

The Opposition to True Marriage Love

Excerpted from a sermon by Rev. Andrew M.T. Dibb

In the Heavenly Doctrines for the New Church we are taught that conjugal love or true marriage love is so rare at this day that people hardly even know it exists. As part of the teachings about marriage the doctrine speaks of an opposing love, called “licentious love” which is a love of adultery (see *Conjugal Love* 423).

If true conjugal love begins in giving oneself to another—soul, mind and body—then licentious love begins in selfishness. Adultery is an act of selfishness. It gratifies the body and the lower levels of our minds, but it does not build up a person’s spirit. The Lord did not say “You shall not commit adultery” because He wanted to spoil people’s fun, but because when people have adulterous relationships they harm their own spiritual lives and bring unhappiness and pain to others around them. When a person commits adultery, he or she effectively says, “I don’t care about my partner. My own wants are more important to me than my husband or wife is.” Marriage cannot be built on that kind of foundation, with the result that it falters and eventually dissolves.

The book, *Conjugal Love*, tells us that marriage love is pure, clean and holy above all loves, and that the Lord gathers all human joy possible into it. From this we can see that licentious love is impure, because it originates in the selfish impurities we should be trying to get rid of in the process of regeneration or spiritual rebirth, but to which the adulterer clings. Similarly, adultery is unclean because rather than seeking the noble goal of uniting two people to form an image of the Lord, it looks only to the gratification of the senses. Finally, conjugal love is holy, because the Lord can fill it with the whole of His love and wisdom. Licentious love is empty—there is no love in adultery except selfish love, and there is no wisdom but foolishness.

Human beings are capable of reaching the highest heights of the Lord’s heavenly kingdom or the lowest depths of hell. In the final analysis our resting place is the result of our own choosing. The Lord lays before us the wonder and ideals of conjugal love, and our own inclination toward evil gives us an opposing view. We can serve God or we can serve ourselves. The choice is our own. But before we make that choice we need to understand the outcome. One path leads to heaven the other to hell. We need to weigh up the value of momentary pleasure against eternal happiness.