

# Using the Whole Word to Develop Concepts of the Lord

by Sylvia Parker

The Word gives us three wonderful successive pictures of who the Lord Jesus Christ is, in all His fullness and glory. None of these pictures by itself at any stage of our life is complete without an appropriate understanding and appreciation of the other two. By appropriate, I mean according to our age and state.

In the Old Testament we see a loving Heavenly Father—the Creator of all things who rewards the good and punishes the evil. To the seven-year-old this means that if I obey the teacher and get my work done I can go out to recess. If not I will have to stay in and finish it. A “Thou shalt not...” approach to key moral issues provides an important basis for all later stages of self-compulsion (*Arcana Coelestia* 1937). It also means, although on a less personally identified level, that the Lord made him and loves him and gives him everything in the world for his use.

To the high school student the idea that the Lord made him and gives him everything he needs is a remote and perhaps scoffed at concept—too simplistic to be meaningful. His independence-seeking defiance of home or school rules frequently needs to be met head-on with the spiritual reality of reward for the good and punishment for the evil; again—“Thou shalt not....”

The college student and the adult alike also need external rules to live by, for we all live in a world of time and space where orderly ultimates are important.

In the New Testament we see a gentle, caring, loving Person—Jesus—who walked on earth as we do—the Great Healer who reaches out to all mankind, no matter how wretched or low, to lift up and to teach a better way. The seven-year-old needs to see Jesus as the little babe in Bethlehem who grew to be an adult just as he will. This age child can show incredible generosity of spirit in sharing with the neighbor without thought of self or reward. He too wants to be a healer—to “make everything better.” This is his form of charity.

For the high school student, identification with Jesus as a person is essential. He needs to know for a certainty that Jesus is there with him even though he be in the depths of hell! (Psalm 139).

For the college student too this developing personal identity with Jesus is necessary, although more rounded and modified through experience and maturity. Indeed this is the essential bridge to rational adulthood because the student is looking for a way to personally serve his fellow man through a chosen field of use.

In the Writings we see the full splendor of the Lord’s Divine Human. Because the seven-year-old has a potential rational he can make beautifully profound statements. “Of course numbers are just like the Lord—they have no beginning or end”; and when I was asked by a student why the Lord couldn’t do something, another student replied, “No way! The Lord can’t break His own rules—or He wouldn’t be the Lord.”

## Using the Whole Word to Develop Concepts of the Lord

The high school student responds with intense delight to the rational explanations of the Laws of Divine Providence and to the beautiful ideals of Conjugal Love. He sees these, from examples, as obtainable goals. His idealism is protected by the Lord despite world conditions of the day.

The college student slowly begins to see the essential oneness of all of creation, a delight made possible by the clear rational explanations found in the Writings. He hears every teacher in the College singing the same tune—"a new song unto the Lord."

What can we as teachers do to help our students develop these three concepts of the Lord? There are ways to use the entire Word at each level to do this *if we will consciously focus our best effort on the task*. We need to put nurturing the affirmative state in first place, without shirking the responsibility to deal honestly with what is negative. In the same way, we feed the healthy plant to keep it healthy.

What a privilege it is to be able to assist toward having the student's developing picture of the Lord be as full and useful as possible at each stage of his growth!