



OUR DAILY BREAD
Resources for Spiritual Questers

An Introduction to the Swedenborgian Way of Life

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A Course Consisting of Weekly Reflections on Swedenborg's Theology

Course Outline

WEEK I: INTRODUCTION

WEEK II: GOD IMAGE:

WEEK III: HEAVEN AND HELL

WEEK IV: DOCTRINE OF LIVING I-- FAITH:

WEEK V: DOCTRINE OF LIVING II-CHARITY:

WEEK VI: DOCTRINE OF LIVING III-USE:

WEEK VII: THE DIVINE MARRIAGE

WEEK VIII: REGENERATION (REBIRTH)

WEEK IX: BIBLE

WEEK X: THE DEPTHS OF THE SELF

WEEK VII: THE DIVINE MARRIAGE

The principles behind Swedenborg's concept of marriage are cosmic. They are grounded in creation itself, and ultimately in God's own Being. A note for contemporary readers is in order. Swedenborg wrote in the 18th century, and LGBTQ issues were not in public discourse. There are only 2 times in Swedenborg's 30 volumes when he even alludes to LGBTQ issues, and then it is only in passing. So in discussing marriage issues, Swedenborg is exclusively heterosexual. But when he talks about marriage principles in a cosmic way, the possibility of application to LGBTQ issues is possible.

Marriage begins in the Divine Marriage principle in God Himself. God is the perfect marriage of Love and Wisdom. We talk about love and wisdom as if they are two things. But in action, they are totally united. As we saw in the lesson on faith and charity, faith and charity are united in good works. In God, Love and Wisdom are one God. Only in discussion do we divide them into two. Love and Wisdom, show themselves in good deeds and true ideas, or in us as loving feelings and true thoughts. This is the Divined Marriage principle—Love and Wisdom totally unified.

In heaven, God appears as the sun. Consider: what 2 major qualities shine out from the sun? We get heat and light from the sun. In God as the spiritual sun, love as heat and light as wisdom shine forth into the whole created universe. Our very capacity to love and think flow into us from God's heat and light. Without God flowing into us, we would not be able to love or think true thoughts. Here again, we confront Swedenborg's mysticism. We are united to God when we act on the love and wisdom that flows into us by doing good deeds according to true principles. And this is God-in-us. Our capacity to love and think are not our own. They are God's in us.

God is also united with the human race. The metaphor for this union is marriage. We are the bride and God is the husband. This metaphor is in the prophets Hosea and Jeremiah, it is

scattered through the Gospels, and all over the place in Revelation. The marriage symbolism is a way of talking about God's love and wisdom being in us, and our union with God by means of it. In Catholicism, nuns are married to Jesus, and, I believe, actually wear wedding rings.

This cosmic wedding principle created human marriages. The love and wisdom of God finds a form in woman and man. In general, women symbolize the love aspect of God and men symbolize the wisdom aspect of God. It needs to be said that both women and men both have love and wisdom principles in them. When woman and man come together in human marriages, the cosmic love and wisdom union is realized in the human realm. Since God's union with the human race—the mystical marriage—is eternal, so in Catholicism, marriages are eternal. That is why Catholics do not allow divorce. They take the symbolism of the divine marriage with humanity seriously. And they make human marriages reflect the eternal character of the divine marriage.

This brings up a word that I think society has forgotten: chastity. The traditional meaning for chastity is the vow to give up marriage that priests, monks, and nuns take. It traditionally means taking a vow of celibacy, a vow to give up marriage. But for Swedenborg, chastity means devotion to one beloved. It means the faithfulness of marital fidelity. Only people who are married are chaste, not people who give up marriage.

But Catholics, and most traditional Christians say that marriage ends upon death. In heaven, humans are no longer joined in marriage—everybody is single. In Dante's *Divine Comedy*, in *Paradiso*, that is, in heaven, all the people are celibate—single. The *Divine Comedy* is all about the couple Dante and Beatrice. Beatrice leads Dante through hell, purgatory, and heaven. And when they finally get to the highest level in heaven, they each are united mystically with God, and separate from each other.

Here Swedenborg differs from traditional Christianity. For Swedenborg, couples remain united in heaven. The heavenly, or cosmic marriage is based on the spiritual union of love

and wisdom. This cosmic marriage is all through the created universe, including heaven. So the same marriage principle that brings woman and man together in this world persists in the next. Women and men are married in the next life and enjoy everything there that they enjoyed here on earth—everything. Since heaven is a continuation of life here, and since we have spiritual bodies there, physical expression of marital love occurs in heaven, too.

