

# PARENTAL LOVE OR STORGÉ

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One of the things that is unique about the New Church is the Lord's special teachings about parental love. The Heavenly Doctrine often refers to that love as "*storgé*"—an unusual Greek word for parental love. It is used in the Heavenly Doctrine to carry a specialized meaning of the love of parents toward children, especially infants. It is a Divinely given love which brings with it "a sphere of innocence and peace" (see *Conjugal Love* 394).

*Storgé* is implanted in parents as a love of protecting what is procreated—a love of protecting their children (see *Conjugal Love* 385:1-2, 4-5). Thus it is part of the Lord's plan and provision for the continuation of the universe (*ibid.*). Without *storgé* the human race could not survive from one generation to the next. So in its largest sense, *storgé* comes from the greatest of the Lord's loves—the desire that there should be a heaven from the human race (see *Conjugal Love* 402). *Storgé* and *conjugal love* (true marriage love) are very closely connected in the teachings of the Heavenly Doctrine. We are told that "the love of infants is conjoined perpetually with conjugal love" (see *Conjugal Love* 385).

*Storgé* flows into parents from the highest or celestial heaven, for the angels in this part of heaven love infants, even more than parents on earth do (see *Spiritual Experiences* 1201). These angels bring an atmosphere of love everywhere that there are little children. Not only are the infants affected by it, but also the parents (*Spiritual Experiences* 1906). Of course, in the final analysis, parental love or *storgé* comes from the Lord. This is clearly shown in a very touching passage: "if the Lord did not love all and each as a Father loves his children... a love of children would never exist. It cannot produce itself" (*Spiritual Experiences* 1683e).

But how do parents receive this love? We find the answer in what the Heavenly Doctrine for the New Church teaches about innocence. The Lord's innocence flows into the angels of the highest heaven and from there, the influences from this heaven flows into the hearts and minds of all children (see *Conjugal Love* 396). When received, it produces innocence in children's faces and movements. Finally, this innocence of children deeply affects parents and causes them to love their children and to feel the love of protecting them (see *Heaven and Hell* 277-274). It is a Divinely ordained system, designed to foster the best conditions for the enduring happiness of the human race.