

Excerpts on Marriage and Eternity

Four different aspects of Marriage and Eternity:

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New Church Teachings on Marriage

1. Excerpts from “Marriage in Heaven” by the Rev. Patrick A. Rose

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The New Church teaches that marriage is not limited to life in this world, but that ideally marriage will last and grow to all eternity. It is a beautiful teaching, confirming what many people instinctively feel—that true love is indeed everlasting. People in love talk about loving each other forever and ever. Songs and poetry speak of everlasting love. Even though, sadly, many marriages do not last a lifetime, let alone to eternity, still, the vision persists. There is a feeling and an inner recognition in most people that if love be true, it will never die. And this is of course the case. If marriage love is founded upon faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, that love will never diminish, but will last and will indeed grow and increase forever and ever.

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True happiness takes root only in the search for what is true, and in the doing of what is right. This is especially true of marriage. There can be no state of marriage after death without an understanding of and performance of our responsibilities here on earth. Married people must honor the vows upon which they entered, and respect them here on earth. As for single people, their marriage in the world to come will also depend upon their conduct and upon their meeting whatever responsibilities they may have here on earth.

Marriage in heaven, and not just marriage, but every other aspect of heavenly life, is primarily spiritual. It is based on the conjunction of good and truth—on living a good life according to the truth. There is no other heaven than this. If good and truth are conjoined within us here on earth, this conjunction will endure to all eternity in the other world. By our life in this world we will have been prepared for heaven. Here on this earth we will have been prepared to live in the happy state of marriage in heaven forever and ever.

2. Excerpts from “The Nature of Life After Death” by Rev. Ormond Odhner

There is marriage after death. Of all the new doctrines revealed in the Writings, this is at once the most startling and the most delightful. The reason is that every love follows a person after death, for love is the life of a person. The love of the opposite sex is the universal love of all, implanted in the soul itself, and descending therefrom through the mind into

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the body. A male is therefore a male after death, and the female is a female. From creation and even after death, everything in each of them urgently strives for conjunction of one with the other; and this inclination is the love of the opposite sex itself—the love that precedes conjugal love. Of all loves in man and woman, therefore, the love of the opposite sex remains the most certainly after death. (see *Conjugal Love* 46).

Thus it is that there is marriage in heaven for all those who, whether wedded or single on earth, have permitted the Lord to bless them with that genuine love of marriage which is love truly conjugal. And there is even something in place of marriage in hell; for in most of those who have no conjugal love, the love of the opposite sex still remains.

But now, let me ask, what is it that renders a marriage spiritual on earth? What is it that makes any particular marriage survive the death of the body? Does not the Lord answer this with His words, “No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven”? What takes a marriage up into heaven is what it has received from heaven here on earth. What is it? It is the fact that in marriage, after the wedding ceremony, genuine conjugal love has been built up between husband and wife, a real union of their minds...in the spiritual things of life.

There is only one safe rule to follow in marriage, and it is the only rule that can make marriage eternal. Indeed, it is by following this rule that we prepare ourselves for any heavenly marriage at all. That rule is, look to what is eternal in marriage. Look to what is eternal in your own marriage, believing that it will be eternal, casting aside all doubts, and striving to make your own marriage eternal in every way humanly possible.

Marriage in Heaven

3. Excerpts from “The Delights of Heavenly Marriage” by Rev. Chauncey Giles

No one grows old in heaven. Every one grows towards the perfection of life. Those who have lived together united in heart, and have grown old and become subject to the infirmities of age in this world, throw off all the infirmities when they pass into heaven, and grow towards a state of perpetual youth. They come into a glow and fullness of life and beauty that surpass everything of earth. They grow towards a state of ever-increasing perfection in outward form and inward state, and attain a peace and blessedness that words cannot express, nor our feeble minds conceive.

