

What is it to Share Religion in Marriage?

A Paper for the Council of the Clergy

February 1999

By the Rev. Kenneth J. Alden

Abstract: "What is it to Share Religion in Marriage?" The paper looks at the "hard sayings" in *AC* 8998, *HH* 378 and *CL* 242 which say that marriages between those of different religions are heinous in the sight of heaven, that no truly conjugal love is possible between those of different religions, that such marriages are illicit, and that they cause interior cold in marriage. These are hard sayings because so many people come to us to officiate at their weddings who appear, at least nominally, to be of different religions, and because so many couples in our congregations appear to remain distinct in regard to their religion. How does a priest make his own the attitude of the heavens toward marriages on earth and then represent that attitude to others?

The other message of those same passages is to restore the beautiful ideal of love truly conjugal which comes about when religion is shared in marriage. This message is the hope for the marriages of the next generation, and ought to form a central part of their thinking as they come of marriageable age and begin courting. It is also the hope for all people who are in the church, regardless of how the state of their shared religion appears to them.

The paper examines the passages in some detail, addressing such questions as "What does 'heinous' mean?" "What is meant by 'different religions'?" "How diverse is 'diverse'?" The goals of the study are to 1) try to understand these 'hard sayings' so that we are not being unnecessarily hard on people nor wishing-away bitter but vital points of doctrine, since either will impede the reception of love truly conjugal by the church; 2) try to find ways to encourage people looking to marriage or teaching those looking to marriage to make the sharing of religion in marriage the most important activity and a key part of the process of courtship and betrothal; and 3) offer hope to those who are already married and who recognize an outward or inward deficiency in the sharing of religion in marriage (i.e., potentially all of us!)

Wonderful but Still Rare

What a wonderful God we have! The Lord created us because He loves us, and His love is such that He wishes to be conjoined with us and to bless us! (*Cf. TCR* 43) As some angels said, "Who cannot see that into some love have been gathered all the blessings, felicities and delights that could ever be conferred by the Lord, and that their receptacle is truly conjugal love?" (*CL* 534) Because at this day this love "is so rare that people do not know what it is like, and scarcely that it exists" (*CL* 57), the Lord has revealed to us this love and its nature, together with the other truths of His Second Advent. This revelation restores the possibility of being conjoined with our loving God and being blessed by Him in an exalted way. We have in the teachings of truly conjugal love a wonderful invitation from the Lord to enter into the fullest blessings that He offers.

What a mess we have made of God's gifts! Promiscuity before marriage, adultery, unhappy marriages, and divorce are all too common both in our culture and in our church. The hells, of course, are behind this. They love to break up marriages. (*HH* 488) As a culture, and on many fronts, as a church, we appear to be losing the war against them. A great number of children are growing up as casualties of this war. They fear commitments. They avoid marriage. They distrust the other sex. The Lord's great gift of truly conjugal love, although on the lips of the people of the church, appears at times to be just as rare and unknown as ever. What went wrong? What do we do now?

Josiah must have been asking "What went wrong" when Hilkiah the priest, in the course of repairing the temple, found the Book of the Law in the house of Jehovah, and Shaphan read it before the king! Imagine! The Lord's Word--lost in the temple for who-knows-how-many years? Josiah tore his clothes when he heard of the wrath of Jehovah that was described in that book concerning the very kinds of disobedience that was rampant in his

day. He knew what to do, though. Josiah had the book publicly read and made a covenant before Jehovah to keep His commandments, testimonies and statutes with all his heart and soul, and to perform the words of the covenant in the Book of the Law. "And all the people took their stand for the covenant." Following this, Josiah instituted sweeping reforms throughout the country. (See *2 Kings* 22, 23)

And what, concerning marriage, is in the "Book of the Law" that graces our homes and temples?

Religion and Marriage Go Hand in Hand

Some of the most important teachings about truly conjugal love are those that deal with the connection between truly conjugal love and religion. Truly conjugal love, after all, "originates from the marriage between good and truth" and "there is a correspondence between this love and the marriage of the Lord and the church." (CL 57) Because of this origin and correspondence, truly conjugal love is more celestial, more spiritual, holier, purer, and cleaner than any other love which exists with the people of the church. (Cf. CL 57) It is not surprising, then, to find that "no others come into this love and no others can be in it but those who go to the Lord and love the truths of the church and do the good things it teaches." (CL 57) An angel once explained: "The human inclination towards marriage goes hand in hand with religion at every step. Every little step and every stride away from religion or towards religion is also a step or stride away from or towards the conjugal inclination that is peculiar and proper to a Christian person." (CL 80:2) We can do much to promote our own happiness in marriage, and that of the people of the church, by reflecting on, speaking about, and bringing into life the connection between religion and marriage.

These teachings about conjugal love are wonderful ideals! They are beautiful promises of what is possible. They are positive statements of what gifts the Lord can give and how He gives them. And yet the Lord has also chosen to state the same truths in a way that can seem frightening and abhorrent to us. He phrases them in such a way that we might well join Josiah in tearing his clothes! Just listen to what it says in *Arcana Coelestia* 8998!

...the case is that those who have been born within the church, and from infancy have been imbued with the principles of the truth of the church, ought not to contract marriages with those who are outside of the church, and have thus been imbued with such things as are not of the church. The reason is that there is no conjunction between them in the spiritual world, for every one in that world is in consociation according to his good and the truth thence derived; and as there is no conjunction between such in the spiritual world, neither ought there to be any conjunction on earth. For regarded in themselves marriages are conjunctions of dispositions and of minds, the spiritual life of which is from the truths and goods of faith and of charity. On this account moreover marriages on earth between those who are of a different religion are accounted in heaven as heinous, and still more so marriages between those who are of the church and those who are outside of the church. This also was the reason why the Jewish and Israelitish nation was forbidden to contract matrimony with the Gentiles (*Deut.* vii. 3, 4), and why it was absolutely heinous to commit whoredom with them (*Num.* xxv. 1-9). (AC 8998)

What have we done? What have I done? Have I really stressed this teaching strongly enough when counseling couples who are nominally not of the same religion, but who come to me to be married?

After the shock from the starkness of this teaching subsides, we can collect our thoughts and say to ourselves, "Religion is an interior state. I cannot judge whether two people are interiorly of different religions or not. Besides, I can list a number of couples in which the partner who was not New Church either joined the church later in life, or who attend regularly and support all the life of the church." But the nagging question still comes

up, “Why did the Lord choose such *strong* language? Why did He have to say “*heinous*”?

Wrestling with Doubts About the Doctrine

One of the reasons passages such as *Arcana Coelestia* 8998 are “hard sayings” is that they present us with something that challenges common practice and experience. Are all those marriages of people we know who are of different religions really “heinous”? Maybe it doesn’t really say “heinous” and it is just a bad translation. Maybe the marriages we know of are not really of “different” religions, and the people are really broadly of the same religion--or at least are inwardly so, although they don’t say so outwardly. Maybe they are really of the same religion, although they adhere to different churches. Maybe the fiancée of that young man really wasn’t “imbued” with the falsities of the church she grew up in, or the young man wasn’t imbued with the truths of the New Church. Maybe it’s alright to select a lesser level of conjugal love than “truly conjugal love.”

How Heinous is “Heinous”?

It is not the objective of this study to make people squirm and feel uncomfortable, but rather to explore what the Lord says about sharing religion in marriage, and to try to understand it so that we can teach what the Lord intends, lead to the good He wants us to receive, and to lead away from the evils which destroy the happiness that the Lord longs to impart. Let’s begin by taking a close look at some key terms.

The word that Potts translates “heinous” in the standard Swedenborg Foundation translation, Elliot renders a bit more gently: “in heaven marriages on earth between people of different religions are thought to be detestable, and especially those between members of the Church and people outside the Church.” The underlying Latin word is “*nefandus*” which is related to “*nefarius*” and is found in Potts’ Concordance under “Wicked.” Chadwick’s Lexicon defines *nefandus* as “Unspeakably horrible, atrocious”. Here are some examples of other ways in which the words *nefas* and *nefandus* are used in the Heavenly Doctrine:

And therefore when these persons come into the other life, which takes place immediately after death, and external things are taken away from them, they rush headlong into every wickedness (*omne nefas*) in accordance with their interiors, such as contempt of others in comparison with themselves, enmity, hatred, revenge, rage, cruelty, and also into hypocrisy, fraud, deceit, and many other kinds of wickedness (*et plura quae sunt malitiae*). These are then the delights of their life. (AC 10745)

...But it was given me to tell him that adulteries are heinous (*Adulteria sint nefanda*), even though, before the eyes of such men, because of the delight which they experience and of the persuasion therefrom, they do not seem to be such.... (CL 481, Retold from HH 385 which uses similar wording)

In these examples, we see that we may have experienced some states of evil that may be described as “heinous” if we have felt hatred, rage, or the other forms of wickedness mentioned in AC 10745. But it is remarkable that the Lord would choose the same word to describe marriages between people of different religions, as He chose to use concerning adulteries! Do we risk officiating at something as wicked as adultery if we officiate at a marriage between people who appear to be of different religions?

How Different is “Different”?

Both Potts and Elliot choose to render “*diversae religionis*” as “different religions”. Perhaps “different” does not render the meaning strongly enough. Chadwick’s lexicon gives the meaning of “*diversus*” as “Different one from the other, various, diverse”, and Potts’ Concordance renders it “diverse”. So now we wonder, “How diverse is “diverse”?

