

Angelic Influence

Apart from their appearance at Christmas time on Christmas trees and in decorations as cherubic figures brightening up the darkest time of the year, angels would seem to have little relevance in the modern world and even less influence on our lives. But this, Swedenborg suggests, is to be misled by the way life appears to our senses, into the belief that this material world and this life is all that there is. He writes:-

"Man from creation is like an angel as to the interior things that belong to the mind.. hence it is that after death if he has lived according to Divine Order, he becomes an angel."

Heaven and Hell. Paragraph 304

Beyond the horizon that we know at the limit of earthly life, that we call death, Swedenborg experienced directly a new universe of spiritual growth and human experience, filled with possibilities beyond our wildest dreams. There we are liberated from the limitations imposed upon us for our safety and protection by material bodies in this universe of time and space.

Even more remarkably, Swedenborg maintains, each living soul has already a location in the spiritual world, and this is true even while the focus of our consciousness is in a bodily life in this world. Just as we are consciously influenced by the community that exists around us on earth, we are at one and the same time unconsciously influenced by the community that exists around us at the higher or more inward planes of our life.

"There are with everyone at least two evil spirits and two angels. the former excite a person's evils, the latter inspire goods and truths. Everything good and true that the angels inspire is of the Lord"

Arcana Caelestia. Paragraph 904

At a higher or more inward level in us all and therefore sometimes, as it were, buried is the embryonic angel or true self, the Biblical 'Child of God'. on this level are preserved all the generous impulses, moments of sacrificial love, feelings of deep compassion, the high ideals of our youthful optimism, sometimes long forgotten, treasured beliefs, special insights. From the affectional content of these experiences, angelic influence fashions what we call conscience to provide a balancing influence on our inner life.

This influence does not manipulate our thinking, which needs to remain free to decide, although it can 'drop' thoughts into our minds - by this route we receive insight and inspiration. Many of the world's great discoveries have been gifts in this form, many personal discoveries have the same origin - but the greater influences are through feeling and its ability to amplify thought and empower us to become who we would really choose to be.

"This government of man by the Lord through spirits occurs because man is not in heaven's design. In fact he is born into involvement in evil things which belong to hell

- exactly opposite, therefore. to the Divine Design so he has to be brought back into the design. and he cannot be brought back except indirectly through spirits."

Heaven and Hell. Paragraph 296

The difficulty to be transcended is the earthbound self-concern and misplaced ambitions of the ego seeking to be independent and in control. To let go of the tangible rewards, and seek the higher way of love, co-operation, forgiveness, and self-forgetfulness is often far from easy, even when we accept it rationally.

Swedenborg asks us to see the 'troubling of consciences as something to be treasured, as an angelic presence in our hearts. Having done so, we can make the affirmation taught in the ancient Hebrew scriptures when higher spiritual feelings stir within consciousness.

"The angel of the Lord encamps around those that fear him and he delivers them."

Swedenborg explains from inner spiritual experience the nature and purpose of the bond that ensures we are not really alone in our inner struggles, however it might appear.

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