

COLOURS, TINTS & SHADES

THEIR SPIRITUAL CAUSES AND SIGNIFICANCE

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36, BLOOMSBURY STREET, LONDON

1893

Key to Abbreviated Titles.

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A.C.	==	Arcana Coelestia
A.E.	==	Apocalypse Explained
A.R.	==	Apocalypse Revealed
C.L.	==	Conjugial Love
D.L.W.	==	Divine Love and Wisdom
H.D.	==	Heavenly Doctrine
H.H.	==	Heaven and Hell
T.C.R.	==	True Christian Religion

COLOURS, TINTS AND SHADES

THEIR SPIRITUAL CAUSES AND SIGNIFICANCE.

THE spiritual world is the world of causes. Thither we must look for the origin of colours—the reasons for their various hues, tints and shades. We shall use these terms—whether in relation to spiritual light and its modifications, or to natural light and its variegations—with an endeavour to convey exactly corresponding ideas. The scientific definitions of these terms are as follow—HUE, the name of the colour; TINTS, the normal hue mixed with increasing quantities of white; SHADES, the normal hue mixed with progressive quantities of black. Neither in the spiritual world nor in this are colours material. As heat and light in that world are spiritual, so are colours also spiritual; and as heat and light in this world are natural—not material—so are colours also natural. It is important to distinguish in thought between the objects which reflect, transmit or refract the colour-rays and the colours themselves; also to remember that these latter are transparent.

Authorities.

It will be best to state here that all the facts concerning colours in their spiritual relations are taken directly from the Word, or from the Writings of the New Church. Historical illustrations are gathered from Baron Portal's Essay on Symbolic Colours, and other available sources; while scientific proofs are drawn from the latest standard work on Colour, by Prof. Church, professor of Chemistry in the Royal Academy of Arts, London; and from the report of the Committee on Colour-blindness (1892). Several artist friends have also given me useful hints.

The Divine love and wisdom proceeding from the Lord appear in the spiritual world as a sun. That sun, as seen by the angels, is spiritual fire, which is the Divine love and wisdom in their first correspondence; and this spiritual fire, received by the atmospheres originating from it, covered and tempered, becomes spiritual heat and light—proportioned to the love of angels in heaven and of spirits under heaven. The tempering atmospheres appear like

radiant belts round the sun, and every angel is veiled by a cloud (H.H. 120).

Colours in the Spiritual World.

Now, with the regenerate spiritual man, when his voluntary part flows into his intellectual part—that is, when his selfish will influences his thought—it causes a dimness or a cloud—falsity—in his intellectual selfhood, called in Scripture "the will of man"; and this cloud, which is visible in the spiritual world, becomes dense in proportion to the influence of man's self-will. The more a man loves evil, the less is he able to discern truths. But, so far as this self-will is checked and controlled, hell is removed and the cloud becomes thinner. Further, when regenerate man has conscience, and charity is implanted—in other words, when he performs his daily duties, shunning evils as sins against God—the Lord by means of charity operates on his "cloud," gently putting innocence, charity and mercy into the obscurity of the intellectual part; and then the cloud is seen as an appearance of truth, through which the rays of heat and light from the spiritual sun shine, and change it into colours. Thus, colours in the spiritual world are, in their essence, modifications of intelligence and wisdom (A.C. 1043, 1044, 1832, 4530,).

Fundamental Colours.

In the spiritual world there are colours of every kind. The red colour originates from the fire of the spiritual sun, and therefore corresponds to love; the white colour originates from the light of the same sun, and therefore corresponds to wisdom. These two, red and white, are the fundamental colours, to which all the others have respect, and whence they derive their varieties. The breastplate of Aaron began with the ruby and ended with the jasper, all the stones being transparent.

It will be well to remember that, as with Divine truths so also with colours, we see them as they appear to be, not as they really are. When the light of heaven passes into the world of spirits, it is presented there under an appearance of various colours, in beauty, variety and pleasantness immensely exceeding the colours from the light of this world. According to the good—that is, the use—in which a man loves to be engaged, such is the colour by which the sphere of his affection and thought is made visible in the spiritual world, when the Lord sees good.

The Divine Sphere

The Divine sphere which surrounds the Lord is from His Divine love, and at the same time from His Divine wisdom. This sphere, when represented in the heavens, "appears in the celestial kingdom red like a ruby; in the spiritual kingdom, blue like the lazule stone; and in the natural kingdom, green like the emerald: everywhere with ineffable splendour and effulgence" (A.R. 232).