One could look to *Conjugal Love* for a definitive statement about diversity with respect to marriage. There we find this statement:

There is an infinite variety of all things, and also an infinite diversity. By varieties is here meant the variety that exists among things of the same genus or species, and also among the genera and species themselves; and by diversities is here meant the diversity between things which are opposite. Our idea of the distinction between varieties and diversities can be illustrated by the following: The angelic heaven, which coheres together as a one, consists in infinite variety, no one there being absolutely like another, either as to soul and mind or as to affections, perceptions and thoughts therefrom, or as to inclinations and intentions therefrom, or as to the tone of the voice, as to face, body, gesture, walk, and many other things. And yet, though they are myriads of myriads, they have been and are being arranged by the Lord into a single form in which there is complete unanimity and concord. This would not be possible unless all the angels, being so various, were led universally and individually by one. This then is what we mean here by varieties. By diversities we mean the opposites of these varieties, these [2] being in hell; for the spirits there, are one and all diametrically opposite to those who are in heaven. Hell, which consists of them, is held together as a one by varieties which among themselves are wholly contrary to the varieties in heaven; thus by perpetual diversities. From these illustrations, it is evident what is meant by infinite variety, and what by infinite diversity. It is the same with marriages, in that there are infinite varieties with those who are in conjugal love, and infinite varieties with those who are in scortatory love, and hence infinite diversities between the latter and the former. (CL 324)

Here, variety pertains to differences among angels in heaven, and diversity pertains to differences among spirits in hell. This definition, however, may not apply universally outside of this passage, for it says, “By varieties is *here* meant...and by diversities is *here* meant...” In fact, a number of passages use “*diversus*” or “*diversitas*” to describe the variety in heaven. Here are some examples:

Little children have various dispositions (*diversa indole*), some that of the spiritual angels and some that of the celestial angels. Those who are of a celestial disposition are seen in that heaven to the right, and those of a spiritual disposition to the left.... (HH 333)

It has been stated that the angels dwell separate from each other; some in the eastern quarter, some in the western, some in the southern, and some in the northern; and that those who dwell in the eastern quarter are in a higher degree of love; those in the western, in a lower degree of love; those in the southern, in the light of wisdom; and those in the northern, in the shade of wisdom. This diversity of dwelling-places (*Illa habitationum diversitas*) appears as though it were from the Lord as a sun, when, in fact it is from the angels..... (DLW 124)

Take also as an example the fact that in the other life it is according to order that states of affection and thought cause the idea of place and distance; and that the inhabitants appear distant from one another, so far as they are in a diverse state. This order is from the Divine, to the intent that all who are in the Grand Man may be distinct from one another.... (AC 7337:3)

As regards truth in an accommodated form, be it known that when truth Divine descends through the heavens to men, as the Word has descended, it is on the way accommodated to all,... Nay, in the heavens themselves it is in diverse forms (*diversis formis*), in one form in the inmost or third heaven, in another form in the middle or second heaven, and in still another in the first or ultimate heaven. The form of truth Divine, that is, the perception, thought, and utterance of it, in the inmost or third heaven, so transcends that in the middle or second heaven, that in this heaven it cannot be apprehended, it is so Divine and exalted... (AC 8920:2)

In spite of the examples above which show “diversity” in heaven, “*diversus*” or “*diversitas*” are also often used in *Arcana Coelestia* to describe things that are apparently

as opposite as good and evil.

...That diverse affections are signified, is because it is oxen (by which the affections are signified) which injure each other; for things which are diverse injure each other, but not things which are not diverse. (AC 9090)

....If therefore there are two truths which do not live from the same general affection, but from diverse affections, they must needs be dissipated, for they are in collision with each other. And when truths are dissipated, their affections also are dissipated; for there is a general affection under which all the truths with a man are associated together. This general affection is good. This is all that can be told about what is signified in the internal sense by the oxen of two men, one of which strikes the other so that he dies, the living ox then being sold, and the silver divided, and also the dead ox. (AC 9094:3)

In what sense, then, are “diverse” religions diverse? In the sense of heavenly varieties? Or in the sense of the evils and falsities belonging to the human proprium? The following passage, because it is concerning the Lord’s kingdom on earth, would suggest that “diverse” means a kind of distant variety among those who look to the Lord.

But as regards the Lord's kingdom on earth, that is, His church, the case is that inasmuch as it has its doctrinal things from the literal sense of the Word, it cannot but be various and diverse (*varia et diversa*) in respect to these doctrinal things that is to say, one society will profess one thing to be a truth of faith, because it is so said in the Word, and another society will profess another thing, also because it is so said; and so on. Consequently, as the Lord's church has its doctrinal things from the literal sense of the Word, it will everywhere differ (*differat*), and this not only as to societies, but sometimes as to the individuals in a society. Nevertheless a difference (*dissensus*) in the doctrinal things of faith does not prevent the church from being one, provided there is unanimity as to willing well and doing well. (AC 3451:2)

The diversity here described is the result of viewing the literal sense of the Word from a state of obscurity. This obscurity can also be described as “thick darkness” as in this passage:

To take another example: they who are of the spiritual church say that faith is the only means of salvation, even without charity and its goods. This they believe because the church says so,.... From this also it is plain in what obscurity, or in what thick darkness, the spiritual church is. And because they are in this thick darkness they divide the church into as many churches as there are diverse doctrines (*diversae doctrinae*) concerning the truths of faith; which they would not do if they were in light. (AC 8928:3)

In the above two passages, the people described appear to be heaven-bound, in spite of their obscurity and the falsity of belief that makes their religions so diverse as to doctrine and belief. I believe this diversity of goods and truths is what is meant in *Arcana Coelestia* 8998. This conclusion is corroborated by *Heaven and Hell* 378, which, incidentally, footnotes AC 8998.

Nor can marriage love exist between two partners belonging to different religions (*diversa religione*), because the truth of the one does not agree with the good of the other; and two unlike and discordant (*dissimilia et discordantia*) kinds of good and truth cannot make one mind out of two; and in consequence the love of such does not have its origin in any thing spiritual. (HH 378)

Clearly, it is dissimilar and discordant kinds of good and truth that are described, not evils and falsities (although we may well imagine, based on the passages quoted above, that it is something from the people or angels that introduces the diversity, and not something from the Lord). Although the diversity between religions is not so great that the Lord cannot make one church or one heaven out of such people where there is unanimity of willing well

and doing well (AC 3451:2), it is too great to make one mind out of them. The passage from *Heaven and Hell* continues:

If they live together in harmony it is solely on natural grounds.¹ And this is why in the heavens marriages are found only with those who are in the same society (*intra societatem sunt*), because such are in like good and truth and not with those outside of the society. It may be seen above (n. 41, seq.) that all there in a society are in like good and truth, and differ from those outside the society. This was represented in the Israelitish nation by marriages being contracted within tribes, and particularly within families, and not outside of them. (HH 378)

¹Marriages between those of different religions are not permissible, because there can be no conjunction of like good and truth in the interiors (n. 8998). (HH 378 footnote)

Once again, we see that the diversity is of the kind that exists among angels. Angels from different societies, it would appear, are too diverse as to good and truth, to make one mind.

A Contradiction?

If marriages are found only within the same society, why does *Conjugal Love* speak as though it is common-place for spouses to come from different societies?

When they come to this age, they are given in marriage. This is provided by the Lord and is celebrated in the heaven where the young man dwells; but immediately after the marriage, the latter follows his wife to her heaven, or, if they are in the same society, to her house.... (CL 411)

It is well-known from the Heavenly Doctrine that children growing up on this earth and in the heavens change their states in general and particular. These changes of state take them, spiritually, into the different quarters of the spiritual world. (E.g. TCR 476, CL 261, cp. HH 514) Perhaps this changing of states, and presumably of societies during formative periods accounts for the teaching above concerning those growing up in heaven. (Another way to reconcile CL 411 with HH 378, is to suppose that some angels, at least, belong to more than one society. For example, the societies of celestial angels which are composed "mostly of the female sex" must have husbands! Perhaps they or their husbands live in one society and "commute" to another society for work. (AC 2302, SE 4169, cp. AC 2303, 5052, 5054, CL 410) If a husband and wife work in different societies, we can infer from *Conjugal Love* 411 that once they are married, they both reside in the wife's society.)

Will Love Conquer All? Is Willing Well and Doing Well Enough to Make Two People of the Same Religion?

The Heavenly Doctrine at times distinguishes "religion" from "church." Religion relates more to life, and church to doctrine, as we see in this definitive passage:

It is said the truth of the church and the good of religion, because the church is one thing and religion is another. The church is called a church from doctrine, and religion is called religion from a life according to doctrine. All doctrine is called truth, and also its good is truth because it only teaches it; but the all of life according to the things which doctrine teaches, is called good, likewise to do the truths of doctrine is good. This is the distinction between the church and religion. But yet where there is doctrine and not life, there it cannot be said that there is either the church or religion, because doctrine regards life as one with itself, just like truth and good, faith and charity, wisdom and love, understanding and will, wherefore where there is doctrine and not life, there is no church. (AR 923)

In the passages which warn against marriages of diverse religion, the term "religion" is consistently used. It would be a mistake, however, to interpret this usage to mean that living a good life, by itself, is all-important and constitutes oneness in religion, and that doctrine is unimportant. In the passage above, it actually says that religion is called religion from a life

“according to doctrine.” The inclusion of doctrine with life in the term “religion” is borne out in one of the most-quoted passages in the Heavenly Doctrine:

ALL RELIGION IS OF THE LIFE, AND THE LIFE OF RELIGION IS TO DO THAT WHICH IS GOOD.

