

“BECOMING ONE FLESH” – by Rt. Rev. Bradley D. Heinrichs

LESSON 1– Genesis 2:18 & 21-25

18 And Jehovah God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him...."

21 And Jehovah God caused a deep sleep to fall on man, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place.

22 Then the rib which Jehovah God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.

23 And man said: "This is now bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Wife, because she was taken out of Man."

24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

25 And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

LESSON 2– Mark 10:5-9.

5 Jesus answered and said to them....,

6 "from the beginning of the creation, God 'made them male and female.'

7 'For this reason man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife,

8 'and the two shall become one flesh'; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh.

9 "Therefore what God has joined together, let not man put asunder."

LESSON 3 – Spiritual Experiences 4229 & 4192.

4229. Conjugal love is the fundamental of all mutual love. Mutual love is to wish better for another than for oneself; but the bond of conjugal love is still closer. One in that relation not only experiences the highest happiness in giving himself completely to his conjugal partner, that their minds may be united as one, but this love is the love of the conservation of the whole human race. It is the Lord's mercy towards the universal human race which inflows into conjugal love, and from thence into the conjugal love of married partners flows the love of procreating offspring, and the love of offspring itself. And moreover, they are so created that their minds and hearts may be ever more closely united.

4192. The conjugal relation is such that the love existing mutually between the parties is so intense, that they desire to be one, and each to impart to the other whatever is his own. It is from this reciprocal sentiment, or the wishing to unite one's-self in another, that the love of true marriage exists.

LESSON 3 – Divine Providence 42-44 (parts).

42. There is an appearance that the more closely anyone is conjoined to the Lord the less he is his own person....

43:2. [However] since everything that a person does from freedom appears to him to be his own for it is of his love..., it follows that conjunction with the Lord makes a person appear to himself to be free and consequently to be his own person, and the nearer the conjunction with the Lord the more free he seems, and consequently the more he seems to be his own person. He appears to himself more distinctly to be his own person because the Divine Love is such that it wills that what is its own should belong to another, thus to a man or to an angel. Such, indeed, is all spiritual love....

44. The more distinctly a person appears to himself to be his own person the more clearly he perceives that he is the Lord's, because the more nearly he is conjoined to the Lord the wiser he becomes: this wisdom teaches and also perceives. The angels of the third heaven, because they are the wisest of the angels, also perceive this; and, moreover, they call it freedom itself.

“From the beginning of the creation, God ‘made them male and female.’ ‘For this reason man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ Therefore what God has joined together, let not man put asunder” (Mark 10:6-9).

These fundamental teachings on marriage are some of the best-known sayings from the Word in the world today, and yet very few really seem to understand the essential truth contained in these words. Marriage is no longer viewed as an eternal sacred union where a husband and wife diligently strive to become ‘one flesh’ in soul, mind, and body.

Husbands and wives all over the world struggle to maintain their own sense of autonomy and power in their marriages, and as a result tend to live parallel existences where no real conjunction occurs. ***“But from the beginning of creation,”*** this was not so! ***“From the beginning of creation, God made them male and female, in the image of God He created them, and said to them be fruitful and multiply.”***

Now let’s look a little more closely at some of the details in our first story. A comparable companion – literally a counter part, balancing aid or helper. The woman being created from the rib of man, means that the Lord transferred the male’s love of his own wisdom to the female, and transformed it into conjugal love within her. *“The purpose of this was to replace the love of self in man with a love for his wife,”* for otherwise the man would have been continually self-absorbed with the pride of his own intelligence (CL 193:2). Thus, we can see that from creation the Lord created male and female to be complementary partners – in particular, we are told that *“man was born to be a form of wisdom and woman to be a form of love”* (CL 75:7). Thus, the male is designed to be the wisdom of the female’s love, and the female is designed to be the love of his wisdom (CL 32).

The next words from our text tell us that a ***“man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”*** It is important to note here, that it is the man who is instructed to leave his parents and cleave to his wife – and not the reverse.

This is because conjugal love in marriage depends primarily on the wife, for it is seated in her like a precious jewel in its matrix (De Conj. 34; CL 457). Therefore, her love is a constant and perpetual source of strength in their marriage, but the husband's love is intermittent and fluctuating, being dependent on the love of his wife (CL 216, 221). So the Lord instructs the husband to leave his parents and cleave or cling to his wife alone, and become one flesh.

The meaning of becoming "***one flesh***" deserves further consideration, because a clear understanding of these few simple words is perhaps one of the greatest keys to having a successful marriage. The Writings give us a quick litmus test to examine our own marriages with in this next passage: "*People who are in a state of truly conjugal love continually wish to be one person, but those who are not in a state of conjugal love want to be two separate individuals*" (CL 215). In contrast, we are taught that "*to will to become one flesh is conjugal love; and such as the willing is, such is that love.*" (AE 1004:3).

Further, we are told that in a marriage where conjugal love is present, the couple's souls incline towards each other and they gradually desire to think and will as one another, until eventually "*they do not wish to lead two lives but one*" (CL 50; cf. AC 10169; HH 372). In fact, without this conjunction they feel like "*a person divided or half a person*" (CL 37).

Therefore, we are instructed that "*the human form is most perfect and most noble when by marriage two forms become one form, thus when the flesh of two becomes one flesh*" (CL 201). In angelic couples from the Most Ancient Church "*the expression and receipt of that reciprocal desire exists in every single detail of life, that is, in every single part of affection and in every single part of thought*" (AC 2731).