What is remarkable for a male Christian in the 18th century is that Swedenborg insists on absolute equality between the sexes. Recall our discussion on heaven and hell. The principle love of hell is a love of controlling, or dominating. Love is destroyed when one person tries to control another. The person being controlled feels anger and resentment to the person controlling them. This is especially the case in marriage. No one can control the other one, or love dies.

Some Biblical support for the Divine Marriage principle are the following:

Revelation 9:6-9:

Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunderpeals, crying out,

“Hallelujah!

For the Lord our God

the Almighty reigns.

Let us rejoice and exult

and give him the glory,

for the marriage of the Lamb has come,

and his bride has made herself ready;

to her it has been granted to be clothed

with fine linen, bright and pure”—

for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

And the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.”¹

Jeremiah 31:31-32:

The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband,^[a] says the LORD.

Hosea 2:16-20:

On that day, says the LORD, you will call me, “My husband,” and no longer will you call me, “My Baal.” For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, and they shall be mentioned by name no more. . . . And I will take you for my wife forever; I will take you for my wife in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love, and in mercy.²⁰ I will take you for my wife in faithfulness; and you shall know the LORD.

Revelation 21:1-2, 9-10:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. . . . Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, “Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.” And in the spirit^[d] he carried me away to a great, high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God.

Matthew 25:1:

Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom.

¹ New Revised Standard Version Bible: Anglicized Edition, copyright 1989, 1995, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Mark 2:18-19:

Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; and people^l came and said to him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" Jesus said to them, "The wedding guests cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them, can they? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast.

Genesis 1:26-28:

Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."

*So God created humankind^{le} in his image,
in the image of God he created them;^{lf}
male and female he created them.*

God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply,

Genesis 2:21-25:

So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said,

*"This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
this one shall be called Woman,
for out of Man this one was taken."*

Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.

The Divine Marriage principle can be found everywhere throughout Swedenborg's writings:

Divine Love and Wisdom n. 28, 29

The true divine essence is love and wisdom. If you gather together everything you know, focus your mind's insight on it, and look through it carefully from some spiritual height to discover what is common to everything, the only conclusion you can draw is that it is love and wisdom. These two are essential to every aspect of our life. Everything we deal with that is civic, everything moral, and everything spiritual depends on these two things.

Apart from them, there is nothing. The

No one can deny that in God we find love and wisdom together in their very essence. He loves us all out of the love that is within him, and he guides us all out of the wisdom that is within him²

Divine Love and Wisdom n. 33

All human feelings and thoughts arise from the divine love and wisdom that constitute the very essence that is God. The feelings arise from divine love and the thoughts from divine wisdom. Further, every single bit of our being is nothing but feeling and thought. These two are like the springs of everything that is alive in us. They are the source of all our life experiences of delight and enchantment, the delight from the prompting of our love and the enchantment from our consequent thought. Since we have been created to be recipients, then, and since we are recipients to the extent that we love God and are wise because of our love for God (that is, the extent to which we are moved by what comes from God and think as a result of that feeling), it therefore follows that the divine essence, the Creatress, is divine love and wisdom

² Swedenborg, Emanuel. *Divine Love and Wisdom*. West Chester, PA: Swedenborg Foundation, 2008. Print.

Divine Love and Wisdom n. 83

In the spiritual world, divine love and wisdom look like a sun. There are two worlds, one spiritual and one physical; and the spiritual world does not derive anything from the physical one, nor does the physical one derive anything from the spiritual one. They are completely distinct from each other, communicating only by means of correspondence, whose nature has been amply explained elsewhere.⁶⁴ The following example may be enlightening. Warmth in the physical world is the equivalent of the good that thoughtfulness does in the spiritual world, and light in the physical world is the equivalent of the truth that faith perceives in the spiritual world.

