

NOW IT CAN BE TOLD

Swedenborg & my Enlightenment

An autobiography

By Basil Lazer 1990

Part 1 — DARKNESS

Six months after the death of my father I was born into a poverty-stricken, ultra-orthodox Jewish family, the youngest of five children.

Such was the condition of my mother at my birth that I was born a sickly, weak, highly-strung child prone to fears of all kinds. As I grew older, this developed into a marked inferiority complex, which took many years to overcome. My childhood and boyhood were utterly bleak, lonely, miserable, frustrated and full of fears and misgivings. I never had a decent toy to play with as a child. We could never afford them, so I used to make my own toys out of old cotton reels and matchboxes and pretend they were the real thing. Such was the extent of our poverty that I was never given sufficient money even to buy my school books, and at classes I had to bear the humiliation of having to look on with someone else.

My mother dressed me in old-fashioned clothes and I was always badly in need of a haircut. To add to this I had bright golden curls. My whole demeanour was one of constant fear! I became the laughing stock of the school and was looked upon as a kind of freak. None of the other kids would play with me and some would go out of their way to pick a fight because of my weak physical condition. I was unable to defend myself and was afraid to hit back.

Think of the effect all this was having on a nervous, highly sensitive, frail child. Even to this day I look back with horror on my wretched, miserable childhood and wonder how on earth I managed to survive it. Of course, it was the Lord who helped and strengthened me over this frightful period of my life, although at the time I hated Him, not knowing any better, or that He had important work for me to do much later in life.

In addition to all this I had a mother who was fanatically religious. This misguided woman was under the impression that God had punished her by taking the life of her favourite son, Lionel, when he was killed in France in the First World War three months before the Armistice. She blamed herself for this, as she thought she had been too lax instilling Judaism into her family, so she redoubled her efforts in this direction, and I, being the youngest, came in for most of her attention — much to my disgust. I saw through all the hypocrisy and stupidity in all this at a very early age and resented it most strongly. I made up my mind to discard all of it when I grew up, but that was many years away.

I was never taught that God was a God of love, but someone to be greatly feared, who would wreak vengeance on anyone who displeased Him. He therefore had to be appeased with elaborate rituals and ceremonies and prayers (so called). In the synagogue the idea of prayer was to chatter off eighty pages of the prayer book at a rapid rate without paying any attention to what they were gabbling about. Any connection this may have with prayer is beyond my understanding.

I saw through all this at the age of six, but dared not express my opinion. So it was all pent up inside of me. Try to imagine what all this could do to an over-sensitive child with an intelligence and perception well beyond his tender years, and you will get some idea of what I had to endure.

I was told that the Bible finished at Malachi, and that everything after that was made up lies. I was taught to hate Christ as the arch enemy, and was told that any Jew who accepted Him or read the New Testament would be cursed and damned forever. I was also told that He never rose from the dead, but that his disciples stole His body away and buried it secretly, so as to make it appear that He had risen from the dead.

My childhood and boyhood were so miserable that I hate to think of them.

Because of my nervous condition as a child, I used to stutter badly and my mother used to mock me. I longed to express my thoughts to someone, but there was no-one who would understand my feelings. I became a recluse

and joined the public library, where I read many books by famous authors. This was my real education, as I hated school, the teacher and the pupils, with a few exceptions.

To be compelled to take part in the numerous ceremonials and customs, against which I strongly rebelled, as I saw through the emptiness of it all, was extremely frustrating and bitter to a lonely, bewildered, rebellious child, who longed to get away from it all. But I was tied down and made to participate in customs which to me even as child were utterly meaningless.

However, the Lord had much better things in store for me, as I will gradually relate one step at a time in what now follows.

Part 2 — THE FIRST ENLIGHTENMENT

Now there was a fine Christian woman, who was a district nurse. She daily attended my grandmother, who had a broken hip. We all liked her very much and called her Nan. She was a very spiritual woman, who also taught Sunday School. We got to know her very well and became very fond of her. Although she was not a spiritualist in any way, departed spirits used to come to her and write through her.

