

Quotes from the Word: The Love of Children

OLD TESTAMENT

So it came to pass in the process of time that Hannah conceived and bore a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, "Because I have asked for him from the Lord. For this child I prayed, and the Lord has granted me my petition which I asked of Him" (1 Samuel 1:20, 27).

Unless the Lord builds the house,
They labor in vain who build it...
Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord,
The fruit of the womb is His reward.
Like arrows in the hand of a warrior,
So are the children of one's youth.
Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them.
(Psalm 127:1, 3-5)

"And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart;
you shall teach them diligently to your children,
and shall talk of them when you sit in your house."
(Deuteronomy 6:6-7)

Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine in the very heart of your house,
your children like olive plants all around your table.
Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord.
(Psalm 128:3-4)

NEW TESTAMENT

Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:2-4).

"Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me" (Matthew 18:5).

"Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 18:10).

"Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God." And He took them up in His arms, put His hands on them, and blessed them (Mark 10:14, 16).

"A woman, when she is in labor, has sorrow because her hour has come; but as soon as she has given birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world" (John 16:21).

Quotes from the Word: The Love of Children

“What man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!” (Matthew 7:9-11).

HEAVENLY DOCTRINE

MARRIAGE AND THE LOVE OF CHILDREN

For people who desire truly conjugal love, the Lord provides similar partners, and if they are not found on earth, He provides them in heaven. This results from the fact that all marriages of truly conjugal love are provided by the Lord (*Conjugal Love* 229).

Truly conjugal love with its delights comes only from the Lord and is given to those who live according to His commandments (*Conjugal Love* 534).

Heavenly conjugal love consists in one living, content in the Lord, together with one's partner whom one loves very tenderly, and with one's children. In the world this brings a person a deeper pleasure, and in the next life heavenly joy (*Arcana Coelestia* 5051:2).

The source of true marital love and the love of parents toward their children, and even greater love toward grandchildren, no one knows. Yet because something heavenly is [felt] in those loves, there must be something universal coming out of heaven and flowing into the minds of all people. If the Lord did not love all and each as a Father loves his children, and the innermost heaven from the Lord as a mother loves her children, a love of children would never exist (*Arcana Coelestia* 1683).

A Divine-heavenly sphere of love continually goes forth from the Lord toward all who embrace the doctrine of His church, who are obedient to Him, as children are to their father and mother in the world, who devote themselves to Him, and who wish to be fed, that is, instructed by Him. From this heavenly sphere a natural sphere arises, which is one of love towards infants and children (*True Christian Religion* 308).

The primary duties which confederate, affiliate, and bring the souls and lives of two married partners together into one are those which involve their joint concern in bringing up children. These duties are joined together through the counsel, support, and many other kinds of assistance that the two partners give each other. People know that these duties bring the hearts of two partners together into one and that this is owing to the love called storge (the natural affection of parents for their offspring) (see *Conjugal Love* 176).

It can be seen from the origin from which it flows that a love of little children is forever conjoined with conjugal love (*Conjugal Love* 385).

Quotes from the Word: The Love of Children

Husbands and wives are moved to their duties towards each other by marriage love and according to it; parents towards their children by the love implanted in everyone, called parental love; and children towards their parents by and according to another love which is closely connected with obedience from a sense of duty (*True Christian Religion* 431).

THE INNOCENCE OF CHILDREN

Little children are especially under the Lord's care, and they receive influx from the inmost heaven, where there is a state of innocence (*Heaven and Hell* 277:4).

Directly after birth angels from the heaven of innocence are with children; in the succeeding age angels from the heaven of the tranquility of peace; and afterwards those who are from the societies of charity; and then, as the innocence and charity with the young children decrease, other angels are with them. At length, when they become older and enter into a life foreign to charity, angels are indeed present, but more remotely (*Arcana Coelestia* 2303).

An atmosphere of innocence flows into little children, and through them into the parents so as to affect them. The innocence of early childhood which affects parents radiates from the little children's faces, from some of the movements they make, and from their first speech, and thus affects them. Little children have this innocence because they do not think from anything interior; for they do not yet know what is good and evil, or true and false. They love their parents and their little companions and play with them in a state of innocence. They also allow themselves to be guided. They listen and obey. Such is the innocence of early childhood which occasions the love called storge (see *Conjugal Love* 395).

Editor's Note: The Rev. N. Bruce Rogers notes that the word "storge"—taken from the Greek "storg"—and pronounced stor'gee (like psyche)—was used in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries to mean natural or instinctive affection, usually that of parents for their offspring, but it is no longer current.

Innocence is mirrored by young children in the way they love and trust their parents, also in their lack of all concern except to please their parents, so that food and clothing are to them not only something they need but also a source of delight. Because they love their parents, they do with affection and delight whatever their parents approve of, thus not only what their parents command but also what they think they wish to command. But it should be recognized that the innocence of young children is not really innocence, only a semblance of it. Real innocence resides solely in wisdom; and wisdom consists in behaving towards the Lord in the ways, as have just been described, that young children do towards their parents, yet with the good of love and faith as the motivation (*Arcana Coelestia* 6107:2).

