

Trust and Discipline in the Building of Conscience

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We should think of our children as budding New Church men and women, who after blossoming into adult age may make the Church utterly their own. This is the Lord' work, yet not without the instrumentality of parents, teachers and others.

First, therefore, we must ask ourselves, What is the New Church? And second, we need to consider the way that leads up to that Church.

A true New Churchman is one who thinks and acts from the Writings. Education by itself cannot make sure that the child will be such person, for thinking and acting from the Writings is not possible without self-compulsion. Nevertheless, education can provide a sort of momentum in the direction of such thinking and acting, making the incentive and challenge at adult age more or less inescapable. Such education consists of a two-pronged action: the implantation of remains of truth, and the implantation of remains of affection. The former is accomplished mainly through teachings from all the three forms of the Word; the latter by the sphere of love, trust, and mutual confidence.

Truth relates to discipline. Here the burden of the three-fold Word shows a development from a beginning discipline that is induced from without, turning into one of beginning conscience, i.e. beginning self-discipline, and gradually—from adult age on—growing into the mature conscience that is independent of external pressure and replaced by the prompting of love for things that are good and beautiful as guided by the truth concerning these things.

I think it is important that all three forms of Revelation should be present in the mind of a person throughout his life. There is no time in which the child can understand nothing at all of the Writings (or, as in earliest infancy, simply be affected by their sphere); and there is no time in a man's life when he outgrows the Old Testament. That the same sort of thing applies to the New Testament is confirmed by the single example of the Christmas story: When are we too young to delight in it? When in life do we cease to be affected by it?

As for the Writings we should be aware that it is a matter of developing from universals to particulars. A small child cannot understand the particulars, but he can most certainly comprehend and be affected by the two universals of the New Church. He can understand the Divine Human! And he can understand regeneration! No, not by those terms, nor in early life by analysis. But he can understand that God came on earth, and that is the doctrine of the Divine Human. Equally he can understand that we are to obey that God and learn to follow and love Him, and that is what regeneration is all about. The Old and New Testaments of course imply these things throughout, but it is only in the Writings that they are taught with such plainness as to exclude any confusion about them.

Another example of the presence of the Writings throughout life, from the dawn of the concept of imagery and then on endlessly, is seen in the name "The Lord." Only in the Writings is that name dominant everywhere. Of course the Writings leave no doubt as to the identity of this Lord

with the Jehovah of the Old Testament, or with the Messiah (or Christ) of the New. Significant is the full name in the “New Church Gospel” in *The True Christian Religion* 791, namely, The Lord God Jesus Christ. But it is this full name that is contracted into the one, simple name “The Lord.” All of this is important; for “The Lord” means first God on earth who began to make Himself known, and later God in heaven who made Himself as fully known as the limits of human reason permit. In a word, “The Lord” means our God who came on earth, and who became our Father in the heavens, thus it means the one God of heaven and earth.

But we return to the idea of implanting conscience through remains of truth. It is self-evident, I think, that the Old Testament should have dominance in early childhood, the New Testament in later childhood and youth, and the Writings in later youth and adult age. Yet as already suggested, dominance does not imply exclusion.

Now in the Old Testament discipline is enforced from without. In general there are the threats of famine, war, or pestilence as rewards of disobedience; and the promise of plenty, of peace, and of a long life to be bestowed on those who obey. Obedience thus induced provides the necessary and only basis for a conscience that can later be deepened and perfected. The New Testament, in turn, opens up what may be called a moral conscience, that is, a conscience that is prompted by a generally accepted moral code. Commandments in the New Testament against hatred and revenge and against an unclean attitude with regard to the opposite sex; and also numerous other commandments, like cleansing first the inside of the cup and the platter, provide the essence of a genuine moral conscience. Later the whole doctrine in the Writings concerning man’s inherited inclinations, the necessity of step by step exploring them and fighting them gives us what we need to know in order to allow the New Jerusalem itself to come down into mind and heart from God out of heaven.

Remains of truth consists of a knowledge of what truth is (that is, what things are true) and a developing understanding as to how and why things are true. The ‘why’ comes last: it leads into the discovery that truth is for the sake of good, and that it is from good, and that in itself it has no existence apart from good.

But remains of affection, or remains of good, are not less important. These provide the essence for the remains of truth. Truth is form, affection is essence. Truth as form is implanted from without, especially through the senses of hearing and sight. But the affections that are to be within them flow in from heaven. However, it is important to understand that they do not flow in directly into the truths that we learn from the Word, but directly into states of the mind which constitute the remains, and which afterwards in their turn are to flow into the truths that we have in memory and understanding. Remains are individual; nor has any man remains identical with any other man or with any angel. Note *Heaven and Hell* 298: “As far as man’s affection agrees with the affection that inflows, so far is that affection received by him in his thought, since man’s interior thought is wholly in accord with his affection or love.” Compare also *Apocalypse Explained* 586:2: “The spirits with man are such as his affections or cupidities are.”

Parents can invite, or not invite, the affections from heaven that serve for the implantation of remains of good. The home setting in which there is the worship of the Lord, a respect for and

love of the Word, and (not to be forgotten!) mutual trust and friendship, provides a correspondential plane for the angelic work of building such remains into the mind.

Trust is the affectional counterpart of discipline. The one is as important as the other, but one is means, the other end. Also, one might say, trust more and more takes the place of external discipline in the degree that internal discipline is seen to develop. What I wish to stress however, is that trust can cautiously go ahead of the development of self-discipline. A wise parent is a watchful parent who measures trust judiciously; but a wise parent also knows that if the child feels that he is trusted, then he has a most powerful incentive not to let his parent down. That is how he has opportunity to substitute self-discipline for the discipline that pressed upon him from without.

It goes without saying that there must be an emphasis on the word “cautious.” Yet another emphasis also important, namely, that it never too early to place a cautious trust in the child! The only difference between early and late is that in the early stages trust is applied only to small matters, and in later stages to gradually bigger and more important ones.

There is of course much to be said both about discipline and trust, but in a short article like this we can stress only a major principle. We can say that one without the other doomed to failure. Discipline without trust causes rebellion; trust without discipline invites the carefree looseness that can be compared to a body without backbone.

But let all parents work out particulars within the framework of remains of truth and remains affection, or, what is essentially the same, the framework of discipline and trust. Disregard one, and you have neither. Foster both, and you give your child the greatest of all parental gifts with which you can send your child into adulthood.