What I am about to relate may appear quite amazing. But I can assure you that every word is true.

One night some years later when Nan was sound asleep, she was awoken by someone who shook her by the shoulder and said: "Give Basil your little blue book. He must have that little blue book."

Nan was startled but not afraid, as she became aware that there was a departed spirit with her. She quietly got out of bed and turned on the light. There, standing before her was my brother Lionel, who was killed at the age of 18 in France at the First World War. He was standing before her dressed in his soldier's uniform. She recognised him because she had seen his photograph many times in our house. She said: "Lionel, I have no little book." He said: "Yes, you have. And I want you to give it to Basil."

So great was the faith of this remarkable woman that she did not question the fact that she had not seen me for 20 years, and had no idea where we lived. All she knew was that the Lord had sent Lionel to her, and that this meant that she would be seeing me soon. So she walked around the room in a daze and stopped in front her dressing table. When she opened the top drawer, there was her pocket edition of the New Testament. She did not realise it had a blue cover till that moment. Lionel said: "That's the book. Give it to Basil."

She said: "I could never give him that. He would throw it at me in horror."

Lionel said: "Put it in your bag and pray about it."

Soon after this, Nan was led to attend a certain church where a Jewish Minister was to speak. As soon as she entered the church, she found that Lionel was beside her, pointing to a certain woman, whom Nan recognised as Jewish. He asked Nan to sit beside her.

When Nan did this, Lionel told her to ask this lady if she knew Mrs Lazer's address. The lady did not know it, but told Nan to inquire at a certain shop in the city, which was run by a Jewish man. She thought that they might be able to help her find my mother's address.

So the next morning, Nan went into town and found this shop. All this time she was aware of Lionel standing beside her. On inquiring at the shop whether they knew my mother's address, she was told that they did not know it. But she was given the address of a Jewish organisation that was nearby.

So, she went there and was told that my mother was the vice-president, and that she could see her at a charity shop which they sponsored, and that my mother would be assisting at the shop on the following Thursday, when she would be able to see her.

So, on the following Thursday Nan went to this charity shop, and there was my mother behind the counter. They were both overjoyed to see each other.

Of course my mother invited her to come and see us and gave her our address. She invited Nan to tea the next evening. Nan did not mention that she had seen Lionel, but made it appear that she had just walked into the shop by chance. So it came about that Nan was able to see us again after 20 years.

When mother told me that Nan was coming to see us, we were overjoyed. I had a very strong feeling that she was coming to see me, although I had no idea why.

Well, Nan finally came. When I was alone with her, I said: "You have come to see me, Nan, haven't you?"

"Yes, my boy," she replied. "The Lord has sent me." She said she could see my brother standing in the room watching me. Then she said: "This is the message I have for you: until you come down to the foot of the cross and accept Jesus Christ as your Messiah and Saviour, you will never get anywhere." She then told me that Lionel had come to her during the night and told her to give me her little blue book.

I looked at her in utter amazement and horror and said: "Nan, what on earth are you saying? You know very well that I was taught to hate Christ and still do. I could never accept Him as the Messiah and Saviour. So please don't mention His name to me again."

She replied: "The Lord has gone to a lot of trouble to help me find you, and Lionel is in it, too. I have done my duty. The rest is up to you. Either accept or reject Him. The Lord wants you alone, and I will not mention this to any other member of your family."

Afterwards, when I saw her to the tram, I arranged to call for her in my car, and that we should go to the Fitzroy Gardens for a private talk. She agreed to this, so I called for her the following week.

But in the meantime I had the most amazing dream of my life.

THE DREAM

The dream is in seven distinct parts, and I will now relate it in the order in which it was given to me.