Divine Love and Wisdom n. 89

Warmth and light emanates from the sun that arises from divine love and wisdom. In the spiritual world where angels and spirits live, there is just as much warmth and light as there is in the physical world where we live. The warmth feels just like warmth and the light looks just like light, as well. Still, the warmth and light of the spiritual world and the warmth and light of the physical world are so different that they have nothing in common, as I have already mentioned [§83]. They are as different as life and death. The warmth of the spiritual world is essentially alive, and so is the light; while the warmth of the physical world is essentially dead, and so is the light. The warmth and the light of the spiritual world come from a sun that is nothing but love, while the warmth and light of the physical world come from a sun that is nothing but fire. Love is alive, and divine love is life itself. Fire is dead, and solar fire is death itself. We may call it that because it has absolutely no life in it.

Heaven and Hell n. 371

The Divine that goes forth from the Lord flows chiefly into marriage love because marriage love descends from a conjunction of good and truth; for it is the same thing as has been said above, whether you say conjunction of understanding and will or conjunction of good and truth. Conjunction of good and truth has its origin in the Lord's Divine love

towards all who are in heaven and on earth. From Divine love Divine good goes forth, and Divine good is received by angels and men in Divine truths. As truth is the sole receptacle of good nothing can be received from the Lord and from heaven by any one who is not in truths; therefore just to the extent that the truths in man are conjoined to good is man conjoined to the Lord and to heaven. This, then, is the very origin of marriage love, and for this reason that love is the very plane of Divine influx. This shows why the conjunction of good and truth in heaven is called the heavenly marriage, and heaven is likened in the Word to a marriage, and is called a marriage; and the Lord is called the "Bridegroom" and "Husband," and heaven and also the church are called the "bride" and the "wife".³

Marital Love [Conjugal Love] n. 180

THE STATES OF THIS LOVE ARE INNOCENCE, PEACE, TRANQUILLITY, INMOST FRIENDSHIP, FULL CONFIDENCE, AND A MUTUAL DESIRE OF MIND AND HEART TO DO EVERY GOOD TO EACH OTHER; AND THE STATES DERIVED FROM THESE ARE BLESSEDNESS, SATISFACTION, DELIGHT AND PLEASURE; AND FROM THE ETERNAL ENJOYMENT OF THESE IS DERIVED HEAVENLY FELICITY. All these things are in marital love, and thence are derived from it, because its origin is from the marriage of good and truth, and this marriage is from the Lord; and because love is of such a nature, that it desires to communicate with another, whom it loves from the heart, yea, confer joys upon him, and thence to derive its own joys. This therefore is the case in an infinitely high degree with the divine love, which is in the Lord, in regard to man, whom he created a receptacle of both love and wisdom proceeding from himself; and as he created people for the reception of those principles, the man for the reception of wisdom, and the woman for the reception of the love of the man's wisdom, therefore from inmost principles he infused into people marital love into which love he might insinuate all things blessed, satisfactory, delightful, and pleasant, which proceed solely from his divine love through his divine wisdom, together with life, and flow into their recipients; consequently, which flow

³ Swedenborg, Emanuel. *Heaven and Hell*. Trans. George F. Dole. New Century Edition ed. West Chester, PA: Swedenborg Foundation, 2000. Print.

into those who are principled in love truly marital; for these alone are recipients. Mention is made of innocence, peace, tranquillity, inmost friendship, full confidence, and the mutual desire of doing every good to each other; for innocence and peace relate to the soul, tranquillity to the mind, inmost friendship to the breast, full confidence to the heart, and the mutual desire of doing every good to each other, to the body as derived from the former principles.⁴

Heaven and Hell n. 380

The love of dominion of one over the other entirely takes away marriage love and its heavenly delight, for as has been said above, marriage love and its delight consists in the will of one being that of the other, and this mutually and reciprocally. This is destroyed by love of dominion in marriage, since he that domineers wishes his will alone to be in the other, and nothing of the other's will to be reciprocally in himself, which destroys all mutuality, and thus all sharing of any love and its delight one with the other. And yet this sharing and consequent conjunction are the interior delight itself that is called blessedness in marriage. This blessedness, with everything that is heavenly and spiritual in marriage love, is so completely extinguished by love of dominion as to destroy even all knowledge of it; and if that love were referred to it would be held in such contempt that any mention of blessedness from that source would excite either laughter or anger.

FOR FURTHER READING:

Marital Love (Conjugal Love)

New York: Swedenborg Foundation, 1954.

FREE PDF e-book at swedenborg.com:

http://www.swedenborg.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/swedenborg_foundation_conjugal_love.pdf

⁴ Swedenborg, Emanuel. *Conjugal Love*. New York: Swedenborg Foundation, 1954. Print.

