

Editorials

MALE AND FEMALE CREATED HE THEM

Incontrovertible is the sheer fact of two genders. There is however a fair amount of confusion nowadays over the genders. We witness traditional societies round the world with a largely subservient status for women, with male domination in some form or other, while other cultures have exalted and secure status for women. There is today also the ‘transgender’ phenomenon, with gender confusion and even alteration. We also face the agenda of ‘gay’ proponents and practitioners, who wish to accept alternate life-styles. Meanwhile, Christian mores and religion accept the one man to one-woman monogamy as the only ideal. Their voices are often muted. The New Church from the source of Heavenly Doctrine has always belonged in this latter camp. That is why “Male and Female Created He Them” are taken at face value. Monogamous marriage is “from creation.” In addition, the spiritual sense shows how the understanding and will may unite a couple interiorly and forever (*Arcana Coelestia* 54, *Conjugal Love* 156:2, *Last Judgment* 20).

Why is there so much confusion? It is because the spiritual levels of the human mind are not disposed in the same manner in male and female. These levels are spiritual, and therefore hard to detect or confess as relevant. The Writings reveal these distinctions, and from them “sides” have been taken on gender issues even in the New Church.

The levels or degrees of creation are essential and must not be ignored or treated as a mere exercise. The Writings warn that unless we keep these discrete degrees inserted throughout creation, “enormously false conclusions will arise” which some will then swear are “right and true” (cf. *Divine Love* and *Wisdom* 187). We have better get it right, then, because otherwise we will not see any distinctions between the two genders either.

Declaring male and female to be the “same” in every regard would be such an “enormously false conclusion.” No, there are indeed distinctions, but they have to be revealed for us to know about them. The physical distinctions stem from the spiritual ones.

The key to understanding discrete distinctions is that conjunctions take place between two levels of unequal height! The “truth of a higher degree” is always conjoined with the “good of a lower degree” (*Arcana Coelestia* 3952). That means the conjunction between one man and one woman involves two levels, which stand in inverse relationship to each other in the two genders. Well, the sequence begins in the Lord Himself: The “Divine marriage itself within the Lord is not a marriage between the Divine good and the Divine truth present in His Divine Human but between the Good of the Divine Human and the Divine itself.” This is explained: “The Good of the Lord's Divine Human is that which in the Word is called ‘the Son of God’ and the Divine itself that which is called ‘the Father’” (*ibid.*).

From the Lord, creation then produces a similar “chain” of higher joined to lower: “from eternity, the Lord who is Jehovah produced from Himself the sun of the spiritual world,” which is the first of creation, and from that, “created the universe, and all things in it” (*Divine Love and Wisdom* 290, 152, *Canons* 7). As the creation process flowed outwards from the Creator, from the spiritual sun as the beginning of finition, God's substance or essence, which is Love (*True Christian Religion* 33) was the starting-point for all finite things in the created universe (*True Christian Religion* 29). Being so proximate in the process, the highest two levels were too active for even angelic reception. They are therefore like “belts, made radiant by a fiery source, which surround the Sun,” (*Arcana Coelestia* 7270:2) which is the Lord. This is the nature of the consecutive degrees of order

down to the heaven nearest to the Lord, buy a “continuous chain linked to the First Being” down to the “lowest degrees present with humans, [who are in] the last and lowest...natural order” (ibid.). As these degrees are discrete, i.e. non-continuous, they become relatively “unresponsive and frigid, general and obscure” (ibid.). All the way down the chain, truth of a higher degree is conjoined to the good of the next lower level. Divine Truth (Wisdom) is conjoined with the celestial good (*Arcana Coelestia* 3952). This marriage produces celestial truth, conjoined with spiritual good; its truth is conjoined with natural good. Natural truth is conjoined with rational good; its truth is joined to sensuous good. Sensuous truth is joined to corporeal good (although these degrees are quasi discrete). Seed is conjoined to soil. Soil is termed “female” in the Writings, and all “seeds” are masculine (*True Christian Religion* 585). That does not ignore stamen and pistils, which Swedenborg observed in his scientific works, but returns to the ancient model of the earth as mother, and all seed as male. This model for a truth of a higher degree joined with the good of a lower degree follows the “chain” of creation right into the male and female.

We get the idea. These degrees are present in both male and female. God created humans into two genders: “Male and Female Created He Them.” They are like the soil itself on earth, where all influx terminates (*Arcana Coelestia* 7270). The higher “truth” is conjoined with a lower “good” just as a seed is implanted into soil.

When we talk of degrees, we usually think of consecutive tiers as in a cake, or floors in a building. However, there is also a concentric way of looking at this. What is highest in consecutive order becomes the center in simultaneous order. It is like an extended telescope, which is then pushed together: the highest eyepiece then becomes the “center” of the collapsed cylinders. Seen from above, you see something like a dartboard, with a

bull's-eye, an inner ring, an outer ring, etc.