From this it becomes clear that the nature of conjugal love is the desire to perpetually and completely conjoin the wisdom, truths, and thoughts of the male with the love, good, and affections of the female. And so we are told in this beautiful description of a heavenly marriage

that *“the wife wills to think and will as the husband, and the husband as the wife, and because each wills this, each is led by the Lord as one, and the two are one angel”* (De Conj. 35).

In this way they truly become **‘one flesh’** and the two more perfectly become one **‘image’** of God, as they were created to be (cf. AE 1004:2; SD 6110:27). Thus, we are told that *“marriage is the completion of a person, for by marriage a person becomes a complete person”* (CL 156). ***“Therefore, what God has joined together, let not man put asunder!”***

The explanation of the words from our text the Writings give, paints for us a beautiful picture of what the true nature of conjugal love between a husband and wife is supposed to be. It is a marriage of two equal halves striving to become one perfect **“image”** of God. For from creation they were created to be entirely complementary, the husband the wisdom of the wife’s love, and she the love of his wisdom. There is no thought of supremacy in a conjugal marriage, but rather the desire to do the other every good from the heart. And as they strive to become more and more **“one flesh,”** they do not lose their sense of individuality or identity, but instead gain a keener realization of the unique qualities each one brings to the relationship.

Now this concept flies in the face of much of what is taught in marriage relationship counselling today. The basic premise some hold to is that in order to have a successful marriage, partners need to focus more on developing themselves as individuals and maintain their own autonomy, for fear that if the partners seek to become one in affection and thought that they will somehow meld into an indistinguishable blob and lose all sense of self identity.

However, our lesson from the Divine Providence points out that this is only the appearance, the reality is quite the opposite. It explains the paradox by showing how we relate to the Lord. The nature of the Lord’s love is that we should experience true freedom, by being able to love him freely without any sense of compulsion. When we choose to learn His will and do the things He desires, then we come into closer conjunction with Him. As we come into closer conjunction with Him, our knowledge of Him and our wisdom from Him increases. As our

wisdom increases, we perceive that in fact the closer we come into conjunction and become one with Him, the more free we become. And the more free we become, the more we have a sense of our own identity.

Then it says that the same is true with all spiritual love and that the angels of the highest heaven perceive this more than all others and thus have a greater sense of self identity than all others. They have the most keen awareness of spheres (CL 171). The angels of the highest heaven also experience the oneness of Conjugal love more than all others, and that is because the same rules apply to this precious love.

The appearance is that the more we become one with our partner the more we will lose our sense of self identity, but the reality is quite the opposite. In a memorable relation Swedenborg had this exchange with angels about a palace designed to represent Conjugal Love. He was told that *“truly conjugal love resides in the highest region, in the midst of mutual love in the chamber...of the will, and at the same time in the midst of perceptions of wisdom in the chamber...of the understanding; and these come together in bed in a bedroom that is located in front on the east side. “Why,” I asked, “are there two chambers?” “Because,” he said, “a husband lives in the chamber of the understanding, and a wife lives in the chamber of the will.”* (CL 270:5). We can see from this that they maintain a distinctness, but nevertheless there is a continual desire to be conjoined. **EG.** The complementary parts of the Yin & Yang form a whole.

Swedenborg frequently asked angels about this unique joining of different parts, and they said: *“It is a truth... that a form is the more perfect as the constituents which compose it are distinctly different, but yet united in a unique way. They have illustrated it also by the marriage of good and truth, saying that the more these are distinctly two, the more perfectly they can be united. Likewise in the case of love and wisdom. And they said that a lack of distinction means confusion, from which springs every imperfection of form.”* (DP 4:4). **EG.** Heart and Lungs.

The nature of the Conjugal love is that we should experience true freedom, by being able to love our partner freely without any sense of compulsion. We're told that "*all freedom is attributable to love, so that perfect freedom is attributable to conjugal love, which is heavenly love itself*" AC 2744).

When we choose to freely love our partner, learn our partner's thoughts and do the things they desire, then we come into closer conjunction with them. As we come into closer conjunction with our partner, our knowledge of them and our wisdom from them increases. As our knowledge of them and our wisdom from them increases, we perceive that in fact the closer we come into conjunction and become one with them the more free we become.

In fact, the more freely we express our love for them, the more we have a sense of our own identity. The secret is that when we endure the trials and do the hard work of seeking to become one in affection, in thought, and in life, the more we gain insight of what unique qualities we bring to the relationship. So as we become more and more one flesh, the more we develop our self identity, and understand who we really are as well as who our partner is. Providentially the Lord often provides us children to help propel us onward in this wonderful arena of discovery. (cf. Cl 385-414).

So let us all appreciate the distinctiveness between the two sexes and work diligently to become one with our partners. If we do this the Lord will bless our marriages, "*innocence, peace, tranquillity, inmost friendship, complete trust, and a mutual desire of the mind and heart to do the other every good*" (CL 180). This is the blessing of heavenly happiness and the essence of conjugal love, for "*to feel the joy of another as joy in oneself – that is loving*" (DLW 47). So let us strive to model our love after the Lord's love, just as He urges us in the gospels: "***These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.***" (John 15:9-12).