Genuine innocence is wisdom, since so far as any one is wise, he loves to be led by the Lord; or what is the same, so far as any one is led by the Lord he is wise. Genuine innocence is symbolized by a beautiful child, unclothed and full of life (see *Heaven and Hell* 341:1, 3).

Quotes from the Word: The Love of Children

THE LOVE OF CHILDREN

The essence of spiritual love is to do good to others, not for one's own sake, but for their sake. Infinitely more is it the essence of Divine love. The case is the same as with the love of parents for their children, who do good to them out of love, not for their own sake but for the children's sake. This is clearly seen in a mother's love for her little children (*Divine Love and Wisdom* 335).

This atmosphere affects the feminine sex primarily, thus mothers, and the masculine sex or fathers from them. Evidence that a love of little children is engraved on the conjugal love into which women come by birth is apparent from the loving and friendly affection of girls for little children, and for the dolls which they carry, dress, kiss and clasp to their bosoms. Boys do not have the same affection. It appears as though mothers acquire a love of little children from their having nourished them in the womb with their own blood, and from the children's consequent assimilation of their life, and so from a sympathetic union between them. But this is nevertheless not the origin of that love, since, if, without the mother's knowing, another child were substituted after the birth in place of the true one, she would love it with equal tenderness as if it were her own (*Conjugal Love* 393).

What else does a mother think about when she has brought forth her child than uniting herself with it, as it were, and providing for its good? What other concern has a bird, when she has hatched her young from the egg, than to cherish them under her wings, and through their little mouths put food into their throats? (*True Christian Religion* 44).

Conjugal love is conjoined with a love of little children in parents by spiritual motivations and consequent natural ones. The spiritual motivations are to bring about a proliferation of the human race and from it an enlargement of the angelic heaven, and so to give birth to those who will become angels, serving the Lord in the performance of useful services in heaven and, by association with people, also on earth... The natural motivations causing a conjunction of these two loves are to give birth to those who may contribute useful services in human societies, and to bring about their incorporation into those societies as members (*Conjugal Love* 404).

Mutual love such as is present in heaven is not the same as conjugal love. Conjugal love there consists in the desire to be one in the life of the other, but mutual love consists in desiring what is good to another rather than to oneself, as with the love of parents towards children, and as with the love of those who are moved to do good not for their own benefit but because they find joy in doing it. Such angelic love is derived from conjugal love, and is born from it like a child from its parent. For this reason that love exists in parents towards their children. This love is preserved by the Lord in parents even when conjugal love is not present in them (*Arcana Coelestia* 2738).

CARING FOR CHILDREN

Love for little children corresponds to the protection of truth and good (*Conjugal Love* 127).

Quotes from the Word: The Love of Children

The atmosphere of a love for little children is an atmosphere of protecting and maintaining those who cannot protect and maintain themselves. For it exists from creation that things created must be preserved, safeguarded, protected, and maintained—otherwise the universe would fall to ruin. But because this cannot be done by the Lord directly in the case of living beings to whom He has bequeathed free judgment, He does it indirectly through His love implanted in fathers, mothers and nurses. They are not aware that their love is a love from the Lord in them, because they do not perceive the influx and still less the omnipresence of the Lord (*Conjugal Love* 391).

The possibility of someone loving the neighbor more than oneself is illustrated in the world from the conjugal love of some who have suffered death to protect a consort from injury; from the love of parents for their children, which is such that a mother would rather starve than see her child go hungry; and from the sincere friendship, in which one friend will expose himself to danger for another (*Heaven and Hell* 406).

SPIRITUAL NURTURING

Spiritual parents love their children for their spiritual intelligence and moral life, loving them thus for their fear of God and for their piety of conduct or life, and at the same time for their affection for and application to useful endeavors of service to society, thus for the virtues and good habits in them. Out of a love for these traits principally do they provide for and supply their needs (*Conjugal Love* 405).

The duties of parents to children are inwardly different with those who are in charity and those who are not, although externally they appear alike. With those who are in charity, that love is conjoined with love towards the neighbor and love to God. By such [parents], children are loved according to their morals, virtues, good will, and qualifications for serving the public. But with those who are not in charity, there is no conjunction of charity with the love called parental love. Consequently, many such parents love even wicked, immoral, and crafty children more than the good, moral, and discreet (see *True Christian Religion* 431:3).

In natural fathers and mothers, a love of little children springs, indeed, from innocence also, but when this innocence is received by them, it is wrapped around their own personal love. After the period of their early childhood, to the age of puberty and beyond, when innocence is no longer operative, they love them, but not for any fear of God or for any piety of conduct or life, nor for any rational or moral intelligence in them, and they pay little or almost no attention to their inner affections and thus to any virtues and good habits, but only to their external qualities to which they are favorably disposed. It is to these latter qualities that they attach, fasten and cement their love. Therefore, they also close their eyes to their faults, excusing them and encouraging them. The reason for this is that in them the love of their progeny is also love of self (*Conjugal Love* 405:2).