



Feminine Swedenborgian Spirituality

Definitions and Concepts in Feminine Spirituality

Feminine

Characteristic of or appropriate or unique to women (Merriam-Webster Dictionary)

Jungian anima (the feminine aspect in men) from Latin meaning breath, soul, spirit or vital force.

In theories about gender-role self-concept and gender identity , “feminine” can apply to everyone

Feminism

Advocacy of the rights of women (based on the theory of equality of the sexes) (Oxford English Dictionary)

Spirituality

2012 CM Del Rio and L J White defined spirituality as “an attitude toward life, making sense of life, relating to others, and seeking unity with God,” with the eventual goals of “reaching truth and goodness.”



Overview of Feminine Spirituality I

- 1895 Elizabeth Cady Stanton edited *The Woman's Bible*, to liberate women from theological arguments for women being subservient to men
- 1978 Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza, Harvard Divinity School, wrote “feminist spirituality proclaims wholeness, healing, love, and spiritual power not as hierarchical, as *power over*, but as *power for*, as enabling power.”
- 1988 Renita Weems introduced Womanist Theology with *Just a Sister Away: A Womanist Vision of Women's Relationships in the Bible*, making the case that feminist spirituality ignores the influence of race, oppression, and classism on the spirituality of Black women.



Overview of Feminine Spirituality II



- 1993 Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice*, identified “an ethic of care” and “non-violence” as the basis of women’s moral development
- 1999 Joan Borysenko, *A Woman’s Journey to God: Finding the Spiritual Path*, described women’s spirituality as “natural, earthy, relational, mystical, embodied, intuitive, sensuous, and compassionate,” and “relying on personal experience versus abstract theology and...sharing our stories.”
- 2005 Rosemary Radford Reuther, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*, noted that hierarchy is not essential in the Christian tradition; God/ess is not merely mother and father but all roles and experience.

Overview of Feminine Spirituality III

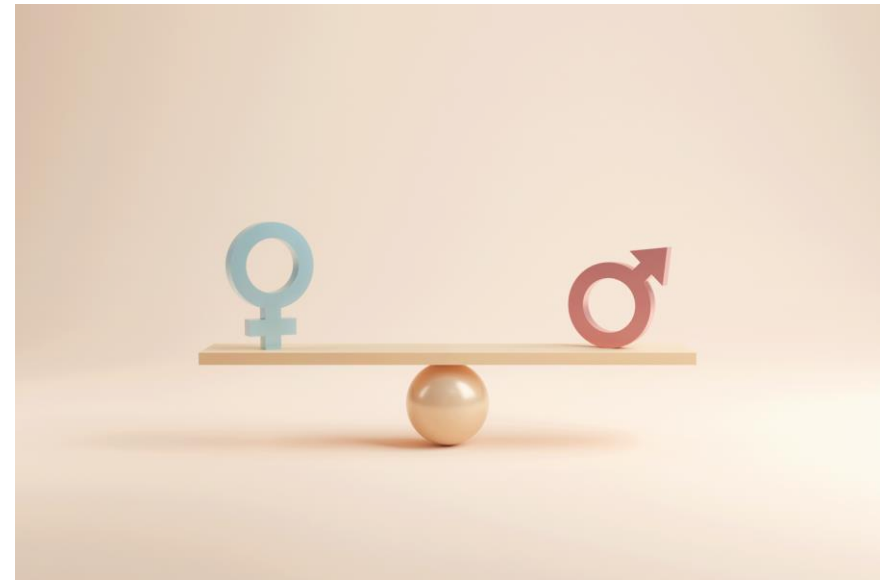
2009 Women of Spirit and Faith formed at the Parliament of the World's Religions, observing that women, and much having to do with “the feminine,” is devalued and silenced in the dominant culture. They promote alignment with feminine principle, always remaining open to guidance from Spirit, and honoring women's spiritual nature by using silence, reflection, divine guidance and prayer.

2014 Aysha Hidayatullah, *Feminist Edges of the Qur'an* asserts gender equality and justice as the foundation of Islamic morality, revealing the assumptions of the text to be in favor of feminist and LGBTQ+ values.

