

Acquiring a Spiritual Life - May, 2011

It is a key New Church teaching that states that a person doesn't just *become* spiritual. Instead, they have to *choose* it and *work* toward it. Here is what the book 'Heaven and Hell' teaches:

“We need by all means to live in the world and to participate in its duties and affairs. In this way, we accept a spiritual life by means of our moral and civic life” (no. 528).

In some cultures and situations people have believed that spirituality is best achieved by being removed from the world and finding a place of solitary quietness and reflection. New Church teachings refute this. They don't dismiss the value of occasional withdrawal from the hustle and bustle of life. There is little doubt that we sometimes need space to clear our heads and reflect upon the Lord and life. Still, the real path to becoming spiritual is not found there.

We open ourselves to the possibility of becoming spiritual people to the extent that we first become morally useful people. The same section of 'Heaven and Hell' asks the question, "Who *can't* lead a civic and moral life?" It is a rhetorical question. The answer, of course, is: Virtually no one.

The important personal question is then not, "How do I become spiritual?". Instead, the questions ought to be along the lines of, "How do I go about filling my civic responsibilities?", and, "How do I live a life that is truly moral?" We are to ask the Lord these questions knowing that He can show us the way. He can also slowly turn us from being people who do what is right for somewhat selfish reasons, to people who do so because this is what the Lord's heavenly principles teach us to do.

Garry