1. I saw everything around me in tremendous upheaval. There were thousands of people gathered at what appeared to be a large railway station. One large group was running in a certain direction, and when questioned by me, said they were making for some fabulous place, where even a small amount of money could purchase untold prosperity and be made to last indefinitely. They had hurriedly packed a few of their most valuable possessions and some were carrying them in bundles on their backs. There was also a long train at the platform, loaded with people and goods bound for this strange place. My mother was there waiting to board the train. She tried to persuade me to go with her, and when I refused, she became very angry.

"Are you mad" she asked, "to deliberately reject such a golden opportunity to become very rich?"

I seemed to be torn between my regard for her and what I thought was right. But I could not move even if I had wanted to. I seemed to be rooted to the spot. "Very well," she said, "if you will not come with me, I will go alone."

2. I next saw myself with another group of people in a large enclosure surrounded by a high wall. We were all tremendously excited because of the manifestations we were witnessing. There seemed to be a colossal upheaval, both in the heavens and on the earth. What appeared to be great meteors were continually falling. I saw some of them crash to the earth, but they did not appear to be harming anyone. They fell all around us, making great craters and causing the earth to shoot up in huge spouts. Many new stars appeared in the sky. I recall three particularly bright ones, each about one hundred times the size of the ones we know. They were twinkling in a most dazzling and wonderful manner. We all remarked on these wonders, and I remember saying how fortunate we are to have the privilege of seeing the greatest transformation for good in the world's history. I said it was amazing to think that it had taken so long for these marvels to happen on earth, and we were the chosen ones to see them occur in our time. Although we all felt that something supernatural was happening, no-one was afraid, only intensely excited. I experienced a wonderful feeling of deep joy and contentment, because I felt that all our troubles were over at last.

3. After this I saw myself in a large room with many other people, both young and old. They were all strangers to me, but I felt I was one of them and we seemed to be drawn by some powerful, friendly force. When I first looked at them, they appeared to be very worried and distressed, but as I watched them their faces gradually changed. The care-worn, worried expressions began to disappear and their faces became miraculously joyful and animated. We all seemed to realise that this was not a temporary change, but a permanent and everlasting one. On the walls of this room were pictures of various people (all strangers to me) and as I looked at them, their expressions slowly changed to intense happiness.

4. I went outside again and saw many amazing sights.

There were still many people rushing toward the train to a new utopia, where money was supposed to last indefinitely. I still felt no desire to go with them. Again I saw my mother, who was very bitter because I would not go with her. Although it made me sad to refuse, I simply could not go with her. She then turned away and made for the train and that was the last I saw of her. I longed to induce her to stay with me, but she was determined to go, and there was nothing I could do about it.

5. I next saw my brother Lionel, wearing his soldier's uniform. I eagerly went up to him and asked him what I should do, as I still could not believe that he really wanted me to become a Christian, since he was always such a strictly Orthodox Jew. But he would not say anything. He just looked at me in a very friendly, significant way. I felt he wanted me to know that I was a free agent and it was entirely up to me to make my own decision. Seeing him cheered me up tremendously, and I somehow knew that he was on my side and was hoping I would become a Christian, although he did not press me to do so.

6. Now comes what I considered to be the most important part of my dream. I found myself beside a narrow strip of water, about thirty yards wide, with barren land on either side. I seemed to be the only one there. It was the most desolate place I had ever seen. Something told me I had to swim across this narrow channel to the other side, although I felt instinctively that it was extremely deep. I hesitated to go across as I am a very poor swimmer and felt if I ventured in, I would surely drown. But before I realised what was happening, I had slipped into the water and was making for the other bank swimming feebly but keeping afloat. Although I was not doing too badly, I had a horrible feeling that I was going to drown. I was beginning to panic, when I suddenly noticed that there was someone else swimming beside me. This person was smaller than myself, but I did not know who it was, because the face was averted from me. I was encouraged by this unknown swimmer, who said I would be alright and had nothing to fear. "Look at me," said this new-found friend. "I can only dog paddle, but I am not a bit afraid. Keep with me and we will reach the other side safely."