2016 Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow, *Goddess and God in the World*, reject traditional views of divine transcendence and omnipotence, and find divinity in the world, in finite, embodied life.

Feminine Spirituality in Swedenborg I

- WHAT IS GENDER?
- Spiritual, from Swedenborgian perspective: where in spirit the marriage of good and truth (life) is received because of form (intellect or volition), and where in conscious mind life is first experienced (perception)
- Assigned at birth by presenting genitals, or intersex presentation
- Biological: combinations of sex chromosomes (X,Y), genes on Y chromosome, gonads, hormones, cell responsiveness to hormones, brain structure/wiring.
- Social: social construct within a given culture, based on norms, behaviors, attributes, and societal roles expected of people based on their biological sex
- Gender at all levels is a limitation and attribute of finite beings necessary for union and reproduction (“gen” root = birth, race, produce) i.e. to create heaven from humankind
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Feminine Spirituality in Swedenborg II

- **GENDER IN RELATION TO PEOPLE:**
 - CL 33 “Consistent from soul to the smallest part of the body” (every cell?)
 - “In the image and likeness of the Divine One” so everyone, including people of each binary gender, images the Divine equally as well, or as imperfectly, as everyone else
- **GENDER IN RELATION TO THE DIVINE:**
 - The Divine One is in=non finite, isn’t limited by gender the way finite humans are (nor by limitations of presence, power, knowing)
 - Divine Masculine (GOD): that in the Divine One which is expressed as masculine in finite beings (Truth/Wisdom? Truth from good? Love of growing wise? Love? Creating energy? Form?)
 - Divine Feminine (GODDESS): that in the Divine One which is expressed as feminine in finite beings (Good/Love? Good from truth? Love of Wisdom? Truth? Nurturing and sustaining energy? Substance?)

Feminine Spirituality in Swedenborg III

HUMAN FORM OF DIVINE, AND OF ALL

CREATED PERSONS

DLW 18 “We can make this **comparison of the uncreated Person, who is the Divine One, with us who are created, because that Divine One is a person.** It is because of the Divine One that we earthly beings are said to have been created in the image and in his likeness of the Divine (Genesis 1:26-27)”

DLW 34 “Divine love is a property of divine wisdom, and divine wisdom is a property of divine love... Since **the divine reality is divine love and the divine manifestation is divine wisdom**, these latter are similarly distinguishably one.”



Feminine Spirituality in Swedenborg IV

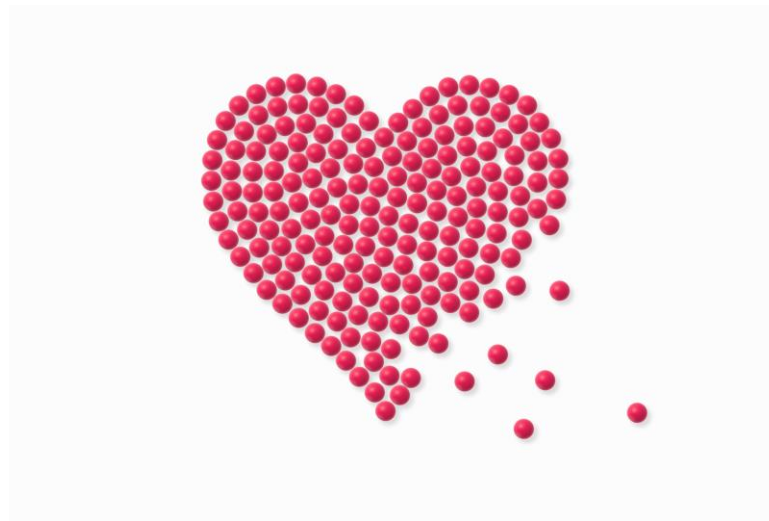
SH 3624 "[H]uman beings have been formed in such a way that every single part of them corresponds to heaven, and through heaven to the Divine."

All humans are created in the image and likeness of the Divine, corresponding to the Divinely human form. The "spiritual template" from which we are all created is love at the center (our reality) and wisdom on the outside (our manifestation,) and these qualities can be seen as separate or seen as united.

