

DOCTRINAL CLASS

By Rev. Theodore Pitcairn
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"Thou Shalt Not Steal."

We read: "Amen, amen, I say unto you, he that entereth not by the door into sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.....I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before Me are thieves and robbers. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill and to destroy. I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly." (John 10: 1, 7-10)

All goods and truths which a man has from the Word and the Church out of his own will and his own understanding are stolen things, in which the Lord is not present, and which therefore lack an internal. Wherefore we read: "If the rational is consulted the Doctrine becomes null and void." Unless a man has given up the life of his proprial will and understanding he always consults his rational, and then all things from the Word and from the Doctrine of the Church are with him stolen things, an external without an internal.

Do we not see with every man, that strong tendency to steal. In churches generally, we see an effort to increase the Church in numbers, power and prestige, by appealing to the proprial will and understanding of men and women. Appeals are made to the natural affections, and the intellect is flattered. Or where this is not done, threats and anathema, are used to inspire fear, fear of hell, and fear of losing the pleasures of heaven. Let us not think that we are free of such dangers.

We are told that the devils are not averse to worshipping God the Father, but they are averse to the Lord in His Divine Human. The Father is the Lord the Creator, the Divine Human is the Lord the Redeemer. Man is not averse to acknowledging God the Creator, but he is, by hereditary nature, averse to acknowledging the Lord the Redeemer, for he is averse to Redemption. He is not willing, from his proprium, to acknowledge that, "A total damnation stands before the door and threatens." The door of both his will and understanding, for he trusts in the rationality he has from creation and in his instinctive good feelings, which he has from birth. To give up trust in these is to give up his life, and this he does not easily do.

There is an expression commonly used, "appealing to a man's better instincts," such an expression implies a climbing up some other way like a thief and a robber, and not entering through the door, that is the Lord Who is the door. The man of the Most Ancient Church did indeed have human instincts by creation, instincts of love into Good and towards his neighbor, for he was born into the order of his life. We are not born into the order of our life, and if we appeal to man's better instincts, we climb up some other way, and come to apparent goods and truths, which are only externals without internals. Man's internals are formed by innocence from the Lord, and a man cannot be in innocence from the Lord unless he believes, that it is solely by the Lord's undergoing temptation in him, and by His overcoming and subjugating the hells which rule in him, that he can be saved. The moment a man loses this perception he is a thief and steals.

Every young man and woman is given gifts from the Lord: the young man particularly, a kind of youthful understanding of truth, an enthusiasm for it, and a youthful ideal of usefulness.

But the young man begins to steal the understanding of the truths he has been given and make them favor himself, and his own ends. He loses the innocence of youth, and thus the internal is stolen away. He must then look to the Lord for a new understanding in which there can be formed a new good of innocence, and must repent of his theft.

It is similar with a young woman; she is granted by the Lord a youthful innocence with its things of love and thence of attractiveness and charm. But she also tends to steal these from the Lord, turning the things of attractiveness and charm, to favor herself and her own loves, and thus destroying her youthful innocence, from which her attractiveness originally came. A woman must then turn to the Lord for a new will in which, in a state of innocence, she receives new living truths, and she must repent of her theft.

No matter how old we are there is always reason to repent of spiritual theft. In fact at the end of every spiritual day or period there is a tendency to take the external of what we have acquired apart from the internal, and then to consult the rational; wherefore there must always be a new repentance, a shunning of theft before a new dawn.

We read: "The evil of theft enters more deeply into man than any other evil, because it is conjoined with cunning and deceit; and cunning and deceit insinuate themselves even into the spiritual mind of man." (Doc. of Life 8).

Whenever a man is in the external apart from the internal he desires that he may appear as if he were in the internal; he therefore uses the greatest cunning, and deceit to make it appear as if he was in the internal. A man who is in the knowledge of the truth puts on the appearance of the love of being wise. A woman who is in her own loves and affections, tries to make it appear as if these had their origin in spiritual truths, and such appearances are put on with the greatest art, so that no one who is not in illustration from the Lord, cannot but be deceived. A man and woman in this art not only deceive others, but especially they deceive themselves.

