

The Divinity of the Lord, the Man, Jesus Christ

A sermon by Rev. Michael Gladish
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Jesus said, “I and My Father are one” (John 10:30)
and
“He who has seen Me has seen the Father.” (John 14:9)

In the book, *Divine Love and Wisdom* #13, we read, “How important it is to have a right idea of God can be established from this, that the idea of God constitutes the inmost of thought with all who have a religion, for all things of religion and all things of worship have respect to God. Also because God, universally and in particular, is in all things of religion and worship, so without a right idea of God, no communication with the heavens is possible. Hence it is that every nation in the spiritual world is allotted a place in accordance with its idea of God as a Man; for in this idea, and in no other, is the idea of the Lord.”

While it is true that the original Latin of this teaching uses a word that means “Human,” and not specifically the masculine form of that Human, still in identifying *the Lord* as this Divine Human it pretty much forces the conclusion that we need to think of God as a MAN, that is, male.

Now of course this is a sensitive matter, so first of all let’s be clear that we’re talking about the PERFECT Man, the IDEAL Man, the Man without *any* flaws or imperfections, the Man who is supremely wise *and loving*, manly in all of the best ways, embodying all the qualities that any man or woman can admire without qualification. We might even say this is the only Man who completely and perfectly understands women, including all the issues and concerns that women face on any level, from ovulation and childbirth to deep seated wisdom and affections.

For some, whose experience of men is far less than ideal, this may be really hard to appreciate, and even if that’s not an issue it may still feel critically important for some women *and men* to be able to picture God in a feminine form. Certainly many ancient religions do so. And after all, if we are made in God’s image and likeness it would certainly seem that the originating Human should include the feminine. Furthermore, if the male and female forms of humanity balance each other and make one whole in marriage, as we believe they do, it’s logical to ask if there isn’t some way to picture this in God.

The particular challenge, though, is that everything in the revelation for the New Church points to the Man, Jesus Christ, as the one, only complete *personification* of God. And despite all the teachings about His meekness and compassion we really can’t think of Him as in any way feminine, least of all androgynous. Of course it is common in our day to hear people talk of a man’s “feminine side,” as if the loving part of his nature were somehow female. But in describing the difference between men and women the Writings say, “the masculine form is the form of the understanding, and the feminine the form of the love of that understanding, [therefore] it follows that the male has a face, voice, and body different from the female; that is, a harder face, a harsher voice, and a stronger body, and, moreover, a bearded chin – in general, a form less beautiful than the female. They differ also in their attitudes and their ways. In a word, *nothing whatever in them is alike*; and yet, in their single parts, there is what is conjunctive; yea, *in the male, the masculine is masculine in every part of his body, even the most minute, and also in every idea of*

his thought, and in every grain of his affection; and so likewise, the feminine in the female” (CL #33).

Oh, but wait. Does the fact that “*the masculine* is masculine in every part” imply that there could be something different that IS *feminine* in the masculine? – the love, for example, within his wisdom? Remember, we are taught that “in the male, the inmost is love and its clothing wisdom, or, what is the same, he is love veiled over with wisdom,” whereas in the female it is the other way around (CL 32). But this assumes that love is feminine and wisdom is masculine, and that’s NOT what the Writings teach. Rather what we’re taught is that *the masculine is love veiled over with wisdom and the feminine is that wisdom of the male veiled over with love*. We’ll come back to this in a moment, but for now think of the male and female minds both as having deep-seated, inner concerns that are veiled with different, *complementary* orientations. In men there is a deep and sensitive love that is veiled over with understanding, rationality and wisdom, or in any case, thinking processes, while in women there is a deep and sensitive wisdom that is veiled over with will, affection and love, or in any case emotional processes. So men like to present themselves as “reasonable” even when they are driven by desire, and women can appear to be wrapped up in emotion when in fact they are acting from deep, inner wisdom.

Love pertains to the will and affection, wisdom to the understanding and thought, but these are NOT masculine and feminine, rather, their particular *composition* in a person makes up that person’s sexual identity. In one wisdom “predominates” in form and expression, while in the other love “predominates” (HH #369). But both together make up the masculine and the feminine.

OK, now, given that Jesus was – and still is – a Man, and that this Man is identified as the visible God incarnate, how can we explain the Divine origin of the feminine sex?

In a way it’s pretty simple: just as the ordinary human male produces sperm with both X and Y chromosomes, but some contain *either* two X chromosomes *or* one X and one Y in each strand of DNA, so the Divine Man *has everything* and is the origin of everything both male and female. The difference is in how the essential components of each are *organized or put together*. And as you probably know, this difference is heavily influenced by the conditions prevailing in the natural and spiritual environment at the time of conception. In short, God is not creating women out of some feminine nature in Himself; He is creating them out of the exact same stuff that makes men, with variety according to the conditions in the human father’s mental and physical world.

But, you may say, why not think of this original source as feminine rather than masculine? After all, we talk about motherhood as the matrix of life, or even as a metaphor for the formation of anything. But again, the simple answer is that “the masculine is love veiled over with wisdom,” and *it is only through wisdom that love becomes visible and comprehensible*.

In *theory*, then, in a completely abstract sense, we can appreciate that *there is no gender differentiation in the infinite Divine; which is to say, the essence of God is neither male nor female, but pure Divine love*. And Divine love is neither male nor female; you could almost think of it as pure energy. But as it goes forth to create and sustain the universe that love *takes form in wisdom*: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1). So the love of God is clothed in wisdom and takes on the original, comprehensive, all-inclusive, *perfect* masculine form. *We can’t see this as it is in itself*: remember, it’s infinite – which is why for millions of years until the birth of Christ it had to be *represented* in the form of

finite human beings: angels, priests, judges, kings, seers, guru's, shamans, sadhus, lamas and so on. In fact even in Christ *we still see the infinite clothed in a finite body*, but this is a body that was fully glorified, or made Divine in the process of time. And the truth is that *this Divine Humanity was hidden even from the disciples* except in so far as they *experienced* His perfect love and wisdom in their own lives, particularly in the period following His resurrection when "He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Lk 24:27).