Feminine Spirituality in Swedenborg V

- DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BINARY GENDERS, IN MARRIAGE CONTEXT
- CL 32 “The difference essentially consists in this, that the inmost quality in **masculinity** is love, and its veil wisdom, or in other words, it is **love veiled over with wisdom**, while the inmost quality in **femininity** is that same wisdom, the **wisdom of masculinity, and its veil the love resulting from it**. This second love, however, is a feminine love, and it is given by the Lord to a wife through the wisdom of her husband, whereas that first love is a masculine love, which is a love of becoming wise, and it is given by the Lord to a husband according to his reception of wisdom. Consequently, **the male is a form of the wisdom of love, and the female is a form of the love of that wisdom.**”
- A husband’s central love (“1st love,” love of growing wise) manifests in his wisdom. His wife has her own central love and manifested wisdom, but also can take to heart her husband’s specific love of growing wise and particular wisdom, and manifest the loving actions (“2d love”) that result from that wisdom. **This is a marriage process.**

Feminine Spirituality in Swedenborg VI



- FEMININE IS MOSTLY ASSOCIATED WITH GOOD, LOVE AND WILL
- SH 4843 “This is why in the Word 'husband' means good and 'wife' truth...But the meaning is different in the case of those who belong to the celestial Church from that of those who belong to the spiritual Church; for in the spiritual Church the husband is called 'the man' and means truth, while the wife is called 'the woman' and means good”
- SH 5198 “For in the Word, when a male means good, its female means truth, and conversely when the male means truth its female means good.”
- CL 168 “It is masculine to perceive from the intellect, and feminine to perceive from love”
- CL 223 “the masculine form is an intellect-oriented one and the feminine form a will-oriented one... this is at the same time a form of love.”

Feminine Spirituality in Swedenborg VII

- **FEMININE CHARACTERISTICS**

- CL 218. “The intelligence of women is by nature modest, gracious, peaceable, compliant, soft and gentle...With respect to the body, women are soft. With respect to the face,...women's are softer, more compliant, gentler, lighter in color, and so pictures of beauty. With respect to tone of voice,...women have a gentle one. With respect to their speech,...women's is modest and peaceable. With respect to their bearing,...women's is meeker and more delicate. With respect to their behavior,...women's is more civilized.”

Feminine Spirituality in Swedenborg VIII

- 2017 *The Growth of the Female Mind*, Soni Werner, “By the time a person lives a long life it is likely that she will have decided what matters to her the most... Women have the capacity to choose their own spiritual destinies.”
- Women are independent in their spirituality from their husbands and other males in their lives

Feminine Swedenborgian Spirituality Themes

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- Feminine: breath, soul, spirit or vital force
- Wholeness, healing, love, caring, nurturing
- Non-hierarchical, enabling spiritual power from partnership
- Reversing racial discrimination, oppression, and classism
- Care, non-violence
- natural, earthy, relational, mystical, embodied, intuitive, sensuous, and compassionate
- personal experience, sharing our stories

Feminine Swedenborgian Spirituality

Themes II

- Devalued and silenced
- Open to guidance from Spirit; immanent Divine relationship
- Silence, reflection, divine guidance and prayer
- Gender equality, justice, inclusion
- Divinity in the world, in finite, embodied life
- Union and reproduction
- Choose their own spiritual destinies (independent)
- Creativity, dancing, movement



Feminine Swedenborgian Spirituality Themes III

- Divine Feminine (GODDESS), alienated from male Divine
- Image and likeness of the Divine
- Difference between genders
- Inmost quality in femininity is the wisdom of masculinity, and its veil the love resulting from it
- Perception from love; good; will-oriented; form of love.
- Modest, gracious, peaceable, compliant, soft, gentle, beauty, meek, delicate, civilized.

Feminine Swedenborgian Spirituality themes in Deborah's Tree Ministry

- Non-profit started in 2021 to promote the work of female Swedenborgian scholars, authors, clergy and artists.
- Website, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter.
- Events, partnered with the Lord's New Church, Philadelphia Society
- <https://www.deborahstree.org/>