In this connection, it is interesting to note that—in the Latin Bible of the tenth century—the Lord Jesus Christ is represented as surrounded with a red limbus, bordered with blue; some of the cherubim and angels who surround Him have red glories, others blue, and others again green. Under His feet is a purple sphere, and His footstool is covered in three bands, red, blue, and green.*
(*Signification of Colours: by M. Portal; p. 94.*)

Red, green and blue are now generally accepted as the three primary colours, or colour-sensations; for modern science views colour as rather subjective than objective.

In Hindoo mythology, Vischnou, the creator, working by fire or love, is represented by the colour red; as eternal wisdom, incarnate in Chrishna, his colour is blue; in the third sphere, that of the works and customs of life, he is painted green.† *Ibid.*, p. 91.

Now, let us view colours, as we know them, in a series; try to discern their spiritual causes, and thence significance; and note how history and science illustrate and confirm these. As far as possible, I have translated the technical expressions of New Church philosophy into more simple language, but the ideas remain unchanged.

Red.

Red is the colour of love at work, love useful, love delighting to impart its own joy to others, without the least desire for recompense. From the delight of such loving service, there exists a pleasurable bodily sensation. This, when represented in colour, in the spiritual world, is seen as tinging objects around the angels with a red colour, and their garments appear red: for truths, to which garments correspond, are with the angels only for use.

We know how the red colour arrests attention. Whether in the ruddy cheeks of childhood, the tender bloom of youth, the rose-petal, the artist's colouring, or the adornments of dress, the red hue gives a life, an animation, otherwise lacking; and this because it is the colour of love, ever-living, ever-active.

In Egypt, this colour—red—was consecrated to good genii; at a later period, the Greek Jupiter was denominated Zeus—life, heat, fire—and was likewise, according to Winckelman, clothed in red. According to Plutarch, this colour was consecrated to all the divinities: on their fete-days, their statues were coloured red, as were the worshippers' cheeks. To the early Christian Church, red was the symbol of charity.* (*Signification of Colours*, pp. 60, 61.)

In view of the spiritual significance of the red colour, it is a remarkable fact that in colour-blindness the most common defect is imperfect sensation of red, and this is much more frequent among men than among women.

Scarlet.

Scarlet is the colour of mutual love in action, or celestial truth. Those who are principled in this love are continually advancing in heaven to the spring-time of their youth: good and charity appear in an angelic face and form of exquisite beauty; for this love is the very bond that holds heaven together, we are told. It is called, also, the love of use for the sake of use. Scarlet, double-dyed, in the other life represents the good of charity towards the neighbour; that is, work done sincerely, justly and faithfully from affection and its delight. St. Gregory says "properly, scarlet is twice-dyed; because it is adorned with the love of God and one's neighbour." The angelic representative colour of mutual love, is to man the colour of war! The scarlet hue, as we know it, is caused by an increase of incident light on a red colour or pigment.

Pink or Rose Colour.

Pink, or rose-colour, is a red largely modified by white: there is also in it a tint of purple. Swedenborg describes a rose-garden, which formed as it were a rainbow, composed of roses or flowers, purple, yellow gold, bright blue and shining green; which the angel-wives, who were sitting there, said was scenery created instantaneously by the Lord, and representing something new on the earth, which they divined to be the delights of conjugal love (C.L. 294). Among the Egyptians the rose was the symbol of regeneration; and in the sacred books of India rose-colour is symbolic of the Divine Word.* (*Signification of Colours*, pp. 105, 106.)

Orange, or Flame-colour, Yellow.

Orange, or flame-colour, follows scarlet, being the latter colour still further modified by increasing light. When we are animated by the heavenly love of use, that use becomes as it were a little flame, which gives light, and enables us to see, perceive and believe truths. The flame-colour, or orange, has especial connection with the aspect and surroundings of conjugal pairs in the celestial heavens. Swedenborg—in describing a conjugal pair who had lived happy in heaven from the earliest period—says that in the face of the wife there was a splendour of flaming light, and her eyes were bright and sparkling from the light of her own heaven, which derived a flaming quality from the love of wisdom. "No painter on earth," says Swedenborg, "has colours bright and vivid enough to express the lustre of her beauty." As this pair left him, they went through shrubberies, among olive and orange trees, laden with fruit (C.L. 42).

