

SPIRITUAL SPHERES
What are we going to attract today?

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“Evil spirits cannot endure the sphere of mutual love.”
(Arcana Coelestia 1398)

When you got up this morning and thought about coming to church, how did it go? Did some persuasive idea try to suggest that today would be a good time to stay home and relax or catch up on that long “to-do list”? Did you feel a sense of anticipation or need to come to church? Did a sense of obligation or good habits motivate you? Was there no hesitation because of a feeling that this is what should be done on the Sabbath?

Obviously, something worked, because here we are together in a worship service.

Now that we are here, what can we do to make this worship service not only valuable but also useful? How can we effectively listen to and reflect on the Word of the Lord to receive its message so that we can leave church better prepared to serve Him and the neighbor?

Spiritual Spheres

The Writings talk about the importance and power of spiritual spheres. What is a spiritual sphere? It is an organic spiritual quality within us that is ever changing and defining who we are and where we prefer to be spiritually. Spheres are our inner loves that will seek out corresponding spiritual dimensions. The Writings liken our spheres to magnets. Whatever the sphere of our love is, it will attract and draw us to either heaven or hell.

We all have experienced something about attracting spheres. Can you recall a time when you walked into a room of people who were laughing and talking but your presence seemed to bring an end to the cordiality of the group? What kind of sphere

did you notice without a word being spoken to you? You felt uneasy, excluded, unwanted, like an intruder pushed out of the group's friendship circle. Probably you felt as if you wanted to run out of the room.

Conversely, we have all experienced what it was like to walk into a room full of laughter and conversation where we were greeted warmly and invited to join the circle. Without a word being spoken we felt wanted, valued, and included as a part of the friendship of that group. It was a welcoming sphere.

Often spheres arise from our own moods. When we are in a bad mood, we tend to view things from an overly sensitive, negative point of view. As a matter of fact, we don't like hearing someone tell us to cheer up and get over it. Family and friends sensing our troubled state try to tread softly, not wanting to "ruffle our feathers." When we are in a negative state, we tend to complain and see the downside of things. Fortunately, we are likely to have more days where we are happy and put a good meaning on the quality of our life.

The spheres we generate are tremendously powerful. They will either push others away or pull them in.

Illustrations from the Word

Stories in the Word illustrate how powerful spheres can be. Recall one such story involving Pharaoh and the children of Israel. In Exodus we have seven places where Pharaoh's heart hardened when he was told, "let My people go." Initially, Pharaoh agreed to let the people go, but then his heart hardened time after time. No matter what miracle or plague the Lord brought upon the land of Egypt, Pharaoh's heart would not melt. Negativism closed his eyes. He saw and heard about the acts of the Lord but was not willing to comply. He was locked in a sphere of stubborn resistance.

The Lord, revisiting His hometown, was met with a powerful sphere of unbelief. "Is this not the carpenter's son? Is not His

mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this Man get all these things?" (Matthew 13: 55-56)

What are we taught by the Lord about their disbelief? "Now He did not do many mighty works there *because of their unbelief*" (Matthew 13: 58, emphasis added). It wasn't the Lord's failure or inability to do mighty works. It was the fault of the doubting sphere.

Let's consider further the theme of this lesson regarding negative debating.

"Debaters"

The sphere of negativism may produce a spirit of debate that will attract arguments to push out the influence of the Lord.

Look at the excerpts from this passage in the *Arcana Coelestia*:

[T]hey who merely debate whether [spiritual] things exist, stand meanwhile outside the doors of wisdom, and are like persons who merely knock, and cannot even look into wisdom's magnificent palaces. And yet strange to say such people believe themselves to be wise in comparison with others, and that they are wise in proportion to their ability to debate whether a thing be so, and especially to prove that it is not so....

[W]hen yet the simple who are in good [an affirmative sphere] can perceive in a moment, without any dispute, still more without learned controversy, that the thing is, and what is its quality. These have a common sense of the perception of truth whereas the [negative debaters] have extinguished this common sense. (3428:3)

Building a Positive Sphere

Why was it a good thing that we put aside other influences so that we gathered here for church? Why is it a necessary thing that we consciously work on building a positive sphere?

