

Use and the Sense of Satisfaction

by the Rev. Geoffrey Howard

The doctrine of use is an important area to consider, because its effects are very widespread. If this doctrine is properly understood, and correctly applied within the scope of our human capabilities, we are gifted by the Lord with a strong sense of personal satisfaction. In the New Church there is sometimes a tendency to view the concept of use from its internal or spiritual aspect, apart from its natural manifestation. Unless uses become natural expressions of the good works of charity, the internal soon perishes and withers. If we view only the spiritual aspects of use, we exalt it out of the realm of mundane application, and we can perceive nothing of the delights of good. It is the nature of the fallen human proprium (love of self) to place itself in a position of dignity and consider certain mundane tasks unworthy of us. Yet such avoidance removes us from the rewards of spiritual contentment and peace, the influx of the Lord into the highest and lowest regions of our minds.

Every use begins as a love, a love which longs to express itself in a tangible form. Only when a love goes forth into its full expression in use can the Lord's life flow in and touch the person with gladness. We can view the mundane aspects of uses as burdens that have to be borne. On the other hand, we can also regard them as blessings, as creations by the Lord, as the very means He has provided whereby we can receive His love. If we aspire to love the Lord, we also aspire to enter into His service by applying ourselves willingly to whatever task presents itself. *If we will only bring ourselves to regard use as an opportunity to serve the Lord and the neighbor, we will live our lives from a completely new perspective.* And the new found delights will speak for themselves.

When we approach uses from the desire to serve, we are emulating a law of heaven which brings a deep sense of delight to the angels. And, if we are in the love of serving, then rewards are not our primary concern. The interior love that is given to the unselfish by the Lord is reward enough. In turn, we will affect others with our happiness.

Perhaps one of the errors of affluent modern society has been the desire to lift all duties or uses out of the hands of children and young people. Well-intentioned parents often rob their children of the sense of belonging to a family by taking responsibilities off their shoulders. Yet, performing uses brings love and a sense of recognition from others. Taking away uses takes away the very plane that receives love. This spiritual law is openly declared in the Heavenly Doctrines. "Every person is born to be of use and that he may perform uses to others" (*Charity* 128). "Infants and children, so long as they are under nurses and teachers, do not indeed perform goods of use, but yet *they learn to perform them* and must have them for an end. Thus the good of use is in the end" (*Charity* 129).

Therefore, if parents do not show their children how to enter into serving, into performing uses (be it in the home, school, church or community), then they close their minds to the perception of heavenly delights. If children are not taught these basic things, they cannot help but grow up expecting to receive much, yet prepared to give little. Under these conditions, adjusting to the adult world will be hard, filled with disillusionment and dissatisfaction.

As with heaven, this world can be perfected only if the people in it are prepared to commit their love to serving the uses that present themselves to be done. We should cheerfully and willingly apply ourselves to whatever task—humble or exalted—needs to be done.