

Introduction

It has been said of Swedenborg that he spoke almost nonchalantly about angels. Certainly, they appear frequently throughout the numerous volumes which he wrote on spiritual subjects, and in his work they form whole sections of description and explanation of the spiritual world and its relationship with this earthly plane.

Swedenborg can be Characterised by his insistence on angels' closeness to us. This is further accentuated by the fact that he sees angels not as coming from a separately created order but as having lived on earth as human beings. This is not to underestimate angels' power, but we are presented with the optimistic picture that angels are human and humans essentially angelic, in both cases the angelic element coming from the connection with the Divine. This connection enables the angels to work together as parts of one body creating a more fluid and organic impression than many more traditional interpretations of angelic hierarchy.

The quotations in this publication have been chosen for their illustration of the broad themes to be found in Swedenborg's writing on angels. They are taken mainly from two works. In the work Heaven and Hell Swedenborg gives a systematic presentation of the life of angels including their interaction with us. Much of this material appeared first in Arcana Caelestia (meaning 'Heavenly Secrets'), Swedenborg's major work. There it is interleaved with a detailed chapter-by chapter exposition of the spiritual sense of the early part of the Bible

Angels and us

People are born to become angels.

Heaven is such that all who live well, of whatever religion, have a place there.

The angels in heaven never depart completely from a person, for if they did he would be done for; left without this contact with heaven through the angels, he could not live.

if our inner part is spiritual, we are actually angels in heaven. This means that we are in a community of angels while we are living in our physical body, even if we are not aware of it. After we are released from our physical bodies we associate with angels.

Innocence flows especially from the higher angels into infants.

Those with a loving attitude hardly notice the evil in-another person, but instead notice all the good and true things about him; on anything in him that is evil or false they place a good interpretation. Of such a nature are all the angels.

Evil spirits who are present with us do all they can to bring about in us a negative outlook, but good spirits and angels from the Lord in every way disperse that doubting attitude, ad the time preserving a feeling of hope and in the end strengthening an affirmative attitude.

Perceiving Angels

When angels are presented to view, the interior parts of their beings shine forth from their faces, while the exterior are represented both in their bodies and in the clothes they are wearing.

The more perfectly the angels receive the Divine Truth that is from the Lord, the more perfect human forms they are, becoming so perfect that the beauty exceeds belief.

When perceptions of angels are converted into odours they are detected as fragrances coming from spices and from flowers.

The Nature of Angels

Angels' minds and human minds are alike. Both enjoy the faculty of understanding, perceiving and intending; both are designed to accept heaven, for the human mind is just as discerning as the angelic mind. The reason it is not so discerning in the world is that it is within an earthly body, within which the spiritual mind thinks in a natural fashion. But it is quite different when it is released from the tie with the earthly body. Then it no longer thinks in a natural way, but in a spiritual way.

When an angel does good to somebody else, he also communicates to that person the goodness, blessedness and bliss he himself has received; he does this in a spirit of wanting to give the other everything and to hold nothing back.

The power angels have in the spiritual world is so great that if I were to mention at this point everything that I have seen, it would be beyond belief. We can see from the Bible that angels have similar power in the natural world when they are allowed to use it. It does need to be realized, however, that angels have no power of their own, that all their strength is rather from the Lord. This is why angels attribute no credit to themselves, refusing any praise for what they do and directing such praise to the Lord.

Angels go on being perfected constantly.

Because heaven is made up from the human race, there are angels of both sexes in heaven. There are marriages in heaven just as there are on earth, although marriages in heaven are different from marriages on earth. Marriage in heaven is the bonding of two individuals into one mind.

The Life of Heaven

in heaven everyone takes delight in sharing his or her own delight and blessedness with someone else.

Once bodily concerns are set aside, love becomes more pure- eventually angelic, Which means loving the neighbour more than oneself. For in the heavens, doing good for someone else so that the good may belong to someone else, i.e. for their sake is pleasant.

People who are in heaven progress steadily towards the springtime of life. In a word, growing old in heaven is growing young.

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