from those things that enter into it, that call those purer perceptions of the nature of reality into question. While the human is in this state of order it lives from the Lord, it lives from and is sustained by those purer perceptions flowing into its conscious awareness.

The eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil represents the awakening of self-consciousness which is devastating to garden-consciousness as it results in the loss of all spiritual intelligence and wisdom. The dialogue with the serpent in that narrative represents a strengthening inclination toward accepting as valid those thoughts entering the state of garden-consciousness that suggest to the human that the feeling that it is the source of its life is actually true. The leaving

behind of garden-consciousness and the shift toward self-consciousness is subtle. The serpent represents reasoning from the senses and is described as being more subtle than any other beast of the field. This shift sees a move into a affection for knowledge about spiritual and divine realities but no acknowledging of them as something to live from. The result of this is that it gives birth to all manner of rationalisations that uses spiritual knowledge to justify its belief in this emerging reconstituted sense of reality in which, the delusion arising from the false belief in itself as an autonomous independent being can be maintained. We see then, that states of self-consciousness leads to the discarding of the sacred responsibility of the core life-task that makes a human human. In this diminished state the human can no longer be called a human for it is no longer in the image and likeness of its creator. States of self-consciousness not only eat away at this image and likeness but robs humanity of all that gives it its sense of purpose and meaning as spiritual beings.

What's at play in the rise of self-consciousness is the denial of the fundamental truth that underpins human existence, that the Lord alone has proprium, that all life flows in, and that to be human is to be in the lived acknowledgement of this. Where this is lacking what arises is a form of consciousness that is organised around their opposites or what is evil and false.

[2] Man's proprium when viewed from heaven looks just like something bony, lifeless, and utterly misshapen, and so in itself something dead. But once it has received life from the Lord it appears as something having flesh. For man's proprium is something altogether dead, though it has the appearance to him of being something; indeed it appears to be everything. Whatever is living within him comes from the Lord's life; and if this were to leave him, he would fall down dead as a stone. For he is purely an organ of life, though the nature of the organ determines that of the life-affection. The Lord alone possesses Proprium. By His Proprium He has redeemed man and by His Proprium saves him. The Lord's Proprium is Life, and from His Proprium man's proprium, which in itself is dead, is given life. The Lord's Proprium was also meant by His words in Luke,

A spirit does not have flesh and bones as ye see Me have. Luke 24:39-40. (AC 149)

In order to be self-consciousness there must first be a "self" that one can be conscious of. But we have seen that there is in reality no such self, that it is an illusion based in the appearances of the senses. Our love for our self is such a integral part of our identity that it is allowed to remain intact in the hope that a true human in the

image and likeness of God might be raised up as a testimony to the mercy and love of the Lord.

I just want to circle back now to the beginning where we touched on the hard sayings the Lord and His rejection by those who found what He said offensive. You remember that it had to do with salvation being dependent on eating His flesh and drinking His blood. Make no mistake, this idea is offensive to the human proprium. It's offensive, not just in terms of its literal meaning, but it is even more offensive and, I would suggest, even more intensely resisted in its spiritual meaning by anyone who happens upon the smallest whiff of its implications for the state of self-consciousness. By His flesh and blood the Word means the Lord's Proprium and it is by this He has redeemed what is human and by it man is saved. So by means of this Divine Proprium the way is opened for salvation, the opening of the way being redemption, and if that way is entered upon then salvation or the regeneration of the mind can be effected. We might ask at this point, saved from what? Well if we turn to the work the Arcana Coelestia, number 210, we are given a clear picture of what it is we need saving from.

What is the proprium? The human proprium consists of everything evil and false that gushes out of self-love and love of the world. It involves people believing not in the Lord or in the Word but in themselves, and their imagining that what they do not grasp through sensory evidence or through facts does not exist at all. They become as a consequence nothing but evil and falsity and so have a warped view of everything. Things that are evil they see as good, and those that are good as evil; things that are false they see as true, and those that are true as false. Realities they imagine to be nothing, and things that are nothing they imagine to be everything. They call hatred love, thick darkness light, death life, and vice versa. In the Word such people are called 'the lame and the blind'. This then is the human proprium which in itself is hellish and condemned. (AC 210)

THE SECOND COMING by WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

<https://youtu.be/zdqCjbg0SnM>

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;

Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

Surely some revelation is at hand;
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.
The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
When a vast image out of Spiritus Mundi
Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.
The darkness drops again; but now I know
That twenty centuries of stony sleep
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

There are many, many passages in the Heavenly Doctrine that reiterate the teaching that the human proprium is nothing but evil and falsity, that the human proprium is what is meant by hell. This human proprium is self-consciousness which is a "belief in oneself" in contrast to a belief in the Word/Lord. While that belief reigns, everything is warped, evil is seen as good, good is seen as evil, truth is seen as false and the false is held to be true. Realities, like there is but One Self and that is the Lord, are held to be nothing while nothing, such as the delusion of being a self, is held to be everything. If this teaching regarding the quality of the human proprium causes offence, it maybe because we don't see that self-love or a love for the delusion of being an independent autonomous self is destructive of all genuine spiritual life. And where it doesn't cause offence it may just be that the delusion is so strongly defended and clothed in religio-spiritual thought that nothing of the nature of the infernal nature of this self comes into view.

What the Lord's Proprium saves us from is our belief in our self. We are being saved from self-consciousness. It is a fallacy that the Lord is saving *the us the self we take our self to be*. This, as we have just seen, is nothing but evil and falsity. Hell cannot be

transformed into heaven. Salvation means that this self has to die before what is genuinely human is to be reborn. And it can only die if we are willing let go of the delights associated with this life through eating His flesh and His blood.

...the Lord's "flesh" denotes the Divine good of His Divine love; and that His "blood" denotes the Divine truth proceeding from His Divine good; can be seen from the fact that these are what nourish the spiritual life of a man. From this also it is said, "My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed;" and also, "this is the bread that came down from heaven." And as man is conjoined with the Lord through love and faith, it is also said, "he that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, abideth in Me, and I in him."(AC 9127)

The Lord's Proprium is the Divine good of His Divine love and this good is made available through the Divine truth proceeding from His Divine good. I think we can see what is presented here in this number as the Lord's Proprium is the Word which is also what is meant by the Lord's Divine Human. It is the Word that saves us from the self-concept that holds to the belief that we are an independent autonomous self.

The Word nourishes and regenerates the human mind and brings it back to the image and likeness of God. But it only does this if we are willing to engage with it with a view to applying its truths to cultivate what is good and true through attending to the quality of what is flowing in. The Word sets out what is required of us, the sacred life-task which is our spiritual worship and at the same time empowers us to live from it as if of our selves. When this as-of-self state rules the mind the feeling of self is returned to being held as an appearance and the way to the tree of life, the Word is opened to the Divine Life within.