

Notes for Same-sex Marriage Discussion

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When we are thinking about or discussing whether or not the church should approve the marriage of same-sex couples, we might bear in mind the following points.

- Today we know a great deal more about the intricacies of biological sex than in Swedenborg's day (18C), and how it was at times culturally limited and even factually in error.
- Swedenborg, as was common in his day, regarded all persons with male bodies to be completely masculine in character, and vice versa. He never refers to or discusses the existence of extremely feminized men or masculinized women. To him, any male body was masculine in gender throughout, and any female body was likewise feminine. Today we experience that there is a spectrum of the relative combination of masculine and feminine characteristics within each and every person.
- Swedenborg never refers to or discusses what are now called cases of 'gender dysphoria', in which a person may suffer greatly from a strong feeling that inside themselves they are really of the opposite gender to their body – feeling like 'I am a masculine man trapped inside a female body', and vice versa. Today this well-studied type of condition can often be fully relieved by the person being helped to 'transition' successfully to the opposite sex – called 'transgendering'.

So, where this occurs, we might ask, "Does the Lord judge whether a person's immortal soul is indicated by their inner experienced gender, or by their biological sex, when they differ?"

- Some individuals are born with genitals of both sexes, making it impossible to determine whether they are either biologically male or female. Such persons have in the past been called 'androgynous' or 'hermaphrodite', whilst today they are classed as 'intersex'.
- Some persons with female bodies have been found to have male (XY) chromosomes throughout, and so, should they be classed as biologically male or female? And vice versa, some persons with male bodies have female (XX) chromosomes in their body's cells, and so should they be classed biologically as women?
- Conjugal love is not something material, but spiritual. And the material form of human bodies, beautiful or ugly, *represent* heavenly or hellish characteristics, but in any particular case, may not *correspond* to them. It is in origin a union or 'marriage' of masculine and feminine principles.

Perhaps the upshot is that who we regard as a man as opposed to a woman, should not necessarily be determined by their bodily sex, but by their gender.