

Notes from Kurt Ho. Asplundh

Shift. Notes for week one: day 1 – conflict and awareness

The Writings reveal that the struggle between the twin sons is about whether good or truth takes priority in life.:

Esau and Jacob...represent the Lord's Divine natural, Esau the Divine natural *as to good*, and Jacob *as to truth*.... This struggling or combat...is about the priority, as to whether good or truth is prior, or what is the same, whether charity which is of good, or truth which is of faith, is prior. ... It is said that the "sons struggled within her," and by this is signified combat...(AC 3289).

How can there be a combat between good and truth? They should go together rather than against one another. That is the eventual goal. But at first it is not so. The good of the natural man is corrupted. Although we receive all of our life from the Lord, our hereditary nature puts a twist on what we receive. The following teaching explains:

AC 3318:[2] Man is nothing but an organ, or vessel, which receives life from the Lord. ...In consequence of the hereditary evil into which man is born, and of the actual evil which he acquires, these vessels are in a contrary position within him relatively to the inflowing life.... [T]herefore before they can be rendered compliant and fit to receive anything of the life of the Lord's love, they must be softened. ...When therefore the vessels have been somewhat tempered and subdued by temptations, they begin to become yielding to, and compliant with, the life of the Lord's love, which continually flows in with man.... This is the reason why man is regenerated, that is, made new, by temptations; or what is the same, by spiritual combats; and that he is afterwards gifted with another nature; being made mild, humble, simple, and contrite in heart (AC 3318: 2-4).

Since the Lord cannot reach us through His inflowing good, He has provided another means by which we can be led: through His truth. Here, Esau represents the corrupted will, the vessel of good; Jacob represents the human understanding, a vessel capable of receiving truth. Therefore, we are told,

“before a man has been regenerated he does good from truth; but after he has been regenerated he does good from good; or more clearly, before a man has been regenerated he does good from the understanding; but after he has been regenerated, from the will (AC 3295).

Shift. Notes for week one: day 2 – selling the birthright

The struggle for supremacy continues as the twins mature. Esau sells his birthright to Jacob under extreme circumstances.

AC 3316 [2] The first state of the man who is being regenerated, or in whom truth is being conjoined with good, is that first of all in his natural man, or in its storehouse called the memory, there are amassed the doctrinal things of truth without any certain order.... But this is to the end that they may be reduced to order, for whatever is to be reduced to order is at first in this state of confusion; and this is what is signified by the pottage which Jacob boiled, that is, amassed. These doctrinal things are not reduced to order by themselves, but by the good which flows into them, and the good reduces them into order in exact proportion to the amount and the quality of its action upon them. When good first longs for and desires these doctrinal things, to the end that it may conjoin them with itself, it manifests itself under the appearance of the affection of truth. This is what is signified by Esau's saying to Jacob, "Cause me to sup I pray of the red, this red."

AC 3330. And he sold his birthright unto Jacob. That this signifies that in the meantime priority was granted, namely, to the doctrine of truth which is "Jacob". That in the spiritual man in the beginning truth has the dominion, is chiefly because in his first state there are delights of the love of self and of the world which he believes to be good, and which apply themselves to his truths, and for the most part produce the affection of truth in him; for he then thinks that truths may be serviceable to him either for honor, or for gain, or for reputation in the world, or even for merit in the other life. All these things excite this affection of truth in him, and also enkindle it; and yet they are not good, but evil. Nevertheless the Lord permits that such things should influence him in that first time, because otherwise he could not be regenerated. Intelligence and wisdom come in time; in the meanwhile through these truths the man is introduced into good, that is, into charity; and when he is in this, then for the first time he perceives what is good, and acts from good, and then judges and draws conclusions from this good concerning truths; and those which do not accord with this good he calls false, and rejects. Thus he rules over truths as a master over his servants.

The name Jacob means he who "supplants" (usurps the place of another, especially by intrigue). While Esau was the firstborn, Jacob was born holding Esau's heel, a sign that he was a rival. (We think of the Achilles heel, the vulnerable spot.)