Being in church helps us hear about and consider spiritual things we might not have the time or inclination to hear about in our everyday jobs. Church is a place where we can reverently

say the name of the Lord Jesus Christ with an affirmative sphere that will invite and draw Him into our hearts. Meditating on the Word gives us corrective insights. The reading of the Word places within our minds the profound words of the Lord. We are here to ask, to invite, the Lord to perform great miracles in our lives.

Why is this important?

We have a memory that has been storing the things of the Lord from our earliest childhood. The Writings instruct us that our mind forgets nothing. So the more we hear and learn about the Lord, the more we add to our sphere of attraction. Our remains will affectionately hold the things of the Lord's Word in a protective memory bank that will respond to the Lord's calling.

“Emptying Out”

The growth of the New Church requires our participation in the work of vastations. Vastations involve emptying out, getting rid of, things that cause the devastation (or the pollution) of our spirit.

What are some of the things we need to empty out?

- The tendency to resist the Lord's authority.
- Finding fault with the Lord; accusing Him of things that are not in His Divine nature. He does not harm anyone. Instead, it is His nature to want to save and protect all. Being an angry Father that punishes His children is not within His Divine order.
- Regarding the Word as being an unhappy book that speaks only of wars and other assorted unpleasant and depressing topics. A negative sphere is inclined to call the Word antiquated and unreadable. These attitudes foster a dangerous and perilous negative sphere.
- Being critical of the form or language of the Writings. This

will attract blinding negativity that will cause us to miss the healing and bonding truths of the Lord.

Why mention these few issues? Because each of the illustrations mentioned highlights the negative sphere of the “debaters” who stand outside the door of wisdom and never enter. The negative debaters extinguish the good common sense of a positive sphere. The negative spirit will not open the Word because it doesn't want to be lifted or cheered by the Lord. Do the debaters hear or say, “Your Word is a light to my path,” “Your Word is a chart and compass?” “How sweet are Your words to my taste.” “I get more wisdom from Your Word than from all of my teachers” (Psalms 119: 105, 103, 99). The affirmative prayerfully, reverently, cheerfully, repeat these things.

When the Lord reveals the spiritual sense of His Word it is like opening a box “containing diamonds, rubies, and many other precious stones, arranged in order in compartments. Who does not value such a box when they know that such things are concealed within it, and still more when they are seen and are offered for free distribution?” (*True Christian Religion* 701: 3)

Why is it a good thing that we have gathered together to read, consider, and discuss the Word of the Lord? We have come to improve our positive sphere. We have come to have our magnet draw spiritual things into our heart and mind.

Our positive sphere with its mutual love also does something incredibly amazing: “Evil spirits cannot approach” our sphere of mutual love. If they approach they will be distressed. They will complain and lament, and therefore will fall back. “One angel can put to flight myriads of evil spirits, for they cannot endure the sphere of mutual love” (*Arcana Coelestia* 1397-1398).

What do we want to attract?

So we return to the opening question of this meditation: What

are some of the things we want to attract today?

- We want the protective sphere of mutual love.
- We want a sphere of cooperation with the Lord.
- We want to open our heart and mind to the Lord so that His Word might actively dwell within us.
- We want to knock on the door of wisdom to be invited into that magnificent palace to see, touch, and know holy things.
- We want to receive the precious things of the Lord that He wants to give freely.
- We want to ask for that common sense that will help us “perceive in a moment, without dispute, that spiritual things are so.”
- We want to be involved in the work of reformation so we might rid ourselves of those things that oppose, resist, and deny the Lord.
- We want to have a positive sphere to invite the Lord and His angels into our hearts so that they might lift and guide us through our days.

With a positive sphere may we hear and record in our hearts and minds the following words, and like magnets, draw from them the inspiration we will need this week:

“Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32).

“The Lord shall preserve you from all evil; He shall preserve your soul. The Lord shall preserve your going out and your coming in from this time forth, and even forevermore” (Psalm 121: 7-8). Amen.

Lessons: Exodus 14: 13-18; John 12: 35-43; and portions of *Arcana Coelestia* 1397 and 1398.