

## Simulations of Love and Wisdom

### Why Self-Compulsion is Useful and Not Hypocritical

A sermon by Rev. Michael Gladish  
Mitchellville, MD, July 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2018

“...What does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the Lord and His statutes which I command you today for your good?” ~ *Deuteronomy* 10:12-13

Once again, this passage from the Word is a powerful reminder of our responsibilities, but it also raises some big questions. How, for example, can we be commanded to love or even to fear anyone? And why should we do anything that is in any way insincere? What if we really don't feel like it or maybe don't even understand how or why?

One of the great misconceptions of our age is that doing something nice or good when we don't really feel like it is *hypocrisy!* The idea is that being nice when it doesn't come naturally, spontaneously, or from the heart is really just being *fake, phoney* or *disingenuous* and that this is really bad. Instead many would have us speak and act “authentically” by truthfully saying or doing whatever is really on our minds, rather than “pretending” to be something we're not.

The trouble with this is that it fails to take into account that we all have two hearts, or as the Writings say, two wills, and they are almost always at odds with each other. On one hand there is a natural will *imposed on us* by our heredity going back many generations; we call this the *proprium* and it's all about self-love and self-preservation. On the other hand we have – or can have – a spiritual will that is not imposed at all, but *freely chosen* and cultivated by a life of self-discipline according to the Lord's Word. This new will is a gift from the Lord, but we receive it just as if it were our own, and with time and practice it can gradually replace the original will so that we really do love the Lord and others more than ourselves.

But it's a tricky process. The old will can be pretty stubborn. In fact *it is*, as they say, *what it is*, and it never does change; it only wants what it wants. Fortunately the Lord has given us divided minds such that the faculty of understanding can function at least somewhat independently of the will. So we can learn what is right and good even though we don't like it, we can develop a conscience about that, and we can compel ourselves to do it *because the Lord said so*. Eventually, then, we learn to enjoy living that way and it becomes our *new will* to do so. In that case the old will is still present, and still rises up from time to time to complain or make demands, but for the most part it is set aside, and like memories of unpleasant things it becomes dormant, or to use the term from our old translations of the Writings, “quiescent.”

Now of course, to the outside observer, and especially to someone who is still in active states of the old, selfish will, it is difficult to accept that this new, altruistic behavior is anything but hypocritical. Often as we struggle with the conflicts between our own two wills we *ourselves* wonder whether we are just being hypocritical when we try to do the right thing. An old friend once described the situation as “motives ping-pong:” you do the right thing and start to feel good about it, but then realize that pride is also a sin, so you begin to feel bad about yourself. And then, realizing that you feel bad about yourself, you recognize *that* as your conscience speaking to you

and you begin to think maybe you're OK after all. So you can go 'round and 'round in your head. But the simple fact is that if you try to do the right thing *because you know you should*, or *because the Lord has said so*, it may not *feel* like you really want to do it, but on some level you *do*, and that's *not* hypocritical because it represents the good part of the real you.

Hypocrisy, by definition, is “dissimulation or pretense” (Oxford English Dict.) especially assuming or projecting moral standards on others while contradicting those standards in one's own life. But the point is that hypocrisy is done with deception in mind, trying to make people think better of us than we really are. And yes, we all mess up; we all fall short of our own ideals from time to time, if not every day! But if it's not our *intention* to do so and we honestly regret when it happens, then we can't *and shouldn't* be called hypocrites.

Notice the word, dissimulation, in the dictionary definition. In contrast the word, simulation, is used in the Heavenly Doctrine in a very positive way. Both words are based on a root that refers to similarity, so to *simulate* is to make or cause to be similar, but to *dissimulate* is to make or cause to be dissimilar. In the positive use of the word, simulate, the Writings speak of “appearances of love and friendship between married partners of dissident dispositions” for the sake of a whole list of good and useful purposes – like mutual aid, peace and the preservation of order in the home, the care of infants and children, the maintenance of a good reputation (honestly) outside the home, and of course for the possibility of reconciliation (CL #277-290). What it means is that a couple will seek common ground in the external aspects of life even when they feel alienated from each other inwardly. In a sense what they will do is FAKE a spiritual marriage in order to get along, ***but not with any intent to deceive***, only to be useful and to provide a platform for improved relations inwardly as time is allowed for reflection and accommodation.

These same principles apply in any relationship, whether between friends or neighbors, relatives, team members, workmates or business associates. ***It is not hypocritical to make nice unless you are doing it facetiously with some mean, selfish or deceptive intent.***

Remember, the Lord in the Gospels and especially in Revelation frequently said that the quality of a person's life is or can be known by his works: “A good tree brings forth good fruit,” He “will give to everyone according to his works,” and so on (see citations in HH #471),

“But by deeds and works, are not meant deeds and works as they appear in external form, but the way they appear in internal form. For everyone knows that every deed and work goes forth from a person's will and thought. Otherwise, it would be nothing but a movement like that of a robot or image. Consequently, a deed or work viewed in itself is merely an effect that derives its soul and life from will and thought, even to the extent that it is will and thought in effect, and thus is will and thought in external form. From this it follows that a deed or work is in quality such as are the will and thought that produce it” (HH #472).