Every man who has religion knows and acknowledges that he who leads a good life is saved, and that he who leads an evil life is damned; for he knows and acknowledges that the man who lives aright thinks aright, not only about God but also about his neighbor; but not so the man whose life is evil. *The life of man is his love, and that which he loves he not only likes to be doing, but also likes to be thinking.* The reason therefore why we say that the life is to do that which is good is that *doing what is good acts as a one with thinking what is good, for if in a man these two things do not act as a one, they are not of his life.* (Life 1. emphasis mine)

For a husband and wife to share a religion in marriage, they must not only share “doing that which is good,” they must also share “life according to doctrine.” They must share “thinking what is good.” They will love to be thinking together, not just doing together. Just as good and truth are not good and true when separated from each other, so religion and the church, although distinguishable, ought not to be separated in application. In some ways, the term “religion” is the term that includes more in it than “church” does, since it has to do with life according to doctrine. But as the following passage shows, the term “church” properly involves the marriage of good and truth, and is also an inclusive term.

And since with Christians, the Church, which is formed by the truth of doctrine, and religion, which is formed by the good of life according to the truth of doctrine, are solely from the Sacred Scripture, it is evident that the Church in general and in particular is the marriage of good and truth.... (CL 115:4)

Returning, now, to *Arcana Coelestia* 8998, we find that it indeed uses both terms, “church” and “religion” to make the same point: diversity of either one in marriage is contrary to order. The passage began:

The case is that those who have been born within the church, and from infancy have been imbued with the principles of the truth of the church, ought not to contract marriages with those who are outside of the church, and have thus been imbued with such things as are not of the church. The reason is that there is no conjunction between them in the spiritual world, for every one in that world is in consociation according to his good and the truth thence derived; and as there is no conjunction between such in the spiritual world, neither ought there to be any conjunction on earth (AC 8998)

When has Someone Been Imbued with Principles of Truth?

Those who have been born within the church are the ones with whom it is possible to be “imbued” (*imbuo*) with the principles of truth from infancy. According to Chadwick’s lexicon, “*imbuo*” means “to absorb mentally, become steeped in.” One passage speaks of being imbued with remains during infancy and with truths as he grows up. (AC 1906). Another passage indicates that one must *live* according to truths before they are imbued. (AC 3762:2) Yet another passage says that the truths of faith are only imbued if one is in the life of charity. (AC 4776:2) Just how much integration with our lives is implied by “*imbuo*” may be seen from the following passage where it is translated “habitual”:

As affections and thoughts are simply changes in the state of the forms of the mind, it follows that memory is nothing else than a permanent state of these changes. For all changes and variations of state in organic substances are such that once they have become habitual they are permanent. Thus the lungs are habituated to produce various sounds in the trachea, to vary them in the glottis, to articulate them in the tongue, and to modify them in the mouth; and when once these organic activities have become habitual such sounds are in the organs and can be reproduced. That these changes and variations are infinitely more perfect in the organs of the mind than in those of the body is evident from what has

been said in the treatise *the Divine Love and Wisdom* (n. 199-204) (*DP* 279:9)

This passage, in addition to clarifying the meaning of “imbue,” also reminds us that the states of good and truth in a person are states of the spiritual organs of the mind. Someone who has been imbued with the principles of the truth of the church, has them written into his habits of thought, and possibly written on his heart in some fashion. They are part of him in some sense. Someone who has been imbued with such things as are not of the church would be someone who habitually thinks in other ways which disagree with the principles of the church, and possibly, someone who has these inscribed on his heart. They are probably not the same as the gentiles who in the other life “easily receive truths, and are imbued with them” (*HH* 321) and who “are easily imbued with faith.” (*AC* 1032:3) These gentiles, like infants, have probably not been imbued with principles of falsity. (*Cf.* *AC* 1802:3)

Can we choose our own level of conjugal love?

We have seen that those who have been imbued with principles of the truth of the church enter into a marriage which is accounted heinous in heaven when they marry someone of diverse religion. Why doesn't it say “less than ideal” instead of “heinous”? Is it wicked to choose less than the best?

The example of Lot comes to mind. He was urged to flee to the mountains, but was allowed to stay at Zoar instead. One cannot help but wonder if he might not have ended up fathering his daughters' sons if he had followed the angels to the mountains to begin with. (*Cf.* *Gen* 19, *AC* 2419, 2425, 2428, 2459, 2460)

And what about the widow or widower who was in truly conjugal love and who has no inclination to remarry because the spirit of the deceased dwells continually with the spirit of the one not yet deceased? We read:

If, after the death of the partner, they contract something like marriage, it is done for reasons apart from conjugal love, and these reasons are all external, such as: If there are small children in the house and provision must be made for the care of them; if the house is large and provided with servants of both sexes; if forensic occupations withdraw the mind from family affairs in the home; if mutual aid and services are necessities; and other like reasons. (*CL* 321)

Here is a marriage in outward form that is not a marriage interiorly. There seems to be no intention of making a marriage between the minds of the husband and wife. Why is there no hint that such a likeness-to-marriage might be regarded as heinous in heaven? or as illegitimate? (*Cf.* *AC* 9182:2, quoted below on p. 15) Assuming that such a likeness-to-marriage is commendable on account of the external reasons and the uses being served, why is it that widows and widowers are free to choose a second marriage which is “less than ideal”? What about a single person who has all but given up hope of finding a partner with whom he or she can share religion in marriage? If he or she decides to marry for external reasons and wed someone of diverse religion, why is that marriage branded “heinous”?

The fact that the contract is for “something like marriage” suggests that the parties contracting the second marriage have it clear in their minds that the arrangement is for the sake of serving certain uses. Note that “desire for more children” is not listed as one of the reasons for a second marriage in this case, as it was in the case of those seeking remarriage who had not already had truly conjugal love. (*Cf.* *CL* 319) In the absence of truly conjugal love in the second marriage, perhaps the second marriage lacks the end or purpose of conjugal love, and so procreation is not a reason for the second marriage. Perhaps in this second marriage, the bed is not shared, or is shared as with a concubine.

In the case of the second marriage following a marriage of truly conjugal love there is a

view to following through on the ends of the first marriage. In this sense, truly conjugal love from the first marriage is the governing principle in the second relationship. As help is needed to accomplish the ends of the first marriage, it is likely that the most suitable person to serve in the duties of caring for small children, instructing servants, or supporting one's occupation would be someone of the same religion, for they would best understand what the uses at hand require. If, with the Jewish and Israelitish nation it was "absolutely heinous to commit whoredom with [Gentiles]" (AC 8998) one can wonder if any relationship from marriage, to taking a mistress before marriage, to the opposite--committing adultery--was worse if done with someone of another religion.

In the case of someone who has all-but-given-up on finding a suitable partner, it would seem that if loneliness, or the need for help in uses, or the desire for children were inclining them to "lower their criteria" and pursue a less-than-ideal relationship, the person should nevertheless remain firm in the criteria of "shared religion." If similitudes in matters of religion are made secondary, there is the danger of mimicking the evils of the antediluvians, when "the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose." (Gen 6:2) This signifies the doctrinal things of faith conjoining themselves with cupidities, "in fact with any cupidities whatever." (AC 569) This kind of thing is described as something which is common at this day:

Those who persuade themselves in regard to any subject, confirm themselves in such persuasion by everything which they imagine to be true, even by what they find contained in the Word of the Lord; for while they cling to principles which they have received, and have become persuaded of, they make everything favor and assent to them. And the more anyone is under the influence of self-love, the more firmly he holds them." (AC 570)

One such persuasion might be that "happiness" and "compatibility" are more important than similarity of religion in marriage.

Know Them by Their Fruits

From the analysis in the preceding chapter, I am content that *Arcana Coelestia* 8998 and *Heaven and Hell* 378 are plain and straight-forward. People who live their lives based on different doctrines ought not to get married because they are in different goods and truths and there can be no truly conjugal love between them. If such a relationship be attempted as a marriage it is detestable and illicit. In this chapter, we turn to the fruits of such a relationship, and examine their quality.

Cold Realities

We tend to hear a number of heart-warming stories about people who married out of the church, and their partner eventually joined the church, or was virtually a member although he or she never took the step of being baptized. They are good stories to tell. But what about the other stories? The stories of starry-eyed people marrying with the hope or conviction that they could convert their partner, or that he or she would find the truth of the Second Coming irresistible--and it never happened. And years went by. And an emptiness grew up inside. A curtain closed between them and became a wall. What of the couples who get engaged in spite of a difference in religious background, because they weren't all that much into religion--until years later when they returned to their roots because they needed something deeper in their lives, and their partners resisted their interest in religion? What about the cold, the painful cold that these people feel?

The fact is, "The internal causes of cold are from religion." (CL 238) That is because the causes of warmth and beauty in marriage are also from religion.

The true origin of conjugal love resides with man in his inmosts, that is, in his soul,....it is

clear that the origin of the Church and the origin of conjugal love are in one and the same seat, and that they are in continual embrace. But more on this subject may be seen above (no. 130) where it is demonstrated that conjugal love is according to the state of the Church with man, and so is from religion, it being religion that makes this state. Moreover, man was so created that he can become ever more interior, and thus can be introduced or elevated into that marriage, and so into love truly conjugal, ever more intimately until he perceives the state of its blessedness. That the sole means of this introduction or elevation is religion, is clearly evident from what was said above, namely, that the origin of the Church and the origin of conjugal love are in the same seat, and that, being there in mutual embrace, they must needs be conjoined. (CL 238:2-3)

The very origin of conjugal love with all its blessedness and happiness is in the very same seat as the origin of the church! How could “the sons of God” turn to “the daughters of men” unless making their decisions under the influence of falsities, fallacies, or cupidities?

