

LOVE TRULY CONJUGIAL

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Falling in love is a rather common occurrence. So is getting married. Both are so common, in fact, that they clearly are things that evil people, as well as good people, do. Falling in love and getting married can be things of genuine spiritual good, and are such, if the persons involved are being regenerated; and it is also undoubtedly true that of all the events in a person's life, these two things, falling in love and getting married, can do more than any others to inspire him toward a life of genuine good. But they do not, by themselves, give anyone a marriage of love truly conjugal. That comes only to the husband and wife who, loving each other, willingly strive to learn to do the Lord's will together. It takes a lifetime at least to attain it, and not even in heaven is it ever infinitely perfect.

Every man and woman, when they first get married, enter into a state so happy, so full of joy and delight, that it is actually what it seems to be—a taste of heaven on earth. (Exceptions to that statement are hard to imagine.) But with almost every man and woman on earth today this so-called "honeymoon state" gradually, almost imperceptibly, comes to an end, to be succeeded by a variety of states, some of them hardly delightful at all, some of them perhaps even more delightful than the first.

That much almost all of us can expect. But with very, very many this change of states becomes much more serious. The state of little delight may deepen into a total lack of delight, a state of absolute undelight and unhappiness. Love, once so wonderful, has gone away. A feeling of downright cold toward the partner may ensue, tending toward indifference and even to contempt and loathing. All that was real and so very, very beautiful in the marriage seems at an end.

But for a New Church person this cannot be the end, and for him—the Lord he praised!—it need not be the end at all. The truths given at the Second Coming simply will not allow him to call his marriage off, just because love has gone away; and exactly those same truths point out to him the way that he may tread in order that love and all its heavenly delights may return in fuller measure than ever was the case before.

Love truly conjugal is the fundamental of all heavenly loves with people, and into it are gathered all delights and joys from first to last. But love truly conjugal does not originate in any person. Pre-eminently, it is a love that is from the Lord alone with angels and with people. It is a heavenly love, and as with all heavenly loves, it inflows into a person from the Lord, through heaven, if the recipient vessel of life, which is a person, is in an orderly form.

That is the reason for the supreme delights of the honeymoon state in marriage. They are not some mystical loan from the Lord, temporarily given as a promise of things that can come. They simply are, *and they actually are*, the genuine joys and delights of heaven flowing into the newly married couple because they are then in a state to receive them. They flow into them because they have, at that time, consciously devoted their whole love to—concentrated the whole of their love—upon their married partner only. That is a heavenly form of order, and therefore heavenly love and its delights flow into it.

The same teachings apply to states of cold in marriage. The honeymoon state is over. Love and its delights have ebbed away and then returned. But now love has gone away, and the beautiful reality of the marriage seems at an end.

But why? And why is the New Church person not allowed to conclude that this really is the end? 'Why must he work, instead, for the return of love (barring, of course, such foul evils in the partner as adultery or the unbridled lust of dominion)?

True love has gone for one single reason. The recipient form of life, which a person is, is no longer in a state receptive of the things of heaven. That is why love and its delights have ceased to inflow. Evil has again raised its head and become dominant in some aspect of his life—that aspect need not be directly concerned with marriage or even with sex. Evil dominant anywhere will cause inflowing heavenly life to recoil and withdraw, in order to protect itself, lest it be sullied, profaned, and destroyed.

Hence it is that a state of cold in marriage is no go ahead signal for separation and divorce. Rather is it a warning signal—a great, huge, red warning-flag—that a person had better stop in his tracks and practice some serious self-examination, to be followed immediately by repentance from evils then discovered. Love has gone away, love has ceased to inflow, not because of the faults they see in their married partner, real or imaginary; love has ceased to inflow because of evil dominant in themselves.

Let them, then, do what the Writings tell them they can do and must: Reform the externals of their life; cast out from their deeds and words and conscious thoughts and conscious delights all those evils which, as sins, separate them from God. Love will then return, in fuller measure than ever before—love, and all its delights—not simply as a temporary loan from the Lord, but as the beginning of love truly conjugal, flowing into them from the Lord and opening for them the eternal gates of heaven.