

## **Marriage In Heaven**

One of the fondest hopes that people have who have lived in long, happy marriage together is that when, eventually they both die, they will meet and be together again in the spiritual world, or life after death. Often a death notice will carry the words, "Until we meet again". And, if it is the second of the two now passed on there is the lovely affirmation, often spelt out as such, that they are now "Reunited".

It can be interesting, without being morbid about it all, to walk around a cemetery and to read the hopes and quiet convictions that people have had, or have, which are inscribed on the grave stones. Invariably, and where marriage is concerned (especially long and happy marriage) there is the thought and conviction there that the two partners will be reunited in the hereafter. They don't see themselves and their descendants don't see them, as being anything different from what they have been here. They will be male and female, grandma and grandpa, husband and wife, as they were here. The deep feeling is that it could not be otherwise. Indeed it can come to the point where we couldn't imagine it otherwise. An old couple will die who were like two sides of the one coin. And even amongst the younger ones who deeply love each other the thought of being separated by death, never to know each other again, never to share life together again, can be torture. And what would be worse would be some kind of 'neuter' existence in the afterlife, being neither male nor female, husband or wife, different but so very complimentary as they are in this world.

Despite what is officially taught, the indications are that deep within their hearts, and especially when they are thinking of those close to them who have died, people think of them as they were here, masculine or feminine. Grandpa remains grandpa. Grandma remains grandma. Dad remains Dad. Mum remains Mum. A brother remains a brother. And so on. And happily married as they were here they will reunite and continue their marriage there.

This perception or conviction that most have about people continuing to be men and women in the after life, and of the marriage relationship itself surviving death is, in fact, a correct one. And this despite the official teaching on the subject. The fact is that human sexuality is not a surface thing, affecting our bodies and biological functions only. Human sexuality, and the fact that one person is male and another female, goes to the very centre or core of our being and personality.

Some would have it that male and female differences are something as it were 'put on', like some kind of skin or garment and relatively easily shed, so that we become the same. There are many indications that this is far from so. And not least among these is the teaching concerning human sexuality which is given in the theological writings of Emanuel Swedenborg.

"The human mind" wrote Swedenborg "consists of two parts, one called the understanding, and the other called the will." (*Heaven and Hell* 367). Everyone has both. Swedenborg says elsewhere "with the man the understanding predominates, and with the woman the will predominates." (ibid. 3069). It's basically a matter of emphasis. Or, to put it another way, it's all to do with the way the male and female function. The teaching given is that they function differently. Again I quote: "Man is born to think from the understanding, while woman is born to think from the will." (ibid. 368). Both, it is emphasised, think. And many women think more clearly and more intelligently than some men. But while men are created to think from their understanding, women are created to think from their will. And there is something wonderfully rich and complimentary in this. Men and women are not competitors. Each has something unique to offer, mentally, psychologically, and spiritually.

These differences, we would emphasise, are not skin deep. They go to the very core of a person's being. Sexuality is not something added on. Sexuality is something that touches every part of our being on every level. Sexuality is there in the way our minds work and in our very response to life itself. Our sexuality is part and parcel of what we are. It's also part and parcel of our personality. The two things cannot be separated. Grandpa is Grandpa and he simply cannot be anything else. He is male and we love him for, or remember him because, of his gentle, masculine ways, the lead he gave at home and the integrity which was always there. And there is no shedding of this after death. We take with us those created differences which so deeply affect us. We remain, after death, male or female, masculine or feminine. The one cannot be, and is not changed into the other. (see *Conjugal Love* 33).

Not only do we remain, after death, male or female, masculine or feminine, but there are marriages after death. The deep longing which men and women feel in this world to join their lives together is still as strong and as urgent with them in the spiritual world, after death. We make the point that death does not change this. In fact death changes very little. We are still the same people.

We are still men and women, or, if death has been in infancy or childhood, still boys or girls. Our minds will still be the same. They will still function in the same masculine or feminine way. And we will still know the same longings.

Repeated experience has witnessed to me that when we move from the natural world into the spiritual, which happens when we die, we take with us everything that pertains to our character except our earthly body. In fact, when we enter the spiritual world or our life after death, we are in a body as we were in this world. There seems to be no difference, since we do not feel or see any difference. . . . As "spirit-people," we enjoy every outer and inner sense we enjoyed in the world. (*Heaven and Hell* 461).

Here again, the teaching more particularly focuses on the coming together of men and women in marriage after death. There is an inherent desire with men and women to bring their lives together and this "remains after death is that a male remains a male and a female remains a female, and the male's masculinity pervades the whole and every part of him, and likewise a female's femininity; and the impulse to be joined is present in every detail down to the smallest." (*Conjugal Love* 37).

People in the afterlife do come together in marriage. People who have lived in happy marriage love in this world and who have been interiorly united meet again after death and resume their marriage. Together a man and a woman in marriage, make a complete unit. By themselves they are divided or half a person. Each compliments the other. Each enriches the life of the other. Each heightens the potential for use that the other has.

In putting forward such teaching one is aware, at the same time, of the many questions that can be asked in regard to it. And not the least of those questions would doubtless be with reference to what Jesus said where He seemed to teach that in fact there are no marriages after death.

To remind you again on the context, the Sadducees, it is said, had come to Jesus to make fun of the concept of life after death. And they instanced a ridiculous situation in which a woman was taken in marriage by seven brothers in turn. And they asked "At the resurrection whose wife will she be, since the seven were married to her?"

Jesus replied, "Are you not in error, because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God? When the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven." (Mark 12: 18-27).

It seems as if Jesus was being pretty definite and final, that there are no marriages in heaven, but when we look closer, both at what He said and who He said it to, a different picture emerges.

The first thing to note is that the question about marriages in heaven was not the main point at issue. The main point at issue was the question of there being a life after death, per se. The marriage part was secondary, or a side issue, and Jesus obviously did not want to be distracted by it. So, without going into the matter He answered the question to the extent that it was necessary for Him to say something, and according to the capacity of His listeners to take in what He wanted to say.

Apart from not believing in a life after death, the Sadducees, also had a very earthy, crude, idea of marriage. In fact, like most Jews of the time, they were polygamous and marriage, when it took place, was only for physical and external reasons - to beget children, to secure positions of influence, to keep wealth in a family, and that kind of thing. As they thought of marriage it wasn't really marriage at all.

Knowing this we can appreciate the point, that what Jesus was doing was ruling out marriage in heaven as those people held marriage to be. What Jesus was, in effect saying was, that in terms of how you people see marriage, and in terms of what you conceive marriage to be, I can assure you, that "when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage."

More than this, the Lord's words here carry a deeper, spiritual meaning which everyone of us can take to heart. Every person who was ever born and every person yet to be born has been, and is, born to live in heaven to eternity. The purpose of creation is a heaven of angels from the human race. Before a person is able to go to heaven however, he or she must have something of heaven within them. And to have something of heaven within us, there has to take place a kind of marriage - a marriage between what we know of the Lord's teaching and how we actually live. It is not enough to know what the Lord teaches. We must strive to live according to it. All of the Lord's truth and teaching is to be "joined" or "married" to a good life. And it is this which, at a deeper level, Jesus referred to here. What is more, it needs to take place here, in this world, now, and before we die. It becomes too late afterwards.

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