Rejection of religion by both partners is the first cause of cold, and the possession of religion by only one of the partners is the second cause of cold in marriage. (Cf. CL 240, 241) Of partners only one of whom has religion, we read:

Their souls cannot but be discordant, the soul of the one being open for the reception of conjugal love, and that of the other closed to the reception of that love..... As the final effect of this cold, that partner cannot bear to look the other directly in the face, or to address that other with any feeling of breathing the same air, that is, save with a restrained tone of voice, or to touch that other with the hand, and scarcely with the back, to say nothing of the insanities which from that cold creep into the thoughts and which they do not divulge. This is the reason why such marriages are dissolved of themselves. Moreover, it is well known that an impious man holds his partner in low esteem; and all who are without religion are impious. (CL 241)

That sounds painful--at least, *interiorly* painful! As with all of these causes of internal cold, there may not be external cold.

Many live together as though love and mutual friendship were theirs....Yet cold lies hidden within and at times this results in its being observed and sensed...Therefore they know nothing of the pleasantness and delight of love truly conjugal, still less of its happiness and bliss, these being to them little more than fables. (CL 244)

The third internal cause of cold is that “the one has one religion and the other another”

The reason is because with such partners, good cannot be conjoined with its corresponding truth;...Hence, from the two souls there cannot be made one soul; consequently, the fountain from which that love springs is closed, and with this closed they come into a conjugal which has a lower seat, being the conjugal of good with another truth than its own, or of truth with another good, and between these there is no concordant love. Thence with the partner who is in falsities of religion begins cold, and this is intensified as the one departs farther away from the other. Once when going through the streets of a great city, seeking a place of abode, I entered a house where dwelt married partners who were of diverse religions. While I was still unaware of this, angels addressed me and said, "We cannot stay with you in this house because the partners there are in discordant religions." They perceived this from the internal disunion of their souls. (CL 242)

Although there is here described a kind of conjugal having a lower seat, still there is no concordant love, but interior cold. This couple, too, would “know nothing of the pleasantness and delight of love truly conjugal.” The story is much the same with the fourth cause of internal cold: falsity of religion. (Cf. CL 243)

What is Wrong with Internal Cold?

If a person is losing hope of finding a suitable partner in marriage, he or she might be

attracted to the idea of a marriage of companionship and living as though in mutual love and friendship. How bad can a little interior cold be? *Conjugal Love* has an answer that is almost too chilling to believe:

SPIRITUAL COLD IS DISUNION OF SOULS AND DISJUNCTION OF MINDS, WHENCE COMES INDIFFERENCE, DISCORD, CONTEMPT, LOATHING, AVERSION; FROM WHICH, WITH MANY, COMES FINALLY SEPARATION FROM BED, CHAMBER, AND HOUSE.The reason is because conjugal cold resides in human minds above all other colds; for the conjugal is inscribed upon the soul to the end that soul may be propagated from soul, and the soul of a father into his offspring. Hence it is that this cold begins there and passes down successively into the parts that follow, and infects them, and so turns the gladsome and delightful things of the first love into things sad and undelightful. (CL 236)

If you dwell on the words in the description above, you can sense the hurt, the pain, the grief, the torment that can lie within a marriage between two people of diverse religion, and which will come to sensation from time to time. If these are the states that angels are aware of when they contemplate marriages on earth, there is little wonder that they regard them as heinous. If a simple-man's synonym for "evil" is "hurt", then surely this amount of inner hurt may be described as "wicked" or "heinous."

Cold Hurts Others

The hurt that results from a marriage between two of diverse religion is not limited to the married couple. Consider the response of the angels who were with Swedenborg as he entered the house where the partners were of diverse religions. (CL 242) They were repelled by the sphere! It hurt them to be there! (Obviously, not all angels or good spirits were completely driven away by the sphere, for we always have at least two good spirits with us, no matter what our state. Nevertheless, some angels were repelled by the sphere.)

Suppose a couple, of diverse religion, had children and suppose that the children were baptized. If the sign of baptism causes a child to be "inserted into societies and congregations according to the quality of the Christianity in him or outside of him," (TCR 680), one can well-imagine that some angels who might otherwise be present with the baptized children would be just as repelled by the sphere of diverse religions as the angels with Swedenborg were. The uses that might otherwise be performed by the baptism are probably altered in some way.

Are the spheres of marriage and of the church so abstract that they have no bearing on the hurt or happiness of children? Consider the experience of our young people. I have heard from several young people about the ease with which they make friendships and get into meaningful conversations at New Church young people's weekends and camps. They notice this in contrast to what they experience among friends outside of the Church. Is it possible that spheres are more powerful than we imagine? Could it be that the associate spirits of our young people sense the sphere of their new-found friends and communicate their delight to the young people as peace and enjoyment, so that they quickly feel at home and at ease? One young person once told me that it was only after experiencing the kind of relationship that he only experienced at New Church camps that he realized why it was so important to marry someone of the same religion.

A third kind of hurt to others that can result from a marriage of diverse religion would result from the diversity of instruction and upbringing. If each parent stands for different principles, different ideas of God, different convictions about eternal life, and so forth, not only may the child be presented with confusion, but he or she may also become imbued with the notion that there is no God, or truth, or spiritual reality, for all would seem relative. The Lord first teaches general truths, such as that God is all powerful, and allows children to suppose that He can do evil as well as good. Later children can learn that God's power is

only the power to do good. But the concept of God's omnipotence must be learned first. If a child senses that religion is meaningful to one parent and not the other, or that it means different things to each one, can the child easily become imbued with the general truth that there is absolute truth, a right and a wrong? Won't the growth of his spiritual concepts be stunted from the start?

A fourth kind of hurt to others that can result from a marriage of diverse religions involves the lesser advantage such children would have at birth.

That offspring born of those who are in love truly conjugal derive inclinations and faculties, if a son, for perceiving the things which are of wisdom, and if a daughter, for loving the things which wisdom teaches, is because the conjugal of good and truth is implanted by creation in the soul of every one, and also in all that follows after the soul. From this it is evident that the ability to conjoin good with truth and truth with good, and thus to become wise, and this with facility, is inherited from birth by those above others who are born of such a marriage; consequently, a facility in imbibing things which are of heaven and the Church; and that conjugal love is conjoined with such things, has many times been made manifest. From the above, the end for which marriages of love truly conjugal have been provided by the Lord the Creator, and are still being provided, is clearly exposed before the reason. (CL 204)

If a couple is of diverse religion, they are not in truly conjugal love. If they are not in this love, their children will indeed receive the conjugal of good and truth which is implanted by creation in the soul of everyone, but they will not receive the facility for joining truth and good which is inherited above others by those born of marriages of truly conjugal love. And notice that it is for the purpose of imparting this advantage that the Lord provides marriages of truly conjugal love! From the following passage, we can imagine that children of such marriages also receive an educational advantage as well. It is about those who lived in most ancient times.

____ Their offspring inherited inclinations to the conjugal of good and truth, and through education by their parents, were easily initiated into it more and more interiorly, and later, when they came to act of their own judgment, were introduced into it by the Lord as of themselves. (CL 205)

A marriage between people of diverse religions results in interior cold for the couple and in hurt to others or at least in hurt uses. Although the analysis above relates to children, we do not have to stretch our imagination very far to picture such marriages causing hurt to spiritual offspring, or uses in general, as well. If there were not this kind of hurt, why would such marriages on earth be accounted in heaven as heinous? Why would the Lord reveal that "marriages between those of different religions are not permissible." (HH 378, footnote)?

Moving the Marriages of the Church Forward

The Lord is not an angry God who gives difficult rules to test us and who takes delight in finding fault with those who fail to measure up. The Lord gives truth as the form of good. In the remainder of this paper, my main focus is to use the truths about religion and marriage to guide us in re-forming our goods, and in receiving genuine goods from the Lord.

What About All Those Marriages in the Church that Appear to be of Diverse Religions?

It would be heinous to go on a witch-hunt, condemning all people who are married to people who are apparently of another religion. Rather, we should uphold such people in the marriage in which they are. Take careful note of what is said in the chapter immediately

following the chapter describing the causes of internal cold in marriage:

Since the causes of cold and separation have been treated of, it follows in order, that the causes of apparent love, friendship, and favor in marriages should also be treated of; for it is well known that, although at this day cold separates the minds of married partners, they yet dwell together and procreate; and this would not be the case were there not apparent loves which, at alternate times, are similar to the heat of genuine love or emulate it. That these appearances are necessities and utilities, and that without them homes and hence societies could not hold together, will be seen in what follows. Besides this, some conscientious persons labor under the idea that disagreements of minds between them and their partner, and the consequent internal alienations, are their own fault and will be imputed to them; and because of this they grieve at heart. But since it is not in their power to relieve internal dissidences, it is enough for them to still the troubles which arise from conscience by apparent loves and favors. Moreover, in this way there can be a return of a friendship, within which, on the one side if not on the other, lies conjugal love.... (CL 271)

Observe, first of all, that the Lord does not wish to torment people's conscience over the state of the marriage in which they are. He wishes to give them as much peace as He can, and so leads them to positive action which, in turn, can lead to a return of friendship within which conjugal love can lie. He is leading them to show love and favor so that a heat similar to that of genuine love can prevail more than states of cold which dissolve marriages of themselves.

Observe also that disagreements between the minds of two partners are not the fault of any one person, and will not be imputed to them. We are only responsible for our own actions, not those of our partner. We can change only our own attitudes, not anyone else's, including our spouse's. Note, also, that *Arcana Coelestia* 8998 does not say the partners of diverse religions are heinous. It says the *marriages* are accounted heinous. Perhaps *Heaven and Hell* 378 says marriages between those of different religion are not permissible (Latin = *illicita*), not to heap guilt upon those in such marriages, but because conjugal love *cannot exist* between two of different religions. (Cf. *HH* 378) Perhaps they cannot be considered marriages (in inward form) because there is no conjunction of minds from the marriage of good and truth, just as spiritual marryings cannot be called "marryings" because there is no procreation of offspring. (Cf. *HH* 382b) In any case, the disagreements of mind are not imputed to either partner, and they are not meant to labor in conscience on account of the state of their marriage.