Spiritual wealth like natural wealth is acquired in one of three ways. By being earned or labored for: By being inherited or received as a gift: By being stolen or acquiring in a dishonest way.

A man to acquire spiritual wealth must labor. We read: "To labor and do all thy work is to perform those things which are necessities of life." (A.C. 888)

"To labor is to apply the mind to study, that these things may be known and acknowledged." (A.E. 102) "Labor in the Word is said of truth." (A.E. 365) "Labor is combat against evil and falsity." (A.C. 10360)

Labor is the state in which man acts from truth and compels himself. When a man has come to a state of peace and acts out of good from the Lord then his works are not called labor but uses. But no man can come to uses who has not first labored. We read: "That they may rest from their labors signifies that those who afflict their soul, and crucify their flesh in the world, for the sake of the Lord and eternal life, will have peace in the Lord." (A. R. 640).

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While a man labors he cannot but feel as if the work is his own, and therefore in a sense steals from the Lord, but this is forgiven him for he has not yet come to the state in which he can perceive that it is the Lord who labors for him.

If a man does not labor he can only live by begging or stealing. When a man has acquired spiritual wealth by labor, indeed by hard labor, he must come to the Sabbath of rest in which he acknowledges that all is from the Lord, and that love is the essential. If he does not come to this perception, then he becomes "nouveau riche", and spends his spiritual wealth on vulgar display, to be seen of men; or like a miser hides it away in a closet, where it performs no use.

A man who has acquired wealth by inheritance or gift, and we have all acquired great spiritual wealth from the Church by this means, either studies to use it well or squanders it in fantastic spiritual pleasures, and in the end is reduced to begging or stealing. How many have not squandered their spiritual inheritance. Everyone who takes spiritual wealth as in itself saving also steals.

Those who have acquired their spiritual wealth by stealing, by illicit gains, and who have not labored, are those who adroitly make the spiritual things of others and even of the Lord appear as their own. All are such who have not "afflicted their souls, and crucified the flesh, in the world, for the sake of the Lord and eternal life," who have not laboriously acquired truth, for the sake of life, and having acquired it, come to the acknowledgment that all is of the mercy of the Lord, and nothing is from their own merit. All others end up as spiritual thieves.

In the Word much is spoken about uses. Because many have the word use on their lips, when yet their uses are dead, for they look solely to the uses of the world or to reward in heaven, some have come to despise uses particularly natural uses. Yet natural uses are the only basis for spiritual uses. If a man does not perform, or strive to perform, the use of his occupation in the world sincerely, justly and faithfully, his so called interior things are but a castle in the air, or a house without a foundation. If a man does not strictly respect the moral and civil things of his work or occupation, he lives in an imaginary heaven. Indeed the moral and civil things of his occupation should not be the end; for the end, for the sake of which he works, is the Lord's Kingdom; yet those who do their work in this world sincerely, justly, and faithfully, who regard the neighbor, in the world, and who shun all those things which are insincere and unethical in a simple way, with little thought beyond, are far better than those who elevated their minds to spiritual uses to doctrinal things, and neglect the civil and moral foundation.

The basis of spiritual life must be a sincere, just, and faithful performance of ones occupation from a genuine natural love of the neighbor, in which, one places the welfare of the community above ones love of self, and the love of the reward which ones work brings. This is a well known truth, but is a truth that is seldom a matter of life. The world speaks much of service and the desire to serve, while, in the New Church generally, use is on every ones lips. Because this is so common, and is so seldom genuine, there is the danger that we come to despise, the very foundation of life. Now a man's first duty in time is to work in order that he can support himself and his family. If a man does not do this he is of little use to himself, to the community, or to any one else. But when he has done this he must come to place the love of his occupation, for the sake of the

community, above the love of his occupation for the sake of himself; this is the all important inversion, that seldom takes place. Yet if this inversion does not take place, where is the foundation upon which some thing higher can be built? It is true that if the man of the Church remains in the love of his occupation for the sake of society in this world and does not look higher, he remains merely natural and in time loses even this foundation; all sincere love of ones natural occupation for the sake of society must be looked upon not as an end, but as a means and basis for a love of uses in the Kingdom of God. But while it must be looked upon as a means, and not as an end, it is a means that can never be skipped over.