In this significance of the flame-colour, or orange-red, we see the origin of the flame-coloured veil, worn by a Roman bride on her wedding-day, as a happy omen. This veil was of a deep brilliant yellow, like a flame; and the colour was the symbol of indissoluble marriage. Metallic gold, also, is of an orange colour, and is significative of love to the Lord; but, when described (Psalm lxxviii., 13) as "yellow" gold, the signification is that of charity towards the neighbour—the good which is expressed by just, sincere and righteous conduct, inspired by genuine affection.

It is remarkable that the quantities of red light and of yellow light in one thousand parts of white sunlight are exactly equal, namely, fifty-four parts; also that persons who are colour-blind to red, call red, orange, yellow, and green all alike "yellow."* *Colour: pp. 53, 77.*

In Christian symbolism, gold and yellow were the emblems of faith. Among the Moors orange, or golden yellow, signified wise and good counsel; pale yellow, falsehood and treachery.

We have now enquired into the signification of red and its various modifications, or tints, arising from successive increase in the incident light. We next proceed to consider the significance of those shades induced through the modifications of red by blue. Those bluish shades in which red predominates may be called purple; this will include the hue of crimson.

Crimson, or Purple. Hyacinth; or Bluish Purple.

In the second heaven, the celestial red appears of a crimson colour; that is, love to the Lord—which is understood by the celestial angels to mean the love of doing truths from the Word for the Lord's sake—is understood by angels of the spiritual heaven as meaning to love the truth which is from the Word, and to do it from inclination. Genuine affection is perceived in the words of one who is merciful and innocent, just as in purple, or crimson, the red is seen through the blue.

In hyacinth, or bluish purple, the blue colour predominates over the red, which latter is still the ground colour. By hyacinth is signified the celestial love of truth, or, the love of intelligence and wisdom, in order that, by means of these, we may serve the Lord. Purple, or crimson, and hyacinth, or bluish purple, may be said to go hand in hand. Both are celestial colours; and both derive much of their beauty and all their warmth from the presence of the red hue. The two together bear the significance of truth in will and act. While crimson signifies love for the truth, hyacinth signifies the truth loved. The Divine Word frequently mentions crimson and hyacinth, called in the Authorised Version "blue and purple"; truth in will and act being of such vital importance. It is then called good, because done from a genuine affection and delight: those who are in celestial love do Divine truths (D.L 4.27).

According to St. Gregory, "Purple is emblematic of resistance of evil, endured even unto blood for love of the eternal kingdom."

In the language of colours, hyacinth signified constancy in spiritual combats.

Violet.

Violet is a still darker bluish-purple; having yet more of the blue and also a sombre shade, which further veils and obscures the red. Among the light-rays, the shortest in length and quickest in time of vibration, are the violet; they are also the most refrangible, that is, most easily bent from their original course. Judging from the position of the violet colour as being that most remote from red in the colour-spectrum of natural sunlight, and also from the fact that it forms the smallest part of the ray of sunlight—only five parts out of a thousand—it seems probable that violet represents the good of obedience, which is good or use, done from compulsion, not from freedom.

Dark Heat-rays.

Even when we fail to see anything to admire in the character of another, when he seems neither to speak truth nor to do good, there are still with him the remains of good implanted by the Lord during his infancy and boyhood. These are adjoined by the Lord to the love of use, and when there is readiness for regeneration, the Lord inspires the affection of good (the love of use) which begins to have dominion, and then the remains shine forth. They are like the invisible heat of the spectrum, at the furthest point from the red hue, of which Prof. Church says: "Even when all the rays of a continuous spectrum are stopped out, save those of invisible heat, the dark heat rays that remain—after having been gathered into a focus—are competent to raise platinum foil to a visible red heat, or even to a yellow or white heat. Thus heat becomes visible as coloured light, which itself, when analysed by the prism, shows all the colours of the rainbow."* (*color*, p.44)

Blue.