The Writings talk of male and female distinctions that way: not above or below, but two concentric circles. Nevertheless, they are the same as high and low. Therefore, the gender distinction: In the male, the deepest i.e. highest or inmost level of the soul is love, and its covering or veiling is truth. Conversely, the highest or inmost level of the soul of the female is truth, having in it a strong urge to be joined to a male source, and this truth is covered or veiled with love. The woman's truth is accepted "as is" and proceeds in terms of affection.

Since a male's inmost is good, which proceeds in terms of truth, this is called "the truth of good" or the "truth from good." "The truth of good or truth from good is masculine" (*Conjugal Love* 88). It is the same as "love and its clothing wisdom, or, love veiled over with wisdom" (*Conjugal Love* 32). We can picture love as colored "red" and wisdom as colored "blue." The male in that case is a red circle with a blue edge. The female is the converse: "the good of truth or good from that truth" (*Conjugal Love* 88) or "wisdom and its clothing the love stemming from it" (*Conjugal Love* 32). Her picture is thus a "blue" circle and a "red" edge! As said before, the two genders are converse of each other as to the discrete levels of their soul! From this, distinctions come all physical differences. Here we find a new reason for saying "Vive la Différence"!

There are no proofs of this, but plenty of illustrations. Everyone knows what attraction to the "feminine" involves. Males are attracted by the face, body, clothing, make-up, behavior, manners of women. Women look deeper to find men attractive, but among the more outward characteristics of "male"— are the bearded chin, the deeper voice, a more visible musculature. The Writings mention these differences between the genders (*Conjugal Love* 218) and "jobs" according to gender (*Conjugal Love* 90). However, we should admit right

here and now that a totally unforeseen factor, only hinted at during the Age of Reason when the Writings were published, was universal education and suffrage. Beginning with the works of Rousseau, contemporary to Swedenborg, Education was revolutionized, and today both genders receive equal educational opportunities and increasingly equal jobs as well. Everyone today knows that ‘coeds’ just as often as not outperform males in practically every scholastic subject! There are no differences, many say. Only in most sports are there still a gender distinction, i.e. males and females do not compete together or against each other. All of this has erased or at least put into question many of the social distinctions observed in the Writings. However, we should beware of erasing the inward distinctions of degrees of creation along with them.

Still active, for example, will always be the physically based attraction between the genders, namely “beauty, manners, and similarity of conditions” (*Arcana Coelestia* 4145). However, these do not account for the vast depth of love and “falling in love” which must be moved by far deeper forces, namely those of the soul stemming from creation itself. Such depth of love for the opposite sex is illustrated in the Writings by those who duel to the death for the love of a woman (*Conjugal Love* 333). One recent movie put it: “Is she worth dying for?”

The inverse relationship of the degrees of the soul is the secret powerhouse for the level of attraction between males and females. This level of friendship is totally blunted and parodied between friends of the same gender. Same gender friendships are not internal unions, but are like the sparring of athletes (*Conjugal Love* 55:6). Because of the inverse discrete levels of the soul, the male soul is “male” and all through his body and the soul of the female is “female” and all through her body, and they can never be changed into each other (*Conjugal Love* 32, 33, 46)! The love worth dying for, the deepest attraction, doctrinally

stated, therefore exists between “the male wisdom from the love of growing wise, and the [female] love of wisdom from that wisdom,” or between “truth from good (masculine), and the good of truth from that truth (feminine)” (*Conjugal Love* 89). This can exist only between two of the opposite sex.

There are many “keys” to keep such a conjugal or marriage union alive and looking to eternity. We only mention one: the woman or wife is able to draw man’s love of his own intelligence to her own heart, and love his intelligence for him! She does this in ways not even she knows (*Conjugal Love* 193), and not without some silence about the man’s deeper inclinations (*Conjugal Love* 167:2).

Can we see some of the distinction of gender in ourselves? Can we reflect that whatever is of “love” then comes out in a conscious response from the “other” end of equation: if you are male, your love only works by means of truth, and at least at times views truth abstractly from your driving love? If you are female, your truth is the starting point, a “fact” to go by, but it only manifests itself together with your personal affection or involvement. There can hardly be a “litmus” test for such interior distinctions, since the outcome is affection together truth in either case. Both men and women appear the same in their productivity. That is why the inner mental workings of the two genders have to be revealed.