The essential of keeping the commandment not to steal in the natural sense is always a shunning of the love of self and the world so that one may come into the love of performing ones natural use sincerely, justly, and faithfully, for the sake of the community; while the essential of keeping the commandment, not to steal, in the spiritual sense, is always a shunning of the internal of the love of self and the world so that one may come into the love of performing ones spiritual use sincerely, justly and faithfully for the sake of the Lord's Kingdom; not only the Lord's kingdom in which we will live after death, but the Lord's Kingdom which we should be in, as to our spirits, while we live on earth. A man's natural work, or in any case his love of a natural use, should correspond to his love of a spiritual use. If a man separates these two, the natural use becomes a dead body and the spiritual use becomes a ghost.

We read: "Thou shalt not steal. That this signifies that no one's spiritual goods must be taken away from him, and that those things which belong to the Lord are not to be attributed to self." (A.C. 8906). It never appears to anyone that he takes the spiritual goods and truths from his neighbor, for the falsities which he holds to, he thinks are truths; and the evils he favors he thinks are goods. He does this because he is not in innocence, and does not genuinely look to the Lord: therefore he deprives others of innocence and of looking to the Lord, and when he does this to himself he does it to the neighbor also. Institutions of education are the worst offenders in this stealing. It is also common that parents affect their children with this lack of innocence and lack of dependence on the Lord. Wherefore a man must beware lest his lack of innocence and lack of genuine belief in the Lord affect others especially the simple and children. Even if a man reads much in the Word, and speaks about it, still if his internal lacks innocence and reliance on the Lord he steals the goods and truths of others.

The sixth and seventh commandments, not to commit adultery and not to steal, in the spiritual sense have much in common. Both involve a separation of the internal from the external and a taking into ones own hand the external separation from the internal. The Lord said: "What God hath joined together let not man put assunder." Thus the breaking of both commandments involves a stealing from the Lord. But the sixth commandment refers primarily to good which is of the will, a stealing of loves which should be in the hands of the Lord. While the seventh commandment treats primarily of truths of the understanding, and of stealing the external of truths, taking them away from the Lord. Thus the truths become separated from their internal.

We read: "Amen, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber; but he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. I am the door; by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go

in and go out, and find pasture. The thief cometh not but that he may steal, and slay and destroy; I come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly. (John 10:1, 2, 8, 10). To enter by the door into the sheepfold denotes to enter by the Lord, for the Lord is the door, as He Himself says: the sheep are those who are in charity and thence in faith. These enter by the Lord when they acknowledge that from Him is everything of faith and charity, for then these flow in from Him. But to attribute them to others, especially to themselves, is to take them away, thus to slay and destroy. They who attribute to themselves what is the Lord's, also place merit in works, and make themselves justice. This then is stealing in the spiritual sense, and this comes to the angels in heaven when man reads in the Word about stealing, for the angels understand the Word only spiritually." (A.C. 8906)

Although we have been taught from the Word and from the Doctrine of the Church so often that all goods and truths are from the Lord with man, and are the Lord's and are therefore Divine; still we tend to continually consult our rational, and merit in our works, because we have no living faith in the Lord in His Divine Human. For a man is not saved by shunning the evils forbidden in the commandments once, but by shunning them daily, and particularly, by shunning them anew in the beginning every new state. Even the highest angels are not free of evil, wherefore the shunning of the evils forbidden in the commandments must be an eternal purification from the Lord.

AMEN