We have next to consider the cause and significance of blue—the blue of ultramarine, derived from the lapis-lazuli. This dark blue colour is one of the blue colours derived from white, and signifies charity towards the neighbour. When we desire good to others, and are disposed to be useful to them without any desire for recompense, this kindly affection is represented in the spiritual kingdom of the heavens by the blue colour derived from white. This, also, is the colour of the Divine sphere, as it appears in the spiritual kingdom. We are told that in the spiritual world, according to the state of the intelligence and wisdom of the spirits and angels, there appears a sky or heaven; when good is done with a view to the neighbour's welfare—in other words, when truth is transparent from good—the sky is seen to be blue (A.C. 9408).

According to St. Gregory, "Blue is emblematic of the hope of heavenly things." The ancient statues of heaven represented a beautiful youth, clothed in a blue drapery, sprinkled with stars. The high priest of Egypt wore a sapphire on his shoulder; this symbol was called Truth. In the mysteries, he was clothed with a robe of celestial blue, sprinkled with an embroidery of stars. Blue is a frequent emblem of immortality: the Egyptians represent the resurrection by a blue form rising out of a brown body.

We are instructed (T.C.R. 366) that "the life of God is present in all its fulness, not only with the good and pious, but also with the wicked and impious, and in like

manner with the angels of heaven and the spirits of hell; the difference is that the wicked obstruct the way and shut the gate; whereas the good prepare the way and open the gate, and also invite God to enter into the inferior regions of their mind, even as He dwells in its highest regions. . . . The form of a man, which is occasioned by the states of his life, varies the Lord's operations."

This is probably the spiritual cause of what is termed "selective absorption, "of which the blue colour—as presented to view in the lapis-lazuli—affords a striking example. A very thin slice of this mineral may appear transparent under the microscope; for all that, white light cannot pass through it unaffected. The lapis does not make the white light blue, but absorbs the red and green rays, allowing those only to emerge which produce the colour-sensation called blue. Even when reduced to the finest powder, the lapis retains the property of absorbing the red and green waves, while the residue emerges as blue light.* (*color*, p. 10)

Green

Green signifies what is true, and living from truths; or, the love of use and its accompanying intelligence confirmed by the fruits of experience, and by various kinds of knowledges which have been procured in childhood. All the knowledges of various kinds which we acquire for the sake of use to others and to ourselves—that by means of them we may confirm and enable others to confirm those things which the Lord teaches—are thereby made true and living. Green, as a colour, signifies such knowledges; they are instinct with love or charity, and manifest its presence and reception on the every-day plane of life and use; just as the grass in spring, absorbing the red and blue rays, reflects the green. From the sciences which in this way live with us, we derive intelligence; none in any other way. In this connection, we may see the fitness of the expression, "living green."

"In Christianity," says M. Portal, "green is the symbol of charity. The apostle John is nearly always represented in a green robe. In China, green designates the East, the spring, charity. Among the Moors, green signified hope, gladness and youth." Green is one of the hues of the solar spectrum; though usually regarded as a compound colour.

White

White as a colour in the spiritual world exists from the light of intelligence and wisdom. In the internal sense of the Word it signifies the Lord's justice and merit, which are " that when He was in the world He subjugated the hells, and reduced to order all things in the heavens, and that He glorified His humanity, and this from His own proper power; and thus saved all of the human race who believe in Him, that is, who love to do His precepts" (A.E. 293).

When the Lord's justice and merit in man are signified by the white colour, this is called "clear (candidus), for it shines by light from the Lord, which light has in it intelligence and wisdom. White also signifies genuine truths, from which spiritual life is derived; the life, that is, of a man who makes the knowledges of truth and good the laws of his life, and thus looks to the Lord in everything (.A.E. 196, 243).

The white colour derived from the light of heaven is transparent; but the white colour with man-viewed as an inhabitant of the spiritual world-when not so derived is opaque, and signifies his own righteousness or self-merit. It is a universal custom among us to clothe the bodies of the dead in white. The Latin word "candidus" means white, sincere, happy. The Romans marked their festal or lucky days with chalk; the white flint stone was the sign of acquittal.

Black

Black colours derive their origin from hell. There are two kinds of blackness: one opposite to white, and called Satanic; the other opposite to red, and called Diabolical. The blackness which is opposite to white prevails with those who have separated faith from good works, both in doctrine and life; the blackness opposite to red with those who have called good evil, and evil good, thus who have confirmed evil loves as allowable (A.R. 231).