This gave me new heart and I felt much better. The next thing I knew was that we both landed safely on the other side.

Now, strange to say, although I could not see them, I sensed that many expert swimmers were in the water with us. They seemed to be all around us, but were under the surface of the water. To the best of my knowledge, none of these people reached the other side, although the distance from shore to shore was only about thirty yards. As far as I could see, the only two people to land safely on the other side were this unknown person and myself. I remember feeling extremely grateful to this person, without whose encouragement and moral support (for I was the stronger swimmer of the two) I felt I would have drowned; but when I looked around to offer my thanks, I was quite alone.

7. I next found myself alone on a vast seashore, and as I watched, there was a great upheaval in the sea. About one hundred yards out, the water seemed to recede and a huge mountain began to rise out of the depth of the sea as though it was being deliberately pushed out of the water by some stupendous power. I realised that normally such a sight would have made me very fearful, because of the strangeness of such a phenomenon. But, strange to say, I was not afraid, as I knew I was witnessing a very minor manifestation of the colossal force and power of Almighty God. I felt that there were far more wonderful and gigantic miracles yet to be revealed, beside which all the wonders I had witnessed would be as nothing.

I then awoke with a feeling of such intense joy and gratitude toward God that I knew this wonderful dream was not just a jumble of confused thoughts and emotions, but a real message of hope for the future from God to me. So vivid was this dream that I felt compelled to write it all down, something I had never done before nor have I done it since.

When I arrived home with the little blue book, I had very mixed feelings about it. After carefully locking the door of my room, I sat at my desk with the little blue book in front of me. I stretched out my hand several times to grasp it, but each time withdrew it. After about twenty minutes, I plucked up sufficient courage to open the first page (The Gospel of Matthew), well knowing the consequences of what would happen to a Jew who read it; but somehow I was given the strength and determination to commence reading it. When I started to do so,

all my fears left me and I became intensely interested in what it contained. My first reaction was amazement at what the Jews had found to hate in this wonderful man, who did nothing but good to people and showed love and understanding to all who came to Him. I was so deeply moved by this Gospel, that I immediately asked the Lord to forgive me for hating Him; and with that prayer was born the beginnings of a feeling of deep love toward Him, which has never left me since.

Sometime after this, Lionel again came to Nan and asked her to tell me to read the book of Isaiah. I did this, and became convinced that the Lord Jesus Christ was indeed the Messiah for whom the Jews were still waiting, even to this day.

PART 3 — DREAM INTERPRETATION

The dream as a whole is symbolical of my acceptance of Christianity and a complete severance from the old life, including a permanent break with Judaism. It shows a rejection of wealth and power for the sake of Christianity and right living, and a complete change in my spiritual life for the better.

The manifestation of meteors and huge new stars represents the tremendous expansion of the knowledge of goodness and truth brought about by the Lord through the Writings (see part 4). The people to whom I found myself drawn are the Christians with whom I will associate in the New Church (see part 4). The people whose faces changed from sadness to joy as I looked at them represent those who will come to a greater knowledge about the Lord by the work He will do through me by introducing them to the Writings through my booklets.

The earthly upheavals represent the utter spiritual desolation of the world in general and the result of the complete rejection of the Lord and His teachings by many people in a confused world, especially the so called intellectuals. The huge stars which appeared represent the tremendous expansion of the knowledge of good and truth which the Lord will bring about by the spread of the Writings in a spiritually starved world.

Seeing my brother Lionel was very significant. His silence meant that he did not want to influence me one way or the other, although I could tell by his expression what he would have liked me to do, (which is how it should be. The Lord only stands at the door and knocks. He does not force His way into our life, but allows us to use our own free will as to whether we will accept Him or not).

The swimming across the water and my fears symbolise my transition from Judaism to Christianity. This was the Jordan I had to cross before I could reach the Lord, and represents doubts and false teachings which had to be overcome before Jesus could come into my life. The swimmer with me in the water was Nan, without whose help and guidance I could never have accepted Jesus Christ. Nan was physically frail, but her spirit was undaunted. This is what buoyed me up more than anything else, when I made my decision to abandon Judaism for Christianity.

