

The Growing Process

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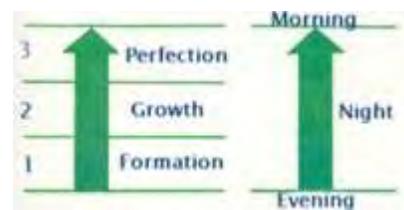
It is a universal principle that nothing begins existence in its completed, stable form; every living being achieves maturity through a process of growth and development. Mature human beings, with all their sophistication and multiple capabilities, start life as single fertilized cells, develop into the infant forms of a man or woman in the womb and then enter the larger world to grow to adulthood in a process that takes many years.



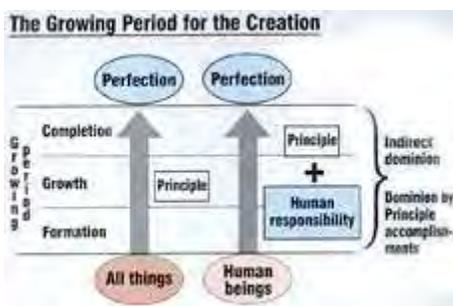
Three Stages of Growth

There are three fundamental stages in the growing period: formation, growth and completion. Only by completing three stages of growth can a being fulfill its proper place in the order of creation. The three stages are derived from the process

of creation itself, in which all things come into being through the three-step development of the four position foundation: (1) God originates all creations as the First Cause of all being; (2) God manifests as two divided but complementary entities, the subject and object; and (3) subject and object interact to produce a new oneness and a new creation.



The number three represents completion in the creation. Nature is divided into three kingdoms: animal, vegetable and mineral; the physical world exists in three primary states: solid, liquid and gas; the many hues that adorn the creation are derived from three primary colors: red, yellow and blue. In nature's three kingdoms the three stages of growth are apparent. For example, a plant begins life as a seed which contains the biological blueprint for the development of an oak tree, rose or cabbage. In the formation stage the seed sprouts into an initial form of the completed plant, in the growth stage it takes on the plant's mature form, and in the completion stage it produces seeds from which new plants spring, completing the cycle of growth.



The Growth of Human Beings

Because of their spiritual nature, the growth of human beings differs from that of other beings. As essentially spiritual beings endowed with free will, their growth is the result of interaction between the spirit and body, a process of development controlled by human will, according to God's principles of growth. The body passes through a cycle of growth that parallels that of certain animals, but just as the body grows, so too must the spirit.

Once the body has completed its work and dies, the invisible but mature spirit continues to exist in the non-physical realm. For humankind, the purpose of physical growth during the limited life span of the body is to enable development of the eternal human spirit.

Human beings grow from birth to maturity through a period of 21 years for a man, 18 for a woman. This period of growth has three stages of seven years each (six each for a woman): the formation stage in early childhood, the growth stage during school age and the perfection stage during adolescence. The body and spirit are meant to grow in tandem through these three stages to reach completion.

10	PERFECTION		
9		Divine Spirit	Unconditional Love
8	Completion stage	Divine Spirit	World
7			
6		Paradise	Mutual Love
5	Growth stage	Life Spirit	
4			
3		Form Spirit	World
2	Formation stage	Form Spirit	World
1			Self Love
			FALL

As the human body grows, the spirit grows in its ability to give and receive love. The child begins life heavily dependent on his or her parents, and during this stage the child's spirit develops through receiving parents' love. During school age, the child explores the realms of mutual love in relationships with brothers and sisters, friends and playmates. The spirit matures during adolescence up to the point where a person is ready to enter into the responsibilities, commitments and intimacy of conjugal love in marriage. Furthermore, the spirit also grows through stages in its relationship to God and transcendent purpose. To be fully mature, the spirit must respond perfectly to God's love and live by God's absolute standard of beauty, truth and goodness. He or she comes to feel God's heart of compassion for the suffering of others and seeks to devote his or herself to the welfare of others and

the world.

The Principles of Growth

Growth in the Physical Cosmos

The growth of humankind's natural environment is empowered autonomously, in accordance with the principles of creation. Given the elements required for growth, plants and animals pass through three stages of development to reach maturity, guided by natural laws created by God.