So... again, we have two wills, and we can act from either one or the other. We can be mean or we can *try* to be helpful. And given the fact that it's hard sometimes even for us to know which will is moving us to act a certain way, let's reflect a little on the difficulty of judging ***others!*** As we read in the book about marriage, in the section on imputation, “a number of people may act and speak in the same way *and yet be acting and speaking differently*, some from a depraved will and thought, and others from an upright will and thought.” Swedenborg confirms this noting,

“In the spiritual world I have met with many who in the natural world had lived in the same way as others, dressing finely, faring sumptuously, doing business for gain like other men, attending dramatic performances, jesting about affairs of love as if from lust, besides other like things; yet in some the angels condemned these things as evils of sin, and in some they did not account them as evils; and the latter they declared guiltless, and the former guilty. To the question why they did so *when yet they had done the same things*, they answered that *they view all from their purpose, intention or end*, and make distinction accordingly; thus that those whom the end excuses or condemns, they excuse or condemn, for all in heaven have good as an end, and all in hell have evil as an end” (CL #527).

This is why the Lord said, “Judge not that you be not judged (that is, condemned; Matt. 7:1). But remember He also taught that we *should* “judge with righteous (just) judgment” (John 7:24).

[The first teaching] can be understood in no wise as meaning judgment concerning a person’s moral and civil life in the world, but as meaning judgment concerning his spiritual and celestial life. Who does not see that were it not lawful for a person to judge as to the moral life of his fellow inhabitants in the world, society would fall! What would society be if there were no public judgments? or if one did not form his own judgment concerning another? What is *not* lawful, is judgment as to the quality of the interior mind or soul within a person, thus as to what his spiritual state is and hence his lot after death. This is known to the Lord alone.

[Thus] “a general judgment such as: ‘If in internals you are what you appear to be in externals you will be saved or condemned,’ is allowed; but a particular judgment such as, ‘You *are* such in internals and therefore *will* be saved or condemned,’ is not allowed” (CL #523).

So much for judging others. But what about judging *ourselves*? Although it can hurt to feel unjustly criticized by others, it would be fairly easy to slough it off if we didn’t think there might be at least some truth to it, or if we didn’t worry that the people we respect might believe it. We are, after all, a sensitive lot, and so it’s important for us to be able to put other people’s evaluations of us in a proper context.

How, then, can we know our own motives? How can we see for ourselves truly whether we are acting from the new or the old will?

On one hand, just as with our judgments of others, we can’t very often be certain. This is important as a measure of our humility and an encouragement to persevere in self-examination, realizing there is always room for improvement. But there are signs – there have to be! – that can guide us to a good understanding, otherwise we would have no idea where we stand.

One of these signs is the presence or absence of any outward conflict of interest. What, in other words, do we have to gain personally from the good we might do for others? This is tricky because the personal benefit might be the hope of heavenly blessing, *which is not bad because it implies and includes the blessing of others* and keeps us focused on eternal values. But if there is some material benefit involved then we can know we need to be very careful, since material benefits appeal mainly to our old, selfish will. Note, making a profit from some useful service is *not*

*wrong*, but doing it *mainly for the profit* is a conflict of interest that can lead us into all sorts of other evils.

Therefore the Writings explain the critical doctrine of our “ruling” or “dominant” loves, and that the most important measure of our integrity – for that’s what we’re really talking about: the full integration of our good actions with good intentions – is the sense of delight we feel in doing what we do. If for example, we feel delight in the good itself, or if we feel the delight of another person as delight in ourselves (DLW #47), then we can be pretty sure we’re acting with integrity. As it says in the *Arcana* (#9449),

“The signs that people’s sins have been forgiven are the following: they take delight in worshipping God for God’s sake, and serving the neighbor for the neighbor’s sake, and so in doing good for goodness’ sake, and believing truth for truth’s sake; they refuse to receive merit because of any act of charity and faith; they keep well away from and detest evils, such as those of enmity, hatred, vengeance, ruthlessness, or adultery, in short everything contrary to God and the neighbor.”

Notice that only those who feel these delights in themselves can recognize these signs, so they are listed for our own benefit, *not* to judge others. And it’s the same with their opposites: if we do the good for our own benefit, and especially if we despise others compared with ourselves, (AC #9450) then we can be pretty sure we are NOT acting with integrity, and that we might very well be guilty of hypocrisy.

This challenge of judging or *evaluating* motives is a persistent problem in society generally, not to mention in the church. Even civil courts have to deal with it when they consider the degree of responsibility anyone has for a given offense. *Our* main job in *spiritual life* however is to exercise due diligence in matters of *our own motivation*, realizing that we are all a mixed bag as long as we are in the process of regeneration, but looking to the Lord and trusting Him to lift us up out of our selfishness and moderate its effects on other people so that the good we do is in fact clean and honest, or at least predominantly so. This trust is critical, since without the Lord it is all a sham, but when we look to Him, pray to Him and shun evils as sins against Him we can know, at least for that moment, that we’re going to be OK.

We know all too well that the Lord condemned hypocrisy and strictly warned against it. But we can’t let the fear of hypocrisy keep us from doing good! Rather, to use an old expression, we can justly and faithfully “fake it ‘till we make it,” as long as we are doing the best we can to honor the Lord’s commandments *from conscience*, with the clear purpose of overcoming our inherent selfishness by *practicing* goodwill. It is, after all, *practice* that makes perfect.

Amen.

Lessons: *Matthew* 23:1-12  
Children’s talk on doing good unselfishly, unpretentiously

*Deuteronomy* 6:1-18  
*New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine* #54-56