

Influx, and Our Associate Spirits

a family service talk by Rev. Michael Gladish
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Today we're beginning a whole series of talks about how we are connected to heaven. And we begin today with the teachings about how important this is.

One of the mysteries – or secrets – of life is knowing where our ideas and even our feelings come from. They don't come from *nowhere*, that's for sure. But where DO they come from? People have all sorts of ideas about this.

- Some say they just come from other people – from reading, or listening, or watching what other people say or do;
- Some say they come from inside ourselves, from the workings of the brain or physical condition of the body;
- Some even say it's all about chemicals in our bodies, so if we take – or if we're missing – certain drugs we will have certain thoughts or feelings.

And there's some truth to all of these ideas, but there are no thoughts in chemicals, and our feelings are not in what we see or hear, no matter how much it may seem as if they are. No, despite what we see or hear, our thoughts and our feelings all come to us from the invisible spiritual *world of spirits* who in turn get all their ideas from the Lord who is the Source of everything. But we FEEL as if these ideas are our own because, well, the Lord has set it up that way so that we can enjoy being ourselves, and being special.

We say ALL our thoughts and feelings come from the Lord, even though some of them are bad, but that's because bad things all start out good, and then they get messed up or perverted by people who apply them to selfish purposes. Love, for example, is a good thing! But if you only love *yourself* that good turns bad.

The real truth is that our minds are like radios, or even like TVs. These machines are full of wires and transistors and speakers and other mechanical things, but there is no sound and there are no pictures UNTIL a special signal comes into them either through the air or through some cable FROM A RADIO OR TV STATION that may be hundreds of miles away! THEN what you see or hear SEEMS like it's coming from that box, but really it's only coming THROUGH the box.

Again, many houses used to be heated in the winter by radiators, which were basically rows of pipes inside a metal cover that warmed the air in the house. The pipes got warm, but the heat was not in the pipes by themselves, it was in hot water

that ran *through* the pipes, causing them to get warm. If the water stopped flowing through the pipes they would get cold again, and the house would get cold.

Something similar happens with a light bulb [show an example], only in this case the *light* does not come through the wires or a battery, but *electricity* comes into it from somewhere far away, and then the electricity is converted into light by the elements that are in the bulb. So it SEEMS AS IF the light bulb makes its own light, but without the electricity coming INTO it, there would be no light.

So – it's not *exactly* the same but – we say that WE have life AS IF OF OUR-SELVES, but that the life is really the Lord's IN us, and the particular thoughts and feelings in that life come to us from the Lord THROUGH the good and evil spirits who are with us all the time. But, like a lamp, we convert this life into ideas and feelings that make use of the experiences and memories and skills and abilities that we have because of who we are – how tall we are, how strong we are, whether we have art skills or building skills or musical skills, whether we are right or left-handed, and what kinds of things have happened to us that may have *shaped* our character.

Speaking of *shapes*, we can illustrate this with light bulbs of all different shapes. In all of these the electric “life” that flows in is the same, but the kind of light that shines in each case is different.

1. ordinary incandescent bulb
2. twisty CFL bulb (warm, or cool or other spectrum light)
3. spot light
4. high intensity light
5. oven light
6. florescent tube
7. LED light

In many cases the power going into these lights can be changed so that there is more of less of it. This is done with a special switch called a rheostat (have someone dim the church lights temporarily to demonstrate...).

But here's the thing you really need to know about all this: the big difference between how life flows into YOU and how it flows into THINGS like a radio or a TV or a cell phone or a pipe or a light bulb is that YOU have a thing called free will, or CHOICE. You also have what is called RATIONALITY, or the ability to think for yourself and try to make sense of the things that affect you. So, you may not be able to make yourself *taller*, but you can think about and choose how to make good

use of however tall you are. And you may not be able to lift heavy weights or run very fast, but you can think about and choose what you CAN do with the love and wisdom that is flowing into you from the Lord and the spirits who are with you.

So, unlike the radio or the TV or the computer that requires someone to turn it on, or change the channels or give it a command, you are like a self-tuning radio, or a self-tuning TV, or a computer that makes its own decisions. For example,

1. Will you choose to listen to nice music, or rude music?
2. Will you watch peaceful, fun, useful TV shows, or violent, nasty ones?
3. Will you do positive things on your cell phone or computer, or....?
4. Will you choose to be a bright light, or a dim bulb?
5. And how can you adjust the brightness of your light, anyway?

In His Word the Lord says,

“The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!” (Matthew 6:22-23).

He also said, “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life” (John 8:12).

What all this means is that our minds can be full of the light of truth if we look to the Lord and make a good effort to do what He teaches. Then we can also be like a lamp to others, letting our light – which is really the Lord’s light in us – shine by setting a good example for them (Matthew 5:16).

Or we can be like a radio, a TV or a computer that receives good and positive, useful things to help us live well in this world and the next.

Okay, what we’ve been talking about today is called INFLUX, and it’s all about the way life FLOWS INTO us. But we need to be clear that there are **two kinds of influx**, one that comes directly from the Lord and that provides the power for us to think and act, and the other that is indirect, which means that it comes from the angels and spirits that are with us. We can illustrate this better with a radio or a smart phone than with a lamp, so let’s think about this. Direct influx is like the electricity flowing into the device to make it work – either from a wire or from a battery; *indirect* influx is like the signal that it picks up from the air waves and converts into the sounds you hear or the pictures you see. Remember, in this example, YOU

are the device, but you have the power to TUNE YOURSELF in to whatever station or website or server you like.

Now we're not going to try this here, because who KNOWS what we might get! Just remember, *you are the device*, but the particular thoughts and feelings you receive come from the spiritual world. If they didn't you wouldn't *have* any thoughts or feelings; you'd be just like this "thing"... sitting here ... silent.

Still, you are important! Your own mind and body are necessary in order to get the signals from the other world. Without you making your choices about what to watch or listen to the influx would have nowhere to go. And you are special. You are not the same as anybody else in the universe, and so you have the power to receive the inflowing ideas in a special way that adds to the variety and perfection of life in this world. In fact, you also have a spirit, and will someday BE a spirit in the spiritual world, adding your own thoughts and feelings to the influx people in another hundred or another thousand years can receive in this world.

So, for today, there's just one more very important thing – something the Writings for the New Church mention many times in several different books: when you really KNOW and BELIEVE that all your ideas and feelings come to you from good or evil spirits, who in turn get them from angels in heaven or devils in hell, you will find it much easier to make good choices than if you didn't know and believe this. WHY? Because if you thought that everything in your mind was just your OWN you might get very conceited about your good ideas, and you might feel really terrible about your bad ones, and you might not think you could change. So you might become very self-centered, even if you felt bad about yourself.

In fact, people make this mistake *all the time!* They think, well, good or bad, this is who I am and I can't change. But the lamp is NOT the light. The radio is not the signal coming into it. The smart phone or computer is not the words or music or pictures you get on it. Your thoughts and feelings CAN change, and you have the power to change them by simply making a choice: look at this and not that; listen to this and not that; take this and not that into your mind, and use it in your own special way to help yourself and other people live happy, rewarding lives. This is what it means to be conjoined to heaven, to prepare for heaven, and in fact to help the Lord establish His kingdom on the earth.

Amen.

Lessons:

2 Kings 6:8-20, Mark 5:1-9

Arcana Caelestia 6206-07:1