The chapter on apparent love in marriages gives a great deal of perspective on *Arcana Coelestia* 8998 because the chapter is given in the context of the teachings on cold in marriage. Not only does the context of that chapter show that it deals with couples who do not share the same religion, but three paragraphs in that chapter deal specifically with a spiritual man conjoined with a natural, and the cold between them on that account. (Cf. CL 280-282) Because of this context and those specific references, we can be sure that marriages in which there is interior cold from difference of religion are included in the following statement:

THAT NEVERTHELESS, IN THE WORLD, MATRIMONIES ARE TO CONTINUE TO THE END OF LIFE. This is adduced in order more clearly to present before the reason the necessity, utility, and truth of the statement that where the conjugal love is not genuine, it should yet be affected, that is, should seem as if it were genuine. It would be otherwise if the marriages entered into were not contracts enduring to the end of life...[2] Since, therefore, the covenant of marriage is a covenant for life, it follows that appearances of love and friendship between the partners are necessities. That matrimones once contracted must continue to the end of life in the world, is from Divine law; and being from this, it is also from rational law, and hence from civil law--from Divine law in that it is not lawful for one to put away his wife and marry another except for whoredom, as above; from rational law because this is founded upon spiritual law, Divine law and rational law being one.. (CL 276)

The message is clear: we ought to support people who are of different religions in the continuation of their marriage. Put another way, although the angels account a marriage between people of different religions as heinous, they vigorously support the people in such a marriage.

I wonder if it is significant that it says “matrimonies” (*matrimonia*) are to continue to the end of life and are of Divine law) (as opposed to “marriages” (*conjugia*)). I wonder, too, about the part of the passage (not quoted above) which refers to what Jesus said about whoredom being the only cause of putting away a wife and marrying again in *Matthew 19*-- why does it not quote the part about “what God has joined together...”? Perhaps the Lord chose the present wording to give the natural-rational less room in which to maneuver. In other words, although marriages between people of diverse religions may be accounted nefarious and illicit; and although the term “marriages” may not fully apply because there is no marriage of good and truth; and although one could argue from those points that God did not join them together and so why not let man put them asunder; nevertheless it is “from Divine law” that “matrimonies once contracted must continue to the end of life in the world.”

The Lord Offers Hope for Those in Marriages of Mixed Religion

Contrary to the reasoning of the natural man, the Lord is not cornering people in a life of misery when He says that marriages of mixed religion are accounted in heaven as heinous *and* that they must continue to the end of life in the world. The Lord’s love radiates blessing, not torment. There is a way forward.

We have already seen that by apparent love and favor in marriage “there can be a return of a friendship, within which, on the one side if not on the other, lies conjugal love” (CL 271) This means that one or both partners can have conjugal love within! It may not be “truly conjugal love” but it is nevertheless a very positive gift from the Lord.

Perhaps the following passage puts hope for one’s personal reception of love truly conjugal even more strongly:

That at this day, love truly conjugal is so rare as to be generally unknown, has been pointed out several times above..... [After giving many illustrations of people making great sacrifices for love, the passage continues] ...what understanding is there that cannot deduce from this, that if, from his soul or inmost being, the lover constantly persists in his love for that one, he would attain those eternal blessings which he promised himself before the consent, and promises himself when consent has been given? That he does attain them if he approaches the Lord and from Him lives [in accordance with] true religion, has been shown above. Who but He can enter man's life from above and impart internal heavenly joys and carry them over into all that follows? (CL 333)

This passage does not say that one has to reform one’s partner to have truly conjugal love. It does not say that one’s partner has to be an active, caring participant in the marriage. It says that one attains eternal blessings when he approaches the Lord and from Him lives in accordance with true religion. Who is incapable of doing that? Who cannot live the laws outlined in the chapters of *Conjugal Love* on apparent love and favor in marriage, or, when necessary, in the chapter on legitimate separations?

In the passage on the second internal cause of cold we read:

[The soul] is closed [to the reception of conjugal love] with the one who has no religion and open with the one who has religion. Hence no cohabitation is possible in the soul, and when conjugal love is banished therefrom, cold ensues--but this only with the partner who has no religion. This cold is not dissipated except by the reception of a religion congruous with that of the other, if the latter is true religion. (CL 241)

Here is good news for the husband or wife in the New Church. First, conjugal love has not been banished from their own soul if they are married to an atheist, and certainly not, if they are married to someone of a diverse religion. Second, the cold in the soul of their partner can be dissipated if their partner chooses to receive a congruous religion! There will be a lot of work ahead. One's own proprium will resist as one seeks to show love and favor in such a way as to make true religion attractive to one's spouse--and to do so without irritating and violating their freedom. But there *is* hope. There is good that can be done and love for another's freedom that can be practiced.

If a couple who think of themselves as having different religions come across the statement that marriages between people of diverse religion are not permissible or are heinous, they have an obvious choice open to them. Their original consent and wedding do not constitute the marriage but begin an ongoing process of marriage. They can reform their state of religion so that they are no longer of diverse religion. They can endeavor to come to the Lord together. "Religion alone renews and regenerates man." (*TCR 601*) Religion alone will renew and regenerate marriage. The following passage shows that marriages which start off illegitimately can be made legitimate.

All the laws of order in heaven are from the Divine truth and good which proceed from the Lord, consequently they are the laws of the good of love and truth of faith. The conjunction of good and truth in heaven is called the heavenly marriage, and this is represented in marriages on earth, and is also signified by "marriages" in the Word. From this it is plain what is involved in unlawful conjunctions, and also in scortations and adulteries. In these two verses an unlawful conjunction is treated of which is afterward either made lawful or is dissolved. [2] Unlawful [Illegitima] conjunction is that which is not made from conjugal affection; but from some other affection, as the affection of beauty, the affection of gain, or the affection of personal rank; and also which is made from lasciviousness. In the beginning these conjunctions are unlawful, because that which conjoins is external, and not at the same time internal. Nevertheless a lawful conjunction may afterward be effected from them as means, which takes place when the minds are conjoined; and on the other hand no conjunction may result from them, as is the case when the minds are disjoined. That this is so, is generally known in the world. [3] Lawful [legitima] conjunction, which is that of minds, is effected when both are in the like good and truth; for good and truth make a man's life; moral and civil good and truth, the life of the external man; and spiritual good and truth, the life of the internal man. Be it known that a man's life is from no other source than good and truth, for all that a man loves is called good, and all that he believes is called truth; or, what is the same, all that a man wills is called good, and all that he understands is called truth. From this it is evident that a lawful conjunction is effected when the husband is in truth, and the wife is in the corresponding good, for in this way the heavenly marriage, which is that of good and truth, is represented in the pair. From this it is that conjugal love descends from this marriage (see n. 2727-2759, 2803, 3132, 4434, 4835) (*AC 9182*)

A step in coming together in matters of religion might be for a couple to take an inventory of their religious convictions, and see what they have that is in agreement with each other and with the Word. From there, the couple can look for principles that are more remote. Then, drawing on the principle of heavenly marriages in which "each loves to will and think as the other, that is, mutually and reciprocally" (*HH 369*) the couple can look for the good and truth in the other's intentions and thinking. We read:

Similitudes and dissimilitudes exist in great variety and are more or less remote. Yet, those which are remote can in time be conjoined by various means, especially by accommodations to desires, by mutual offices, by civilities, by abstinence from things unchaste, by a common love of infants and care of children, and above all, by conformity in things of the Church. By means of things of the Church, conjunction is effected of similitudes inwardly remote, but by other means only of those which are outwardly remote. (*CL 228*)

A person must be careful not to take this passage superficially. A person raised in the

New Church might conclude that he or she, to practice what they preach, must conform to the false religion of their partner. Falsity, however, takes away religion or defiles it and is an internal cause of cold. (Cf. CL 243) As the Lord said to the church which was in some faith from charity (AR 124), "That which you have, hold fast till I come," (Rev. 2:25) meaning that "they should retain the few things which they know from charity and faith, thence from the Word, and live according to them until the New Heaven and New Church are formed." (AR 145) Similar words were spoken to the church in Philadelphia. "Those who are in truths from good from the Lord" "should remain in their truths and in their good" (AR 172, 188) "Holding fast to what one has" does not mean that a person in the New Church has a perfect understanding of all truths and has nothing to learn. The way forward is for the couple to ask the Lord to flow in with an innocent affection for truth. In approaching the Word with humility and innocence, they can seek the truth together.

It may be useful to see that Paul corroborates much of what is said in *Conjugal Love* against divorce in marriages of mixed religion. If we reinterpret some of the wording where Paul is speaking from himself, there are some useful points to reflect on in relation to the discussion above. For example, "if the unbeliever departs, let him depart" etc. could be thought of as "does not wish to get involved in religion," and a brother or sister "not being under bondage in such cases" could be thought of as "not laboring under the idea that disagreements are their own fault" or that one can "save one's spouse."

Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: a wife is not to depart from her husband. But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife. But to the rest I, not the Lord, say: if any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy. But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace. For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband whether you will save your wife?...Brethren, let each one remain with God in that calling in which he was called. (I Cor 7:10-16, 24)

Practical Steps to Sharing Religion in Marriage

One of my hopes in presenting this paper is to hear from you about "what works" in the sharing of religion in marriage. Any marriage can benefit from partners improving in their sharing of religion in marriage. With the Word being "the medium of conjunction" (CL 128) reading the Word and praying individually and together are obvious practical steps, as is participating in public worship and classes. But neither heaven nor marriage is perpetual glorification of God. Serving uses is the worship of life, and partners who mutually serve each other and who together serve others, notably their children, are drawn together, as the Doctrine teaches.