The other people in the water with us — the expert swimmers who were drowned — are the so-called intellectuals, who have great book knowledge, but have forsaken the "spirit of the law for the letter", and have insufficient faith and humility to accept and believe in Christ and His teachings. Also among these people were many of the powerful ones of this world, hypocrites with an external piety, but rotten within, the self-righteous, arrogant, loveless, proud, smug so-called Christians, who make a mockery of their religion in their hearts. While accomplishing nothing themselves they are the first to point the finger of scorn at anyone making an honest effort to help others along the path which leads to the Lord.

These people will drown in their own unbelief, and their wealth and power will be millstones around their necks, because they thought in their ignorance that their money and position could buy them a place in Heaven.

The final scene of my dream and the fact that I was not afraid of the sudden appearance of the great mountain out of the sea, meant that I had nothing to fear from this world, because the Lord had overcome the world (we are more than conquerors through Him); and because my hatred of Him had turned to love and trust, He has given me the faith, courage and power to overcome many huge "mountains" in my life and would continue to do so (such as grief, sorrow, disappointment, frustration, loneliness, disillusionment, treachery and black despair). These are but a few of the "mountains" in my life, which from time to time have risen up in my past, completely blocking out all hope. But the Lord in His great mercy has now taught me to overcome all these things through Him, so that they no longer have the power to harm and spoil His work in my life.

That briefly is the meaning of my dream, as I see it now.

PART 4 — THE NEW CHURCH AND A GREAT REVELATION

After my conversion to Christianity, I decided to attend a number of various churches of several denominations to see which one had the most appeal for me.

But what a let down! What did I find?

For the most part I found a complete lack of love and charity, self-righteousness, bigotry, selfishness, hypocrisy, lifeless sermons, a smugness and in some cases a clannishness which had to be experienced to be believed. If you are not in the clan, as it were, you were treated as a rank outsider.

I was fast becoming disillusioned with churches in general, when something happened that completely changed my life for the better. I was introduced to the wonderful books of Emanuel Swedenborg and the New Church, which was founded on the Divine revelations that his books (better known as the Writings) contained. Here I would like to recommend an excellent booklet by J. H. Doering, entitled "The New Church". It sets out in simple, concise form what the New Church is all about.

In the New Church we pray to the Lord Jesus Christ as the Divine Human personification of God. He said: *"He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father,"* as *"I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me"* (John 14:10,11). It is the Lord by means of the Writings who has made God real to us in a very special way, teaching us spiritual truths of a most profound nature, not only about life after death, but what is most important, how we can overcome our evils through Him. He achieved this during His life on earth when He conquered the hells by enduring and overcoming all the temptations they put upon Him; so that now when we call upon Him, as we shun our evils, He will and can win the victory for us.

The New Church stresses the importance of living our lives in a practical Christian way. In Matthew 25 we are told of the judgement of the sheep (the good) and the goats (the evil). In that chapter the Lord made a very important statement. He said: *"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me."* That is what Christianity is all about. It is a personal thing, which affects each one of us. We, of our own free will, have to live the teachings of the Lord in our own personal lives. All the love talk, rituals and so-called prayers will never get us to heaven unless we do this. In the next world we will be judged by the extent of which we have done this.

We have all met so-called Christian people who put on a pious exterior, but under it they are something quite different. They are full of their own self-righteousness, and consider themselves to be the all of the church, the salt of the earth, as it were. Their lives are devoid of love and charity. They are completely wrapped up in themselves and their own affairs, to the exclusion of everything else. The Writings point out the hypocrisy of such people and what happens to them after they leave this world. In their arrogance and pride they imagine they have a one way ticket to Heaven; but as the Writing point out, there can be no deception in the next life and each person stands revealed for what they really are. This life is a preparation for the next life, and it is according to how we live our life in this world that we will have our place in the next life in either Heaven or Hell.