The wife will be to her husband the most beautiful and lovely of all the angels. He will see grace in every motion and harmony in every tone of her voice. She will be to him the perfect embodiment of his ideal; she will be his will clothed in its corresponding perfections and manifest to his senses in perfect form. The husband will be to the wife the most manly and noble of all the angels. He will be her understanding; the perfect form and expression of her thought. He will be her highest ideal of a man. So each one will find in the other the perfect complement of his or her own being. There will be no lack and no excess. No faculty or feature will be too much or too little pronounced. Husband and wife will have one will and one mind and one way. “The two shall be one.”

Every day will be fresh with a new life, and every new discovery will draw married partners closer together and awaken within them intenser and more profound delights.

Heavenly partners see the image of each other's thought and affection in everything without them. To the wife the image of the husband is seen in everything; to the husband the image of the wife is

seen in everything. It is not only when they look into each other's faces or hear each other's voices that their affections are awakened; their thoughts and affections and the inmost principles of their being blend in everything. Every object around them is indeed the expression of their thoughts and affections combined in one image. We can all understand how much this mutual recognition of each other's life must exalt and intensify their happiness. A book or a letter that one dear to us has written, a picture which a friend has painted, a natural object that has belonged to one we love, or a landscape we have looked upon together, excites the most lively interest and awakens the most painful or delightful emotions. How full and perfect must be the happiness of heaven, where every beautiful and lovely thing is as a perfect mirror in which each married partner beholds the interior thoughts and affections of the other.

But even this might not fully and forever satisfy all the wants of the soul. If there were no progress and no variety, even heavenly men and women might grow weary of each other. So the life of every angel is continually unfolding. Every parent knows what delight the unfolding faculties of a child awaken, and from this, some idea may be gained of the pleasant surprises that will continually awaken new interest in heaven. Beautiful and perfect as life maybe in any given state, new and more lovely scenes will continually open to the expanding mind; new discoveries of Divine truth will awaken new thoughts and affections, which will disclose profounder depths in the nature of husband or wife. Every day will be fresh with a new life, and every new discovery will draw married partners closer together and awaken within them intenser and more profound delights.

Such are the possibilities that lie before every man and every woman, whatever may be our condition or circumstances in this world. We have only to cherish those affections which constitute genuine marriage, and make its principles our own by making them the rule of daily life, and we shall become sharers in a heavenly marriage that will grow more intimate, more varied, more harmonious, more joyful and blissful forever.

Doing Our Part on Earth

4. Excerpts from Window to Eternity by Bruce Henderson

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Whatever your attitude now toward love and marriage, that will stay with you after death, too. Whether it is devoted to one partner, is searching for the ideal, or is lustful and wandering, it isn't going to change miraculously when you die, because that would change who you are. And just as

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love of the opposite sex in this life often goes from general attraction to a special love for just one, that progression continues after death to a more inward and spiritual love of just one person....

How we approach love and marriage in this life actually helps to determine our choice between heaven and hell. Real love leads to heaven and the promise of the greatest happiness we can know. The opposite—adultery and promiscuousness—leads to hell. To the degree that a person chooses adultery to the bonds of marriage, Swedenborg says, he inclines “to the deepest hell, where nothing exists that is not cruel and fearful. This kind of lot awaits adulterers after their life in this world.”...

[E]nduring happy relationships are the dream of many who have been in love. And such a love is the promise of heaven for anyone content to love just one partner and to love God. But Swedenborg warns that some who say they want this kind of love may be denying it to themselves by the choices they make in this life. They can deny it by indulging in adultery or things harmful to love. And they can deny it by dominating their spouse to the point that there is no love, only a master and servant relationship.

“A love of having one rule over the other” Swedenborg writes, “destroys completely both true marriage love and its heavenly delight.” That sense of delight depends on couples working together for each other’s happiness, not one taking advantage of the other. It is sharing that brings blessedness to marriage, and dominance that brings detachment between partners....

This does not mean that men and women with unhappy marriages in this life cannot aspire to the happiness of heavenly marriage, and someday find it. This is the real reward for those who may suffer at times in marriages that are less than ideal, but who believe in the sanctity of marriage and work to make the most of their own relationships. But realizing this dream will be harder for those who are used to putting themselves ahead of their partners. The more they do this, the more they also turn themselves away from heavenly marriage. The roles we freely choose to play on earth are the roles we will choose to follow in the other life, because that is how our love guides us....

