

DOCTRINAL CLASS (4)

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CONJUGIAL LOVE

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The number we read at the opening of the class, closes with the words: "When these things were said by angels, I heard from spirits who were standing by, that these are matters of angelic wisdom, which are transcended. But these spirits were natural-rational and not spiritual-rational." (C.L. 178)

What is the difference between the natural-rational and the spiritual-rational? This difference may be expressed as follows:

The natural rational man looks to himself and his own happiness in the first place, after this to the happiness of his family, then to society, the country, the Church and finally to the Lord's Kingdom, in the last place. While the spiritual rational man looks to the welfare of the Lord's Kingdom and thence its happiness in the first place, thence to the welfare of the Church, of the country, of society, of his family, while he regards his own happiness in the last place. Thus in the light of heaven the spiritual-rational man is seen right side up, while the natural-rational man is seen upside down.

The natural-rational man always lives for the sake of his own happiness and never finds it; the spiritual rational man does not seek for his own happiness and to him eternal happiness is given.

Particularly is this true of marriages. What is called romantic love in the world, places happiness as the ideal or goal of life and never finds it. Conjugal always looks to the welfare of the Lord's Kingdom, the Church, society in the first place and happiness in the last, and in this resides all eternal happiness.

In every marriage there are states in which all happiness is taken away, and unhappy states ensue. When such states arrive, if a man and woman have their own happiness as an ideal and goal, they desire separation. In the world they often divorce, and if they do not divorce, it is on account of external reasons of many kinds. In the Church if they do not think of separation in this life, they think of separation in the life after death.

If a man and woman are spiritual rational, they do not think primarily of their own happiness, but of the welfare and order of the Lord's Kingdom, of the Church, of society, of their family. With such the states of unhappiness pass away, and states of eternal happiness are given them, for they are content in the Lord's Providence, and they see their marriage as being part of the order of Divine Providence.

Every marriage, which is entered into from love, and in which one takes the marriage vows as sacred vows before the Lord and the Church, is in the stream of Providence. Wherefore to every marriage in the Church the Lord's words apply. "Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." (Matt. 19:6)

Any desire to be separated, even after death, is an internal breaking of this commandment. Any favorable looking upon a separation in marriages either with ourselves or with others comes from a lack of trust in the Lord's Divine Providence.

All in the Church think they believe in the Divine Providence; but much of what is called trust in the Divine Providence is only a form of fatalism. A man accepts his fate, and the fate of others, particularly those who are dear to him, a fate which he cannot help or do anything about, and calls it trust in the Divine Providence. Whether one truly believes in the Divine Providence of the Lord manifests itself in those things in which man can act against the Divine Providence, and there is nothing in which a man is more apt to act against the Divine Providence than in the things of marriage; that is, in man putting assunder what God hath joined together, - Not only an external separation, but an internal separation which takes place when a man or woman ceases to look to the eternal. All internal or external separation takes place, out of a separation of the good and the true, which is the soul of marriage. Whenever a man or woman begins to look to the good alone or to the true alone, or to make one important and the other not important, conjugal love immediately departs; even if they regard both the good and the true as important, but do not see them to be one and inseparable, they tend to destroy the conjugal, and this is still true when, theoretically, they are said to be united, and practically, that is in the life, they are not united.

In the marriage services of the Old Church, a man and woman take their vows to be faithful, "for better or for worse." These words "for better or for worse" are omitted in the services of the New Church; for in the Word to the New Church it is taught that the marriage service represents the marriage of the Lord and the Church, and that marriages are to be entered into with the sole thought of being eternal. Never-the-less, there are in the words "for better or for worse" an important truth, if rightly understood; for it is of order for all marriages to continue to the end of life in this world, whether happy or not happy; for this law which is not to be broken with the exceptions laid down in the book on Conjugal Love, is for the sake of society and the family; wherefore, up until recently, the laws of Christian lands, as to the dissolution of marriages, were severe; for there was a general perception