Finally, we come to the conjunction between the male and the female. Because there is One only God of all creation (by however many Names He is known!) and because the entire Church both in heaven and indeed on all planets in the universe, appear as One Church before His eyes, to reflect One God and One church, heterosexual monogamy is the only legitimate conjunction from creation (*Conjugal Love* 70). The two genders were made so complimentary that only a denial of the history of the human race could construe any other than a heterosexual

union. Besides, the “end of creation is an angelic heaven from the human race,” which is why the highest level of human delight is attached to the act of procreation (cf. *Conjugal Love* 68, 143, 390, *Heaven and Hell* 402), thereby guaranteeing the continuation of the human race. The source of the delight is from the conjugal or marriage sphere, which extends from the Lord as Source throughout His entire creation, “in an instant” (*Conjugal Love* 92, 222, 389). The “conjugal-instantly” leaves the mere “speed-of-light” for dead! So holy is the monogamous act of procreation that the organs themselves are deemed holy, and should not be abused away from procreation; and all manner of alternatives are deemed as “foul” and “profane”, “prohibited degrees,” listed in the literal text of Leviticus 18 (*Arcana Coelestia* 6348, *Apocalypse Revealed* 784, 799, *Conjugal Love* 519). In that chapter, all sexual disorders are listed by verse: adultery, incest, homosexuality, bestiality. Rape is mentioned elsewhere, and sexual abuse or harassment is condemned as the intention behind these acts, via the 9th and 10th commandments against all coveting of evils. Such “foul” liaisons, which “profane marriage,” are prohibited degrees of sex. When the Old Testament text already proscribes anything that clearly, all the Writings need do is to add the Divine imprimatur to it.

The spiritual relationship between the husband and wife being on two levels, the reproductive organs also switch to the opposite of its gender. I.e. the woman’s womb refers to truth, or a rational reception of doctrine of the church (switching from woman’s usual representation of good). The male now represents love from which truth comes as seed (switching from the male’s usual representation of truth). Both male and female in the act of procreating, thus move to their interior nature (male love veiled by truth, female truth veiled by love). This is illustrated by the Lord and the Church represented by a

Bridegroom and Bride. As a couple approach the Lord, the Bridegroom represents the Lord, and the Bride the Church. But after they are married and have taken their vows, the Lord alone is the Bridegroom, and the Man and his Bride, i.e. husband and wife together, form the Church or Bride (*Conjugal Love* 125). The representation changes when the interior marriage takes place, effecting a reversal in roles between going up the aisle and going down it! This doctrine has been the source of the occasional New Church custom of the Bride and Groom exchanging places on the Chancel after they are declared “husband and wife.”

It is for the same reason that physical conjunction is prohibited during the betrothal state or anytime prior to the wedding. Remember that Mary was in danger of being stoned to death for being with child before she and Joseph had contact. Most world cultures hold the pre-marital state equally sacred and protected, an ideal in which the New Church joins forces together with a rational view as to ‘why.’ Namely, “It is apparent that a love for the opposite sex is not the origin of truly conjugal love, but that it is its first stage, being first in time, but not in end” (*Conjugal Love* 98). People who fall in love want to have sex before marriage, and perhaps the explanation above is not enough. The Lord forgives the “sins of youth” and everyone can always recover to an orderly path. However, the law is to harness the sexual desire by the Betrothal union, which is of “souls” before that of the body. The “end” of marriage is first; but the “first” manifestation of marriage is the physical attraction, tempting couples to yield. Nevertheless, marriage love does not grow from that attraction! A stronger marriage does not result from premarital unions. That is why the holy state of betrothal protects the couple by turning to the spiritual side of the marriage, letting doctrine sustain their souls as they seek a closer union. The ideal “time” for the wedding is then just right, whenever its condition is fulfilled.

“Male and female created He them” signals an order to creation. The miracle that the same Lord and God created two genders, lies in the degrees in the chain of creation running through both, but offset by one step. If you think of a staircase, good is a platform, and truth is the riser. The male begins with a platform and goes down the next riser; and female starts with a riser and comes down to a platform. The higher truth is always joined to a lower good, all the way down. Although the male and the female stand on the same ground, spiritually, couples access each other, higher to higher, lower-to-lower, higher to lower. All these relationships are described in the work *Conjugal Love*. These movements are only perceived as lateral movements, which can become a source of “colds” and some argument in marriage. However, knowing these doctrines allows both singles and couples to be aware of degrees of height in the human soul: the masculine need to see a point most high and lofty, and the feminine need to fly even higher with her affection for that same point. The truth both see is from the Lord, and joins them forever.

BE PERFECT

The Lord said, “Therefore you shall be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48).

Since creation is finite, it cannot be perfect. Only the infinite Lord God is perfect. Why then does the Lord command us to “be perfect”? It is because it has a spiritual meaning. Literally, it is impossible, but the spiritual meaning is quite possible: “They are ‘perfect’ when the Lord is in them” (*Doctrine of Life* 84). Simple, we are perfect, when the Lord can be in us.

Even though we are still finite and imperfect, the Lord can be in us when we turn to Him, or when we have overcome evils on our own, and thanked the Lord for the victory. The good that we then do has the Lord in it, because genuine good does not seek any reward or praise. We do it unselfconsciously, in charity. We are “perfect,” but only because we then lose the power of reflecting on the good that we do. The more regenerated a person