A beautiful young girl, advancing upwards, elegantly arrayed in a black shining garment, represented, to Swedenborg, the interior things of the Word when they first ascend (A.C. 1572); the black garment representing the Word in the letter.

Self-merit, or the supposition that a man's good deeds • are from himself and merit a recompense, is sometimes signified in the Word by white. In such case, black denotes a man's acknowledgment that nothing but evil comes from himself, and that all good is from the Lord. When from the heart man confesses and believes this, we are told that the

Lord flows in Their Spiritual Causes and Significance. 17 with good and truth, and gently puts into man a celestial selfhood, which is bright and shining. Black having such a significance, we can see why it forms so large a proportion of even red-purple colour. When, for instance, vermillion and ultramarine are, as pigments, mixed together, the resultant hue is a dull violet-purple. In order, by means of a rotating colour-disc, to produce a like colour, twenty parts each of ultramarine and vermillion, nine of white and fifty-one of black pigments are required.* (*Colours*, p. 88)

Colors in Relation to Regeneration

Now let us look for a few moments at the whole subject in relation to regeneration. Man's intellect is at first clouded by falsity, and his will is—so to speak—black with evil. The rays of heat and light from the sun of heaven, as they fall on his intellect and will are to a large extent extinguished or obstructed; too often, those which he allows to emerge are blackened by his own false persuasions or evil lusts. He begins, however, from some motive—worthy or unworthy—to obey Divine truths. At first, he thinks that the truth and good which characterise his words and actions reflect credit upon him, and he sees his own merit in them, and so casts back, or reflects, the rays from the heavenly sun. As he continues, in obedience to the Divine laws, to shun evils as sins against God, the rays of heavenly sunshine modify the truths which he knows and the good that he does. Into his clouded and the Lord gently puts innocence, charity and mercy; and then the rays, touching the intellectual selfhood and passing through it, tincture his thoughts and feelings with a new beauty and joy, and in the other life become visible as colours, in the likeness of a rainbow.

Or, to view the matter in another way—we begin with the persuasion that a thing is true, because some one whose opinion has weight with us has said it, so it is true to us; while, at the same time, the good actions we perform—our round of daily duties—are tintured by the ever-present thought of our own merit; thus our perception of truth is darkened, and our love of what is good is chilled. But, as we believe in the Lord, Who is the Light, the Way, the Truth and the Life, and as by Divine help we conquer in temptations—thus, as we prepare ourselves—the Lord enters, and causes our natural faith and charity to become spiritual faith and charity. Then we see within ourselves whether the things we think of, read or hear spoken are true or not: our natural principle becomes transparent;

and, as faith is conjoined with charity, it acquires a beautiful tint or colouring, which is seen in the spiritual world. By all these changes, however, the selfhood is not destroyed but dispersed, or loosened, and tempered by truths and goods from the Lord, so as to become quiescent. In just such a way, we are instructed (A.C. 731), black and white, variously modified by the rays of light from the sun of this world, are changed into beautiful colours, as blue, yellow, purple, etc., by which, according to their arrangement—as in flowers, for example—divers forms of beauty and loveliness are presented to view, although the black and white radically and fundamentally remain.

In the natural world, the nature of the medium through which the solar rays pass determines the colours in the rainbow—for the bow never exists except in a cloud—and the case is similar with the spiritual man, whose intellectual selfhood, when innocence, charity and mercy are gently put into it by the Lord, no longer looks falsity, but is as the appearance of truth united with truth from the Lord, and hence resembles a coloured bow (A.C. 1043), the beauty of which increases as the regenerating man believes truths and loves them. Innocence adds greatly to this beauty.

As man advances along the path of daily duty up the incline that leads to his heavenly home, attributing to the Lord all merit and praise, he passes from the first perception of Divine truth in the literal sense of the Word—represented by colour of the jasper stone—through increasing degrees of intelligence, wisdom and love, towards that celestial love—represented by the colour of the ruby—which consists in loving offices of usefulness, delight in the performance of good deeds and joy of heart in so acting (H.D.'49). At every upward stage the play of heat and light from the sun of heaven becomes more potent, because more acceptable to him; until the black no longer significative, in its modifications, of evil, nor the "dark" of falsity, but only of that ignorance which is said to be the "shade of the good of love and of the truth of wisdom;" while each affection and thought when presented to view in the spiritual world, is seen by the angels as they partake of the radiant light and heat from the sun of heaven.