that the welfare of the state and the family was of greater moment than the happiness or unhappiness of the individuals. Thus far in relation to the world; but the words "For better or for worse", has also an application to the Church, namely, this: Man from himself can never know what is better and what is worse. To man what appears better is often worse, and what appears worse is often better. If a man therefore trusts in the mercy of the Lord and in Divine Providence, and in His Word, he does not judge from himself what is better and what is worse from the appearance, and he never trusts his own feelings in regard to this, for he knows his own feelings are most deceptive. For example a marriage between those who are in much natural good, and who have easy going and aimable dispositions from heredity, appear as happy and even ideal to the world, even to those who are in them; and yet such marriages, if there is nothing spiritual in them, are merely animal; while with those who enter the struggle of regeneration, marriage in many states may appear unhappy and bitter, may appear worse than no marriage, and yet such states may be temptations leading to Conjugal Love. If therefore, we understand the words "for better or for worse," as meaning what appears to man to be for better or for worse; and has in it the acknowledgement that the Lord alone knows what is better and what is worse, and that man in so far as he trusts in himself, his own feelings, and his own intelligence is always deceived, then these words are seen to contain a most important truth of marriage namely that a man must trust in the Divine Providence of the Lord, and in His Divine laws including that of marriage, and must not trust in what to him or what to the world appears better or worse. To illustrate: A husband and wife, in a merely natural state, while finding a common ruling enjoyment in natural pleasures, are happy together; which state is worse, then, when there begins to be a struggle against the dominance of merely natural enjoyments, which struggle often leads temporarily to unhappiness in marriage, which state of unhappiness is in this case a better state than the state of happiness which went before.

We have said the natural-rational places happiness as the **primary** end of or goal of marriage, while the spiritual marriage places the Lord's Kingdom, and its Divine order as the primary goal. The natural rational man desires order, but it is the order which every man can see, it is the order of natural laws, natural charity, natural kindness, and sympathy. Such laws are not in agreement with the laws of the Divine Providence; for while the Lord is Infinite Divine Love and mercy, He frequently does not appear to act according to laws of order such as they appear to the natural man. For example the Lord permits most grievous trials such as wars in which the innocent appear to suffer; not only physically, but also mentally, even morally. The evil are permitted to prosper in the world while the good often, not only do not prosper, but are even tortured, and cruelly treated.

In relation to the individual the Lord often appears to leave man when he needs Him the most, and when man prays, even to despair, the Lord appears not to hear and does not bring visible aid. From such things the natural rational man often doubts the Lord's Divine Providence or thinks it is only in generals.

In the Church no man would dare to express doubt of the Lord's Divine Providence. But the natural-rational man opposes those who live in the stream of the Lord's Divine Providence. For the spiritual-rational man as seen by the natural rational man often does not appear to act according to laws of natural order, he permits grievous and even cruel things to take place in the Church and does not appear to take active steps to put an end to them. He appears to go away, to be indifferent, or not heed when he is needed the most. He at times does not show charity or sympathy when they are earnestly plead for. On account of these things the natural-rational man hates the spiritual-rational man and when possible persecutes him.

Can we not feel how we tend to side with the natural-rational man, who looks to temporal and immediate ends, and oppose ourselves to the spiritual-rational man who looks solely to eternal ends, and how in doing this, we are opposing the Divine Providence. If with us there is a beginning of the spiritual-rational we still, in many states, find ourselves supporting the things of our natural-rational against the things of the spiritual-rational which have just commenced and are still weak. If however there is a love for the spiritual-rational which is commencing, we are then brought into temptation, combat, and repentance. In such states we see things like certain drawings, called illusions of reversible perspectives which when viewed in one way appear the inverse from the way they appear when viewed in the opposite way. As long as we view them in the one way we cannot see them in the opposite way and visa versa. The viewing of things from the natural-rational is the inverse from viewing the same things with the spiritual rational; when we view things with the natural-rational we cannot understand how we saw them the opposite when we had viewed them with the spiritual rational, and when we view them with the spiritual-rational we cannot understand how we possibly saw them inversely with the natural-rational. These alternations of seeing, now with the natural-rational, now with the spiritual-rational, are given in order that man may be in freedom and freely choose and finally confirm either the one or the other. If a man will permit himself to be humbled, and will trust in the Lord, in His Divine Providence, in His Word, and in His Presence in the Church, then he will confirm the things of the spiritual-rational. But if a man trusts in the things of his own feelings, and his own intelligence then he will confirm the things of the natural-rational. - It is indeed easier to confirm the things of the natural rational, for such things are in agreement with appearances, with natural logic based on appearances, and with natural and innate loves; while the spiritual rational sees things contrary to natural appearances, contrary to merely natural logic, and especially contrary to the loves, affections, and delights, which a man is in, prior to regeneration.