See AC 259

Shift. Notes for week one: day 3 – Jacob steals the Blessing

Jacob not only has taken Esau's birthright, he conspires with Rebekah, his mother, to deceive Isaac and steal Esau's rightful blessing. He accomplished this by pretending to be Esau. This shows how we become regenerate by "pretending" to love a good life.

AC 3539 [3] that the state has been completely inverted, is represented by Jacob's feigning to be Esau, in clothing himself with the garments of Esau and the skins of the kids of the she-goats; for in this state rational truth not yet thus conjoined with rational good, or what is the same, the understanding not thus conjoined with the will, in this manner inflows and acts into the natural, and disposes inversely the things which are there.

[4] ... A man is also able to apprehend in his understanding, even should his will dissent or go contrary thereto, that the happiest life is from love to the Lord and from charity toward the neighbor, because the very Divine flows into it; and on the other hand that the most miserable life is from the love of self and the love of the world, because hell flows into it; and from this it may be perceptible to the understanding, yet not to the will, that love to the Lord is the life of heaven, and that mutual love is the soul from this life; and therefore insofar as a man does not think from the life of his will, nor reflect upon his life derived therefrom, so far he perceives this in his understanding; but insofar as he thinks from the life of his will, so far he does not perceive, nay denies it.

[6] This faculty of man of being able to understand what is good and true although he does not will it, has been given to man in order that he may have the capacity of being reformed and regenerated; on which account this faculty exists with the evil as well as with the good; nay, with the evil it is sometimes more acute, but with this difference, that with the evil there is no affection of truth for the sake of life, that is, for the sake of the good of life from truth, and therefore they cannot be reformed; but with the good there is the affection of truth for the sake of life, that is, for the sake of the good of life, and therefore they can be reformed. But the first state of the reformation of these is that the truth of doctrine appears to them to be in the first place, and the good of life in the second, because they do what is good from truth; and their second state is that the good of life is in the first place, and the truth of doctrine in the second, for then they do what is good from good, that is, from the will of good; and when this is the case, because the will has been conjoined with the understanding as in a marriage, the man has been regenerated. In the internal sense these two states are treated of in the things said concerning Esau and Jacob.

Shift. Notes for week one: day 4 – Jacob steals the Blessing

When Jacob presented himself before Isaac in disguise, Isaac said: “The voice is Jacob’s voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau. Concerning this we read:

AC 3563 {T}his signifies that in this case the intellectual part is of truth which is within, but that the will part is of good which is without, thus that they are of inverted order.... That these things are of inverted order is evident from the fact that it is according to order for good which is of the will to be within, and for truth which is of the understanding to be without. [2] The good of the natural comes forth from no other source in man than interior good, that is, from the good of the rational; that the natural has good from no other source is evident; but the influx causes the good in the natural to be such as the natural is; and as this is the only source of the good of the natural, the truth of the natural is from the same source; for where good is, there is truth, both being necessary in order that there may be anything; but the influx causes the truth therein to be such as is that into which it flows.

[3] It is according to order that the good of the rational should inflow into the good of the natural and at the same time into its truth, immediately; and also through the truth of the rational into the good of the natural, thus mediately; and in like manner into the truth of the natural both immediately and mediately; and when this is the case, then the influx is according to order. Such influx exists with those who have been regenerated; but as before said there is another influx before they have been regenerated, namely, that the good of the rational does not flow immediately into the good of the natural, but mediately through the truth of the rational, and thus presents something like good in the natural, but which is not genuine good, and consequently not genuine truth; yet it is such that inmosty it really has good from the influx through the truth of the rational; but no further. Therefore also good comes forth there under another form, namely, outwardly like the good which is represented by Esau, but inwardly like the truth which is represented by Jacob; and as this is not according to order, it is said to be of inverted order; but yet in respect to the fact that man can be regenerated in no other way, it is according to order.

When man is affected with truth, not for the sake of ends of life, but for the sake of other ends, such as that he may become learned, and this from a certain affection of emulation, or from a certain affection of childish envy, and also from a certain affection of glory; then are the good of the natural and the truth of the natural in such an order as is here represented by Jacob, consequently relatively to each other they are in inverted order; that is, the will part which is of good is without, and the intellectual part which is of truth is within.