The choice then between heavenly love or the torment of hell is ours to make on earth. Swedenborg consistently holds out the hope that no matter how much we may incline to hell at times, we can always turn to God and heaven. It has to be a serious commitment to mean anything. But with the promise of heaven and a marriage there so full of beauty and happiness, that should be inspiration enough in our lives.

One of the most heartwarming visions in the writings of Swedenborg is of a devoted couple growing old together in this world, then growing young together in heaven, with ever-deepening love. One of the brightest promises there is that such pure and joyous love awaits everyone who truly wants it and lives for it. And one of the saddest scenarios is of the man driven by lust for personal pleasure who finds none in his eternal life, because he has not learned that the essence of love is giving and that the essence of heaven is love.

5. Excerpts from “An Eternal Perspective” by Rev. Brian Keith

An eternal perspective is vital in our attitudes towards marriage. If we view it only in terms of romance or the joy of living with another, arguments or times when the inner love is not felt could be taken as a signal the relationship should be ended. Indeed, if marriage is thought of as simply something of this world then most couples will not struggle through the difficulties to reap the rewards of joy later on.

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But where there is a firm belief that the basis for genuine marriage love is in two people forming one human being over the course of a lifetime here and in the next world, there is a strength to face and eventually overcome the frustrations and difficulties inherent in any relationship. This belief also sets the stage for a couple to share their most intimate feelings and thoughts. Trust can develop and grow because they have a special relationship that will never come to an end.

When Your Partner Dies

6. Excerpt from *Dove at the Window* by Vera P. Glenn

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A true marriage binds two together in body, mind, and soul and is the strongest human bond of love there is, lasting to eternity. When one partner dies, the physical tie disperses, which brings grief. But we are assured that the spirit of the one gone before remains with the person still on earth, and that they will be reunited when they meet in the spiritual world.

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7. Excerpts From “When My Husband Died” by Donnette Alfelt

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Conjugal Love is not a place or accomplished goal but a process and intention. Those who truly wish for Conjugal Love are somewhere on this path. We are all capable of this love starting where we are. Doubts and fears attack us when we are vulnerable, but we are assured that the Lord will lead and protect us if we turn to Him.

No marriage can be perfected without change, and the death of our spouse is a big change. We have teachings that promise an eternal relationship, but during periods of grief and loneliness we may find ourselves struggling to relate to some of the teachings we are blessed with. As in any other stage of marriage there is work to be done, struggles and temptations to deal with.

The death of our spouse was not a divine punishment or error. God would not have allowed this painful separation unless good could come of it. There must be a purpose that can lead to greater happiness for both partners or it would not have been permitted. Trusting that this is so can help us to look for and work with this purpose. Those of us still on earth can find ways to advance our marriages and prepare for a reunion with our partners.

There is no marriage that can't be better than it is and we as widows and widowers have as much opportunity as anyone else to work to improve ours. The time will come when we will be fully reunited. In the meantime our partners are and will continue to be with us. They are part of who we are, what we think and where we are going.

We are always close to those we truly love and we can always become even closer.

Remembering times when my husband was alive but out of town or even just at work, it is easy to remember how his spirit “dwelled” with me during his absence. Part of this was “collecting” the day’s experiences in preparation for sharing or conferring with him about them when he returned. But it was, and is, also a knowledge that he was part of me—part of how I looked at, planned for and dealt with all of the things that make up daily living.

Losing a loved one does not mean that love goes away. While we may miss the physical presence acutely, we gradually come to the realization that the person we love is still present with us. Although we long to touch and see the body that contained the person we love, it becomes more and more clear that the body we miss is much less substantial than the love. We have all had the experience of being profoundly touched by others without any physical contact This is the real meaning of being close to someone. We are always close to those we truly love and we can always become even closer.