What do the people of the church need to hear? Especially where a marriage is less healthy, the chapter on apparent love and favor is full of applicable principles in this regard. Many familiar teachings from the New Testament also come to mind. "Do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return" (Luke 6:35) agrees with what is said of a spiritual person conjoined to a natural one: "A spiritual man acts spiritually even with one who is natural." (CL 280) Respecting and showing respect for the good intentions and good judgment of one's partner, and for their freedom, is vital. It will not be easy, but teaching children, and others close to oneself, the ideals of sharing religion in marriage, is a great gift that such a person can give. It is important, however, that they do so without undermining respect for one's partner or commitment to the marriage.

If a person is realizing the importance of the Lord and religion in his or her life, she or

he should repent of those things which have separated her or him from the Lord, and invite the Lord to the center of life. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven," (*Matt. 5:16*) has obvious application for a marriage in which there is not agreement in matters of religion. A spiritual partner cannot but seek the amendment of a natural one, but it is not pursued by nagging and irritating. Amendment "is brought about by wise and refined conversations and by courteous favors pleasing to the genius of the other." (*CL 282*) Pharisaic displays of piety, are certainly not recommended. The Lord said, "When you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place." (*Matt. 6:6*) Where there is not response to efforts to amend, it is enough to make accommodation. (*Cf. CL 282*) Paul's statement concerning charity can be of help: "Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, endures all things. Love never fails." (*I Cor 13:4-8*)

As one grows, spiritually, there is the additional hope that one will not irritate and aggravate the proprium of one's partner. When a person acts from a natural and self-centered motivation, it tends to evoke a like response in one's partner. As one shuns such motivations and is reformed and regenerated, one's partner may be freed from a defensive, reactive pattern of behavior. They may feel less threatened and less vulnerable when they reflect on their own life, their own prejudices, and their own closed-mindedness. *Conjugal Love*, as we saw above, offers hope that the partner who has no religion or a false one can receive "a religion congruous with that of the other." (*CL 241*) If that does not happen, at least the partner who is growing spiritually will have greater resources of inner contentment with the Lord's Providence, peace, and innocence which will surely have an effect on the outward difficulties of the marriage.

Imparting a Heritage

One of the greatest hopes for the restoration of truly conjugal love is the hope that we have for future generations. We can give them the opportunity to learn the ideals of truly conjugal love from the time they are young. They can become imbued with the genuine doctrines of the church. They can be guided into expectations and habits of social life which will make a straight and smooth way before the Lord, so that He can come to them and usher them into the delights of truly conjugal love. It is our privilege as priests, teachers, parents, and adults, to give them that heritage.

Guidance for Future Generations

Picture yourself preparing to teach a lesson on the ideals of sharing religion in marriage. You do a bit of study and get excited about the sparkling truths of the Heavenly Doctrine which can even be illustrated in the stories of the Patriarchs in *Genesis*. Then you visualize your pupils. Perhaps half of them have parents who married outside of the church, and of these, the majority of parents from outside the church have not joined the church, and don't really participate. Come to think of it, many of the parents who married in the church have one or both partners who show reluctant participation in the church. What do you teach to your students about sharing religion in marriage?

Of course. You teach the true ideals that the Lord wants them to follow so that they can have the greatest blessing His love can give them. You must teach them to honor their parents and to love and respect their marriage. And you must teach them that for all people, whether nominally of the same or of different religions, truly conjugal love and true religion are in one and the same seat. The way to true love is for them to come together in their love, understanding, and worship of the Lord. That is a key principle for the restoration of that rare and wonderful love. If that principle is forsaken, truly conjugal love is

impossible.

As teachers of religion, we must not neglect, short-change, or down-play the role of religion in marriage. If we convey to young people the idea that they can have truly conjugal love between themselves and their partner without having religion at the center of their relationship, then we convey the impossible. It is not enough for us to know the doctrine, hint at it, and let it be up to our young people as to whether they “get it” or not. It is such a fundamental point that we must teach directly to that point if we wish them to hold truly conjugal love as an ideal they can work toward, and receive.

Telling the Message of True Love

If the people of the New Church are to genuinely seek truly conjugal love they must learn about it. And who is going to tell them?

____ Who at this day knows that the origin of conjugal love is deduced from this source [religion]? who at this day is willing to acknowledge this? and who at this day will not wonder at it? This is due to no other cause than the fact that though there is religion, there are no truths of religion; and what is religion without truths?... (CL 239)

How many love stories do you know of in books or cinema or song, on television or stage that put the sharing of religion at the heart of the growing relationship? In my own very limited experience, I cannot think of any but a few books my wife has read by religious authors. I can, however, think of some in which religion or morals are obstacles to overcome in finding true love, or else are things that are casually set aside on the way to love. And when religion does play a part in a love story, is it true religion? The next generation needs to hear the truth about true love from Divine revelation.

Progression Toward Marriage

From what *Arcana Coelestia* says about the mediate goods of conjugal love, which appear to comprise the normal progression to a truly conjugal relationship, one wonders how much of this progression precedes the wedding. In the passage below, does consent to be married come somewhere in the second state? Ideally, does the period of betrothal lead to a taste of the final state, or does the final state come only after years of marriage?

Take also as an example conjugal love: the good which precedes and initiates is beauty, or agreement of manners, or an outward adaptation of the one to the other, or equality of condition, or a desired condition. These goods are the first mediate goods of conjugal love. Afterwards comes conjunction of minds, wherein the one wills as the other, and perceives delight in doing that which pleases the other. This is the second state; and then the former things, though still present, are no longer regarded. Finally there follows a union in respect to celestial good and spiritual truth, in that the one believes as the other, and the one is affected by the same good as the other. When this state comes, both are together in the heavenly marriage, which is that of good and truth, and thus are in conjugal love - for conjugal love is nothing else - and the Lord then flows into the affections of both as into one affection. This is the good that flows in directly; but the former goods, which flowed in indirectly, served as means of introduction to this. (AC 4145:3)

The goods which precede conjugal love and initiate are qualities that can be found in any religion. There are many beautiful people with agreeable manners, and adaptable outlooks in all religions. Especially in the western world, where multiculturalism and the New Age movement are so popular, are people outwardly adaptable in matters of religion. We are accustomed to looking for true ideas in other philosophies and trying to understand other people's ways of looking at things. In addition, the doctrine of the Second Advent leads us to view others from charity. Where charity exists, the church need not be divided according to doctrine, but can make one. It is easy to picture a New Church person attracted to someone of another religion who can be loved and respected for his or her

manners and even his or her sincerity in following his or her religion. We can even picture them going on to the second mediate good, of willing as the other and finding delight in pleasing the other.

(I am not sure why it is that “conjunction of minds” is not illustrated in AC 4145:3 by some form of delight in *thinking* as the other, and why it isn't until the final state that there is mention of anything that sounds like the doctrinal component of shared religion: “believing as the other.” Perhaps progressions of natural good neglect the truth dimension until they become spiritual. Is this why Esau, representing natural good, at first married outside of his religion, whereas Jacob, representing natural truth, was sent to marry within his religion to begin with?)

How Diverse Religions Can Seem Not to Be Diverse

So we have in our example a New Church person in love with a lovely person of another religion whom we all can respect for his or her uprightness and sincerity. They both believe in God. They both believe that one must shun adultery, theft, false witness, murder, and all that is meant by these in the natural sense. The New Church person is doubly impressed, because this other person seems to live his or her religion better than anyone she or he has met, and possibly more thoroughly than her- or himself. So our New Church person is wondering if this could be enough of a shared religion to lead to truly conjugal love.

One of the beautiful things about the doctrine of the New Church is that it is broadly inclusive when it comes to describing those whom the Lord brings into heaven.

It is of the Lord's Divine Providence that every nation has some form of religion; and the primary essential of every religion is the acknowledgment that there is a God, otherwise it is not called a religion; and every nation that lives according to its religion, that is, which refrains from doing evil because it is contrary to its God, receives something spiritual in its natural. (DP 322:4)

To acknowledge God and to refrain from doing evil because it is against God are the two things which make religion to be religion....The heavenly Man, which is heaven, in order that all these [organs and viscera and other organized forms of the human form] may be in it, cannot be composed of men all of one religion but of men of many religions. Therefore all who make these two universal principles of the Church part of their life have a place in that heavenly Man, that is, heaven, and there enjoy happiness in their own degree. (DP 326:9-10)

Other necessary ingredients of religion that are mentioned include “precepts similar to those in the Decalogue,” (DP 253:3, *Life* 65), the concept of a life after death (cf.. DP 274, AE 902:3), some origin of religion in revelation (cf.. AE 963:2, *Coro* 39:2), and self-examination and acknowledgment of sins, repentance and desisting from sins. (Cf. *Life* 64, DP 114:3) To find compatibility with another person on such points as these is a necessary condition for truly conjugal love to grow, but it is not a sufficient condition. Put another way, it is necessary for angels to be married to someone else from heaven, but it is not sufficient. Their partner must also be from the same society of heaven, as we saw above. A cell from the femur is no partner for a cell from the heart. Even a cell from a glandular tissue like the liver is not a match for a cell from another glandular tissue like the pancreas or brain. A person looking to a marriage of truly conjugal love needs to look for a compatibility that is more specific than the general things common to all religions.

Appreciation of another person and their religion is not enough to make conjunction in matters of religion possible. We read:

The law enacted in the Jewish Church:- When thou comest into thy companion's vineyard,

then thou mayest eat grapes according to thy soul, to thy fill; but thou shalt not put any in thy vessel (*Deut. xxiii. 24*); involves that every one associating with others who are in a different doctrine and religion (*alia doctrina et religione*) may learn and accept their goods of charity, but may not become imbued with them and conjoin them with his own truths. As a "vineyard" denotes the church (*Ecclesia*), it denotes where there is doctrine or religion; "grapes" are the goods of charity; and a "vessel" is the truth of the church. (*AC 5117:13*)

I interpret this passage to mean that we are allowed to appreciate and benefit from the good that others do, but those goods are not to become our way of life if those forms of charity are not what our doctrine teaches.