We'll look at this again from a different angle next week. Meanwhile, we can of course acknowledge that it is a very deep subject, that many questions remain unanswered, and that there certainly are complicating and confusing elements in it. *Women can and do represent the Divine in many ways, both in ordinary life and in the Word*, it's just that the whole perfection of God is only visible and comprehensible as a Man, specifically, ***the Man***, Jesus Christ.

It is, therefore, of more than passing interest that *the church* is represented in the Word as a *woman*, the bride and wife of the Lord. Why? – because "the feminine is that wisdom of the male veiled over with love." The whole point of the church is to learn the truths of the Word so that we can express them in our lives with love. And just as a husband and wife together make one in the eyes of the Lord and constitute a church in one household, so together they receive that wisdom interiorly and express it outwardly in charity, that is, loving relationships. ***So the church itself is feminine***, that is, the wisdom of the Lord veiled over with love. We can see this imagery throughout the Word, especially (and unfortunately in a negative way) in the prophets, where the church is described as a fallen woman, but also in a most positive way in Revelation, where she is described as a fabulous golden city "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."

But all this philosophical stuff is really only background as we try to cultivate a right idea of God, that is, a DIVINELY HUMAN idea of God, which challenges us to think of Him entirely as He presents Himself in the Gospels. The biggest questions are about how we can see that Divinity ***in*** His Humanity, which is to say, how we can see what the disciples themselves for the most part did not see, even though they spent years following Him around, hearing Him speak, watching Him miraculously heal people and dramatically control even the very elements of nature.

On one hand it would seem we have a much bigger challenge than the disciples, since we have no first-hand experience of His physical presence and so have to rely on second-hand reports of His life that are some 2,000 years old. On the other hand we know that these reports were written and preserved exactly as the Lord intended, AND on the strength of that we have something the disciples could never have imagined, something that can open our eyes in a way that is far more convincing than sensory experience (which can often be illusory). And that of course is the revelation of the spiritual sense of the Word, including all the heavenly doctrine about the Lord.

Here we have fulfillment of His own promise of "the spirit of truth that will guide us into all truth" (John 16:13), and it's not just in books like *The Doctrine of the Lord* or *The True Christian Religion*. It's in the whole of the *Arcana* where we learn about the hidden purpose and ***inner quality*** of the Lord's life as represented in the stories of the Patriarchs, judges and kings. Remember, the promise in John (14:16) is that the Father would send "another helper, that He (the Father) may abide with us forever." This Father is the Divine love and the Helper is "the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him" (John 14:17). But note the Lord declaring in the very next verse, "I will not leave you orphans, I will come to you," which is His clear affirmation that the way Divine Love appears to us and

comforts us is by means of the truth – not just the knowledge of truth, not even the natural embodiment of truth, but *the Spirit* of truth, the spiritual understanding of it.

How, then, can we see the Divine in the male Human form of the Lord? Of course we can read, study, reflect and discuss the truths of His Word both in the literal and in the spiritual sense; we can think, reason, understand, challenge and debate these truths; we can work hard every day to apply the truths to our lives. We can even pray earnestly that the Lord will heal and save us from our intellectual doubts and reservations. But in all these efforts we will be focused on His outward form, the veil of wisdom that *clothes and expresses* His infinite, Divine love. If we really want to know the Lord as He is inwardly, if we really want to experience *the Divinity within* His Humanity, we have to find ways to get in touch with that love.

As the Lord told the Jews, the consummate scholars of the Torah, concerning His Father,

“You have neither heard *His* voice at any time, nor seen His form. ... You do not have His word abiding in you, because whom He sent, Him you do not believe. You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life” (John 5:37-40).

To have life is to have the Lord’s love. How, then, can we “come to Him” on that deeper level?

There’s only one way, and that is to do what He says. As the Writings explain, “Act precedes, a person’s willing follows, for what a person *does* from the understanding, he at last *does* from the will, and finally puts it on as a habit; and it is then instilled in his rational or internal man” (AC #4353:3). In other words, we just have to get on with it and do what the Lord teaches, whether we *fully* understand it or not. Yes, of course it’s important to know how and why we should do what we do! It’s important to think, plan *and calculate the cost* (Luke 14:28). But we’re never going to understand perfectly; indeed, our understanding will develop to all eternity! At some point we have to be content to turn our 60 or 70 or 80% of faith into ACTION that expresses our *willingness* to accept more fully and believe. Then – and only then – can the Lord reveal His Father, the Divine love, to us, and bring us into conjunction with Him.

Does this feel threatening to our *proprium*? – our sense of self? Does it feel like a leap of faith that compromises rationality? Yes, of course it does! But what do we really know? And what do we really understand? If the Lord is God, if His Divine Humanity is pure love expressed in perfect wisdom, what do we have to lose in trusting Him? And what do we have to gain? The nature of love is that what is its own should be another’s, providing for the other’s freedom and happiness (TCR #43). And so we may ask, is there anything in the stories of the Lord’s natural life *or in the exposition of His spiritual life* that would suggest we can’t trust Him?

If not, why do we hesitate? He and the Father are one. Whoever sees Him sees God in the Human form.

Amen

Lessons: *Exodus* 1:22 & 2:1-10
 Children’s talk on the Providential Care of Moses
 John 5:24-40, *True Christian Religion* #85-86: selections