In the New Church, where the Writings are regularly studied, together with the Bible itself, all these things and much more are made clear.

In conclusion I would like to reprint something I wrote some time ago on the effects the Writings had on my personal life after I began to study them. There may be others who had similar difficulties to overcome. If so, I trust they may be helped by my humble experience.

A GREAT REVELATION

Have you ever felt dissatisfied with religion, as we know it today, where so many vital questions are left unanswered? Did you ever have a longing to know God — what He is like; how He operates and what He meant when He said: *"I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."* (John 14:2-3)? Have you ever wondered what would become of you after physical death; if it really mattered how you lived your life on this earth and if there were actually such places as heaven and hell? In contemplating modern life, with its never-ending rapacity, intolerance and instability, have you ever asked yourself: "What does it all amount to and is there any sense or reason behind it all?" If you have felt any of these things it will perhaps give you some idea of my outlook before I was introduced to a set of books which I can only describe as the greatest revelation of my life. That was nine

years ago, and I have studied all of these great books and am now re-reading them. People say things happen by chance, but I have learned that there is no such thing as chance, but that the Divine Providence is ceaselessly at work in our lives preparing us for our future state when we depart from this world. However, I would like to begin by telling you something of my search for spiritual light and the effect it had on me when I finally found it.

I was familiar with the Bible, particularly the New Testament, but I had never found a Church which demonstrated the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ in a practical way. I tried many of them, but the impression I gained was that for the most part they were doing the Lord's cause more harm than good. There seemed to be no love, understanding, sincerity or tolerance, as taught by the Lord. They gave "stones for bread" and one came away from them feeling a complete lack of upliftment or joy. On the surface these people were quite polite, but you had the feeling that they were entirely wrapped up in themselves and their own affairs, and anyone who did not think and act as they did simply did not "belong" and were treated as an outcast. All of which made me most unhappy with my (so called) religious associations, from which I derived neither comfort nor hope. I had come to the spiritual crossroads, as it were, and was vainly seeking for a living, inspiring faith in which I could really believe.

Also, I despaired of ever finding a religion that would satisfy both my spiritual and intellectual hunger. It was at this point of spiritual desolation that the Lord led me to the book HEAVEN AND HELL, then to other Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg, and thus into the New Church. And here is how it all happened.

While spending a holiday with some friends, I was introduced to someone, who, like myself was also seeking spiritual truth. We had many interesting talks and just before the conclusion of my visit, an absorbing discussion developed on the mode of life which awaited us after death. My new friend then mentioned that, in answer to an advertisement, he had received a book which described life after death in both heaven and hell. I was amazed at this and said it did not seem possible for such a book to be authentic, as the idea seemed utterly fantastic; but he said he was greatly impressed with it and felt it could be true. As he was a man of great integrity with a wide knowledge of the Scriptures, I did not doubt his word, but found it very hard to accept his statement. I then asked to see the book, and he produced a copy of HEAVEN AND HELL. I was eager to borrow it, but he said he would not part with it even for a short time, as it was much too precious. This roused my curiosity and I wondered how the book could have made such an impression on him. He then gave me the address from which he had obtained it and I made up my mind to send for a copy.

So, after returning to Canberra from my holiday, I wrote away for a copy of this book and could hardly wait for it to arrive. You see, in spite of all my disappointments, I still had great spiritual hunger which had never been satisfied. A few days later I received the book and sat down to read it with great eagerness. Would I be disappointed? Would it be just another cold exposition? Was I expecting too much, or would it contain the spiritual enlightenment for which I had vainly sought for so many years? These were the thoughts running through my mind, as I began to read the excellent introduction.