How Much Difference of Doctrine Constitutes "Diversity of Religion"?

It is noteworthy that even when charity reigns and is alive, schism would not be called schism and heresy heresy, "but a doctrinal matter in accordance with each person's opinion; and this they would leave to each person's conscience, provided such doctrinal matter did not deny first principles, that is, the Lord, eternal life, and the Word; and provided it was not contrary to the Divine order, that is, to the precepts of the decalogue." (*AC 1834:2, cf. 2385:4*) Difference of doctrine between religions, then, does not divide the church, but it does make a truly conjugal marriage impossible, for there is no conjunction with the differing truths. On a deep level a couple with differing religions would not be able to communicate with each other. The falsity in one or the other point of view would introduce internal cold.

Where there is real difference of doctrine, a couple might not be able to converse at all, spiritually, because they would not "speak the same language." Although there is a common speech of spirits by which they can converse with any one in heaven or hell of whatever religion, (*cf. SD 5591*) there is also another speech from ideas and affections which is not universal.

One spirit is not able to hold conversation with another by means of that speech from ideas and affections, if they are not in like truths and in like affections from truths. For collision immediately occurs, and, indeed, of such a nature that the one must needs be carried away by the other, according to the ideas and their affections. Those who are of differing religion cannot (converse together) at all; neither angels with infernals at all... (*SD 5593*)

We are taught in *True Christian Religion* that peoples and nations in the spiritual world "occupy separate regions according to their religion. Christians are in the center, Mohammedans round about them, idolaters of various kinds behind these, and Jews at the sides. Moreover, all who are of the same religion are arranged into societies." (*TCR 678*) Clearly, Mohammedans and Christians are of different religions, according to this passage. Baptism is a sign that makes that kind of distinction, and is important to maintaining order in the spiritual world. (*cf. TCR 678, 680*) Another passage refers to the Christian religion as one where it mentions differing enlightenment as being the cause of so many churches within the Christian religion, and heresies within the churches. (*cf. AE 1177:2*) But although the Christian religion is described as one religion, still, these passages refer to different societies and churches within it. Since angels only marry from the same society, it appears that one seeking a marriage of truly conjugal love ought to look for similarity of religion that is more sharply defined than simply "Christian." In fact, if we look at the differences of doctrinal emphasis among those in the Council of the Clergy, we might be hard-pressed to imagine that we will all be in the same society in the other world, or that the views we represent could make one mind out of two people holding such views! Further evidence that the Christian religion is not singular enough to constitute similarity of religion comes from the account of Swedenborg seeking lodging (probably in London or Amsterdam). Although it is possible that the couple Swedenborg met consisted of a Mohammedan or Jew and a Christian, the likelihood is that one was Protestant and the other Catholic or some other Protestant sect, (*cf. CL 242*) for Swedenborg said he was

unaware of their difference of religion, and he also says “Who does not know a Jew from his looks?” (*CL* 202)

The Persistence of Imbued Religion

In the Western world, it is easily observed that religion and doctrine do not mean nearly as much as they used to. People are very tolerant of a multitude of viewpoints, and those who express strong religious opinions are in the minority. Between the media and government supported schools there is a shallow, usually corrupt, but remarkably homogeneous outlook on such moral and spiritual values as we speak of and display in Western society. This conveys the strong message that religion really doesn't matter, and that it is essentially all the same. In contrast to this view, I find that what the Heavenly Doctrine says about the distinctness of religions and the persistence of early religious influence to be almost unbelievably strong. The following passage, after saying that those who die in infancy or childhood are introduced into heaven through baptism, says:

Infants and children, however, who were born outside the Christian church are brought by other means than baptism into the heaven planned for their religion, once they have accepted faith in the Lord; but they are not allowed to mix with those who are in the Christian heaven. (*TCR* 729)

Another passage says that Mohammedan boys and girls of more than ten years of age cannot be taken up into heaven as quickly as Mohammedan infants because “they are firmly imbued with paganism.” (*SD* 347) We do not usually think of someone of ten years old as being “firmly imbued” with a particular religion, and yet it is not only possible, but likely, whether that religion is Mohammedan or “Generic American Agnosticism.” The above two passages underscore the import of the first lines of *AC* 8998:

The case is that those who have been born within the church, and from infancy have been imbued with the principles of the truth of the church, ought not to contract marriages with those who are outside of the church, and have thus been imbued with such things as are not of the church. (*AC* 8998)

Taking the above three passages together, we should be careful not to assume that it is a simple matter to bring someone from another culture or religion into one's own religion. It seems to me that it is possible for someone to make such a conversion, but it is not simple. Although having become “imbued” with a faith is probably not as strong as “confirming oneself” in it, one would imagine that what is said of the process of converting from the old church to the new would apply:

They who have confirmed themselves in the faith of the old church, cannot, without endangering their spiritual life, embrace the faith of the New Church, until they first have disproved its particulars, and thus have extirpated the former faith, together with its offspring or eggs, that is, its dogmas (*BE* 103e)

The following passage makes it sound as though one rarely gives up one's childhood religion. At the same time it makes conversion sound a bit easier, at least in certain cases.

Heresies themselves do not condemn men, but an evil life does, as also do the confirmations from the Word, and from reasoning from the natural man, of the falsities that are in the heresy. For every one is born into the religion of his parents, is initiated into it from his infancy, and afterwards holds to it, being unable to withdraw himself from its falsities through being engaged with his business in the world. But to live in evil, and to confirm falsities even to the destruction of genuine truth, is what condemns. For he who remains in his own religion, and believes in God, or if in Christendom, in the Lord, regarding the Word as holy, and from a religious principle living according to the ten commandments, does not swear allegiance to falsities, and therefore as soon as he hears truths, and perceives them in his own way, he can embrace them and so be led away from falsities; but not so the man

who has confirmed the falsities of his religion, for confirmed falsity remains and cannot be rooted out. (SS 92)

To What Extent Can We Judge Compatibility of Religion in an Individual Case?

The doctrine bearing on the sharing of religion in marriage all relates to the conjoining of people whose goods and truths agree together. (Cf. AC 8998, HH 378) Is it possible to recognize with certainty this agreement of goods and truths, or conversely, the lack of agreement? On one level, the answer appears to be "No."

There are marriages in which conjugal love is not apparent and yet exists, and there are marriages in which conjugal love appears to exist and yet does not. ...Appearances in outward manifestations determine nothing in regard to imputation. The only determining factor is the conjugal disposition that is lodged and harbored in a person's will, in whatever state of marriage the person lives. This conjugal disposition is like the tongue of a balance by which that love is weighed; for the conjugal union of one man with one wife is the precious jewel of human life and the repository of Christian religion, as we showed above in nos. 457, 458. This being the case, it is possible for conjugal love to exist in one partner and not at the same time in the other. It is possible as well for that love to lie so deeply hidden that the person himself has no awareness of it. And it may also be implanted during the course of one's life. The reason is that conjugal love in its progress accompanies religion; and because religion is the marriage of the Lord and the church, religion is what initiates and infuses that love. Consequently conjugal love is imputed to a person after death in accordance with his spiritual rational life. Moreover, for one to whom that love is imputed, a marriage is, after his passing, provided in heaven, whatever the character of any marriage he may have had in the world. (CL 531)

If one cannot judge the state of conjugal love in a marriage, or even in oneself, how can a person make a reliable judgement of compatibility with regard to one's own and another person's goods and truths?

The following teaching about the distinguishing of the neighbor according to his good--a thing which is enjoined on all who are in true charity--has application to the distinguishing of such a neighbor as may become one's conjugal partner:

The distinguishing differences of the neighbor, which the man of the church ought to wholly know, in order that he may know the quality of charity, vary in accordance with the good which is with every one....Without exception all persons in the heavens and on earth differ in good. Precisely one and the same good never exists in two persons; it must vary in order for each person to subsist by himself. But all these varieties, thus all the distinguishing differences of the neighbor, which are according to the reception of the Lord, that is, of the good proceeding from Him, can never be known to any man, nor even to any angel, except in general, thus as to their genera and some species of these. Nor does the Lord require more of the man of the church than to live according to what he knows. (AC 6706)

I interpret this to mean that a person cannot be precise in his recognition of similarity between his own goods and truths and those of another. At the same time, he *can* recognize general compatibilities, and some that are a bit more specific. To recognize these goods, a person must pay attention to his own and the other person's ideas of God, for in heaven, the Lord appears in the societies there according to the quality of the good in which the society is. (Cf. HH 55, AC 6707) Insofar as two people share a common vision of the Lord, they will share similar goods and truths.

In all things pertaining to marriage and the selection of a partner in marriage, a great deal must be left for the Lord to provide. Compatible unions are provided on earth by the Lord, "in the case of people who from their youth had loved, desired and sought from the Lord a lawful and lovely partnership with one, and who spurn and reject roving lusts as an offense to the nostrils." (CL 49) Part of seeking from the Lord a lawful partnership means

avoiding an illicit one with someone of a different religion (*cf.* *HH* 378 footnote). In this a person does what he can. He follows the laws of which he knows and distinguishes the compatibilities and incompatibilities that he can see. The Lord does not require more of a person “than to live according to what he knows.” A person must leave the rest to the Lord. But if he has done that much, if he is following the Lord, the Lord can lead him to a marriage in which the goods and truths of religion are similar.