Animals and plants, lacking a spiritual nature, do not consciously participate in their own growing processes: God endowed their internal characters with instructions and instincts which guide them to fulfillment according to the purposes for which they were made. The same holds true for the physical bodies of human beings. Given the necessary elements, such as sunlight and air, food and drink, men and women grow naturally to full physical maturity, becoming physically capable of reproduction and exercising dominion over nature and all material things.



The Indirect Dominion of Law

Human beings are not only physical, however. They have a spiritual nature as well as a body, an inner being through which they are linked with God and other people. Since this internal mind of human beings governs their entire identity and life, its growth to maturity is ultimately more important than the growth of the physical body. What then is spiritual growth and how is it achieved?



Since humankind was made to receive and reciprocate God's love, the most important purpose for men and women is learning how to give and receive true love. Essentially, growth of the spirit is growth in capacity to give and receive pure love. This development of love is what enables men and women to resemble God fully and realize the three blessings. In the formation stage, a child begins this process by receiving and giving love with its parents and older brothers and sisters. The child expresses children's love in responding to the love it receives. As it grows, it learns to give and receive more in the intimate circle of its family,

complemented by loving relationships with relatives and friends, expanding the circle of love. Eventually, he or she develops the capacity for mutual love. On this foundation of fully mature love, a man and woman are prepared to enter into a relationship of conjugal love and take full responsibility for children, giving them unconditional parental love. The growth of love is accomplished in accordance with God's law.

Before individuals are fully mature, they must be guided by instructions from God so that they do not misuse their capacity to love. It is the role of parents to communicate the laws of true love to their children, through word and deed. Children who grow into men and women learning how to love according to God's principles live virtuous lives and fulfill the purpose of their creation. True parents are fully qualified to guide their children to maturity and fulfillment of the three blessings. In particular, the father and mother, with the wisdom and compassion of true parental love, know when a child has reached the level of maturity to enter into a relationship of conjugal love and become a parent, and can provide the best advice in selection of a spouse.



Love is a spontaneous expression of heart. It cannot be programmed into a person or forced from someone. It must be freely given and received. For this reason, God created human beings with the freedom to make conscious choices. Humans learn to give and receive true love by learning to make the right choices in life. Just as someone needs to study and internalize the rules of mathematics or language to become a master in those fields, so too an individual needs to master the rules of love to become mature in its practice. Once heart is perfected through this maturation process, all its expressions of love flow freely and spontaneously in accordance with the rules of true love.



Since God is the source of all love, the principles of true love are His creation and thus any expression of love in contradiction to His rules would be temporal and false. It is these laws, together with corrective instructions that are variously articulated by the world's religions, as, for example, in the Ten Commandments given to Moses, the Sermon on the Mount of Jesus and the Five Pillars of Islam in the teachings of Mohammed. All religious laws derive from one: human beings should not misuse - the love of God. Described metaphorically in both the Bible and the Koran, this is the only law God gave to the first man and woman, Adam and Eve. They were told they were free to enjoy the Garden of Eden in its entirety, with one caution: they were not allowed to partake of the fruit of a particular tree. This prohibition meant they were warned, at the cost of their lives, not to engage in illicit love. (A full explanation of these scriptural accounts is given in Chapter 7.)

The rules of love have to be articulated because people are born immature and have to pass through a learning process, guided by the laws of God, to reach maturity. Therefore, to cultivate true love and grow to completion, individuals must exercise their free will in obedience to the laws of God.

God's laws contain the instructions that people must follow to reach the goal of full maturity, but in starting life as infants, men and women cannot comprehend such laws and have no knowledge of God at all. For this reason, the role of parents is vital. Parents have to educate their children in the application of God's laws to personal behavior and life in general. Through parental discipline children learn how to grow in harmony with the principles of God's creation. Until men and women have completed the three stages of the growing period and become fully mature, they remain only partial images of God. This means that the communication between God and humanity during the growing period is limited by human immaturity, very much as the relationship between mature parents and their children is limited by the immaturity of the children. As the children grow in understanding and love, their relationship with their parents deepens and broadens. So it is with God and humankind.

The goal of human growth is to achieve oneness with God: full compatibility of heart and love. In that stage of being, true love will be perfected, all-embracing love in the image of God's true love, and human actions will be completely at one with God's will. To reach that goal, men and women must deliberately obey the word, or laws, of God. During the period of human growth, when God's control of human beings requires the mediation of His laws, individuals remain in the indirect dominion of God: they are not yet completely accessible and responsive to God.