Identifying General Compatibilities

The Lord does not leave single New Church people without any signs and indications of which way to go. He provides things that people can know, so that they can make choices as of themselves and exercise the prudence which the Divine providence can lead. (*Cf. DP* 210) Perhaps the first and most obvious sign of similitude in matters of religion is that sacrament whose first use is to be a sign. (*Cf. TCR* 677, 677) By baptism it is known that someone belongs to Christians. It is orderly to have distinctions, and signs of those distinctions. A person looking to identify someone with whom he or she can be interiorly united in marriage, ought not to dismiss the value of this sign.

It is obvious that one also must go beyond the mere sign of baptism, and look for evidence that the uses of baptism have followed the baptism. Has there been instruction and learning from an affirmative point of view? Is there evidence of spiritual washing and regeneration? *Doctrine of Charity* lists some signs of charity that can be useful in this regard. As you read them, try to imagine how many people who are looking to marriage give consideration to these signs. Think also of which signs might carry more weight than the others, and in what circumstances.

The externals of the body which pertain to worship are:-(1) Frequenting temples. (2) Listening to sermons. (3) Devoutly singing, and praying on the knees. (4) Partaking the Sacrament of the Supper. And at home:--(1) Prayer morning and evening, and at dinners and suppers. (2) Conversing with others about charity and faith, and about God, heaven, eternal life, and salvation. (3) And in the case of priests, preaching, and also private instruction. (4) And with every one, the instruction of children and servants in such matters. (5) Reading the Word, and books of instruction and of piety. (*Char* 174)

The externals of the mind which pertain to worship are:- (1) Thought and meditation concerning God, and concerning heaven, eternal life, and salvation. (2) Reflection upon one's thoughts and intentions, as to whether they are evil or good, and that the evil are from the devil, and the good from God. (3) Aversion of one's mind from impious, obscene, and filthy language. (4) Besides thoughts, there are also affections which come to the sight and sense of a man. (*Char* 175)

The rest of this chapter on the signs of charity demonstrates further that externals of worship are signs of charity (*Cf. Char* 177). Charity in the internal man especially manifests itself in the external when it does combat with the external by examining oneself, sees and confesses evils, resists them and lives a new life. (*Cf. Char* 179) If a person does these things, his internal man is good, if not, it is evil. (*Cf. Char* 180) “Whatever the internal man produces and presents to sight and sense in the external is called a sign.” But if a person is not shunning evils, his external piety and worship is not a sign of charity. (*Char* 181)

Although the statements of these signs of charity are so general that non-Christians can be identified by them as being in charity, still they are useful signs to attend to as evidence that a person has entered into the uses of which baptism is a sign. Since “there is no internal without its sign and indication,” (*Char* 183) the absence of this kind of evidence should sound a definite warning to a person contemplating marriage with another individual. If the absence of these signs is in oneself, it is a warning that one is not approaching marriage from good and truth. The presence of these signs can be taken as encouraging evidence, although it is possible that they are empty or hypocritical.

The signs listed above are indeed general signs. Baptism in the New Church and membership in the General Church is also a general sign, as we have noted. There can be wide differences of good and understanding of truth among the people identified by these signs. A person looking for compatibility for the sake of marriage, then, needs to go beyond looking at the presence or absence of these signs, to looking at the way in which the signs of charity are manifested.

How Does Diversity of Religion Manifest Itself in Everyday Life?

When it comes to determining whether two people will be able to share their religion in marriage, they must confront the question of what religion means or can mean in their own lives. This is not something that many reflect on very thoroughly. It is not something that I feel I have a good handle on. Sharing religion in marriage would clearly involve participating together in the above signs of charity in a harmonious way. As I re-read the signs listed above, I see that I don't do all of them as regularly as I should, and that my wife and I do them together even less than that. All of us can improve in our spiritual growth, individually, and in our marriages. But since our culture does not emphasize the value of religion in life, and since many of us do not reflect on it as much as we might, I have put together the start of a list that is designed to show how much religion does impact our everyday outlook on, and participation in life. Perhaps others of you can add to this list. I thought that such a list might have value to people who are thinking of marriage, so that they can take very seriously the idea that religion and marriage go together. The danger of such a list might be that people would mistake it for one of those "seventy-six-point checks" that automobile service stations do, and opt for blind romance over bringing anything so analytical into the approach to marriage.

The first part of the list especially involves doctrinal issues in which religions (and atheistic philosophies) differ on their world-view and their idea of God. Imagine how difficult it would be for a married pair to share their thoughts and concerns if they differed in these areas.

- Is God one person, two, three, or more?
- Is God a person or a force? and If a person, is God good? or evil, too?
- Is God essentially loving? angry? wise? arbitrary? present? remote? knowable?
- Is self a spark of the Divine? a lifeless vessel? a condemned sinner?
- Is a child born good? born in sin? born with hereditary inclinations?
- Is the purpose of life to serve God? to glorify God? to make oneself happy? to survive?
- Is the purpose of worship for man's humility? for God's aggrandizement?
- Is marriage for the sake of performing uses? for procreation only?
- Is marriage essentially holy? sinful but necessary? recreational?
- Is polygamy a sin? allowed by religion? (Cf. CL 348)
- Are people responsible for their spiritual life?
- Is the world's purpose to serve heaven? to test our faith? to be exploited?
- Is the world of nature more lifeless than man? essentially Divine?
- Are people saved by repentance and life? by reform and incarnations? by the death of Christ?
- Are all predestined to heaven? only a select group?
- Is the last judgment in this world or the next? individual? universal? past? future?
- Is the resurrection at one's death? at the "last day"?
- Is the Word to be taken literally? spiritually? both?
- Is the Word Divine revelation? a historic and cultural document? a fairy tale?
- Is life after death like a feast? a party? a paradise? a church service? an economy of uses?
- Does the priesthood have power over peoples' lives or souls?

This next list is designed to reflect many areas of life where people need to take actions

which have religious significance for some or many religions. Imagine if one partner feels free to do what another considers to be sinful. How united in thought and will would they feel themselves to be? In actual practice, what some religions teach is not followed very widely by the membership, but people follow the practices of various popular and political leaders and movements.

- Is marriage between two of different religions permissible? heinous?
- Is marriage between two of different race permissible?
- Is conception in marriage to be sought or avoided?
- What is sexually permissible? ideal? before marriage? after marriage?
- Is divorce permissible? under what circumstances? can remarriage follow?
- Are the sexes equal? equal but different? master and slave?
- What courtesies or services are expected of each sex?
- Is the body to be treated as a temple? something the devil possesses? your own possession?
- Is abortion always wrong? sometimes wrong? never wrong?
- Is money managed for personal goals? for the Lord's kingdom? for tithing?
- Is charitable giving a responsibility? an option? a waste?
- Is your time spent for yourself? for the Lord's kingdom? for set sacred rituals?
- How much ritual is required?
- Is worship more holy if it is formal? informal? ecstatic?
- Under what circumstances are baptism and other church rituals permissible?
- Is there agreement on the value of practicing the signs of charity (Cf. *Char* 174)
- Does healing take place by medicines? "natural" medicines? miracles? all?
- Are medical procedures like vaccinations, transplants and transfusions permissible? profane?
- Is suicide a sin? an honor?
- Is euthanasia a sin? a duty?
- Is it sinful to eat meat, pork, or other foods?
- Is recreational use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs forbidden? optional? useful in moderation?
- Are the following, sins: gambling, dancing, certain kinds of music or books?
- Should charity be exercised according to individual conscience and with discrimination? according to the dictates of church and social leaders?
- Who is the first neighbor? self? family? country? church?
- Is revenge always wrong? a sacred duty?
- Are accidents and misfortunes a punishment for sins? the result of blind chance? an opportunity for self-examination?
- Is punishment for driving out the devil? exacting justice? deterrent and amendment?

Charging Our Young People with Responsibility

Most of the young people I have taught want to hear, or quickly point, that your nominal religion is not your real religion, and that it is possible for people who are nominally of different religions to share a common approach to the Lord. There is some truth to this outlook, but it carries with it some of that youthful sense of indestructibility that is so common in young people. One's nominal religion, and especially one's adherence to it, are *likely* to be a sign of something deeper, something significant to oneself. True, many people who say they belong to this or that religion, really have very little idea of what that religion teaches officially. But it is just as erroneous to assume that their nominal religion means nothing to them as it is to assume that they are thoroughly indoctrinated and confirmed.

The responsibility with which we need to challenge our young people is the responsibility of putting the sharing of religion at the center of their quest for a partner in marriage. Religion should not be an afterthought to explore after the couple has fallen in love. Religion should be woven into the fabric of the growing friendship and an integral part

of the courtship. Whether a person is interested in someone out of the New Church or in it, religion should be on the agenda of things to discuss, practice, and observe. After all, if religion and truly conjugal love go hand in hand, step by step, religion ought to be present throughout the process. And if putting it to them in these words sounds too “religious,” then perhaps it can be rephrased in terms of learning to explore, appreciate, and share thoughts, principles, purposes and delights in what is good and true from the Lord.

Conclusion

The Lord has revealed that conjugal love is unlimited in its variety, even though it appears as if it were the same in many cases. (*Cf. CL 57*) We cannot possibly know the quality of every marriage in the church or of every relationship which is just beginning. But we can know some general principles about truly conjugal love. The Lord has revealed what conjugal love is in its origin because it is not until one knows what that love is “in its true essence and perfect state” that one can see the endless varieties with any understanding. (*CL 57*) As the church follows the Lord and seeks from Him the precious blessings of that love into which are gathered all joys and delights, it must keep its sight set firmly on those fundamental principles which make love to be truly conjugal. It is these that it must then apply to all the variety of circumstances within the church so that the conjugal of good and truth is within.