How can I describe my first reactions to HEAVEN AND HELL? As I began to read it I was shocked and amazed at what it said about some of the erroneous beliefs on which I had been fed, but how thankful I am now that I did not discard it in anger. Among other things, I felt deep down inside me— that it could be true. It gripped me in a way no other book has ever done, although it was like a deluge of icy cold water to my spiritual thinking, as the veil was lifted before my astonished eyes and I read an eye-witness account of what actually takes place in the world of spirits and heaven and hell. The flimsy spiritual foundation of my life seemed to disintegrate and it began to dawn on me, that if this was all true, I would have to completely re-cast my spiritual thinking.

I had never heard of Emanuel Swedenborg — the great genius whom the Lord chose some 200 years ago to reveal to mankind the spiritual meaning of the Scriptures, and through whose pen the Lord has manifested His Second Coming to the world. Up till then, I had no idea that such a book could ever have been written, as its whole conception was utterly different from anything in my experience. At first I did not know what to make of it and read it with mixed feelings. This was because I was inclined to be prejudiced against any new spiritual revelations, after having been misinformed and deluded on numerous occasions by other religious sects and organisations, each of whom claimed to be God's Elect. However, after recovering from the first rude shock, I prayed to the Lord to show me if there was anything false in the book, that I might not be led astray, particularly as the things it expressed were so startling and new. After this, I was given a definite assurance in my heart that it was true; so putting aside all the old ideas and clearing my mind of all the dross with which I had previously

filled it, I began to re-read the book; but this time with an open mind. I was determined to let it speak for itself and my patience and tolerance were rewarded beyond all expectations.

As I read, I marked many passages which greatly impressed me, and although I could not bring myself to accept everything it said (it was some time before I could do this) I did find myself agreeing with a great deal of it, as it appealed to my common sense and seemed so feasible. It also stressed the importance of love — almost in the very words I had used to certain people, that faith alone, without repentance, love and good works was dead, no matter how much Bible knowledge one had, or how many times one attended Church.

When I had finished reading HEAVEN AND HELL, I had a great desire to study more of Swedenborg's Writings, so selecting some titles from the back of the book, I wrote away for them, little realising what wonderful revelations were in store for me. The next book I read was THE NEW JERUSALEM AND ITS HEAVENLY DOCTRINE.

It was this book which really made me aware of the fact that I would have to do something drastic about my life, if I ever hoped to reach heaven. I was particularly impressed with the chapters on "Repentance and Remission of Sins" and "Regeneration and Temptation". This book made me examine myself as never before, and as I read that our sins are not really forgiven, but remitted only to the extent to which we refrain from committing them, or cherishing them in our thoughts, I began to ask myself where I stood in this regard, and had to admit that there were many things which were causing me to turn away from the Lord and have conjunction with hell. This was something quite different to the easy going method of the people who say all you need to do to be saved is to declare that Jesus Christ died for your sins and that you are cleansed from all the blame through His sacrifice on the cross.

Then I read: "A man who is examining himself in order to carry out repentance, should examine his thoughts and the intentions of his will, to discover there what things he would do if permitted, that is, if he had no fear of the law, or of losing reputation, honour or monetary advantage. A man's evils are in his thoughts and intentions. It is from them that all evil actions done with the body proceed. Those who do not examine into the evils of their thought and will, cannot carry out repentance, for they afterwards continue to think and will the same thing as before; yet it is in the willing of evils that evils are committed. This is the meaning of self-examination."

"With every man there are evil spirits and good spirits; the evil spirits are in his evils and the good spirits in his goods. When the evil spirits come near, they bring out his evils and the good spirits, on the other hand, bring out his goods. Hence there is conflict and combat from which the man feels interior anguish of mind, and this is temptation. It can therefore be seen that temptations are not brought about from heaven, but from hell. God tempts no one."

"In temptations what is being fought out is whether good shall have dominion over evil, or evil over good. The evil which wants to gain dominion is in the Natural or External man, while the good is in the Spiritual or Internal man. If evils win, then the Natural man rules; but if good wins, the Spiritual man rules. The Lord alone fights on man's behalf in temptations and conquers for him.

Unless a man believes this, the temptation he undergoes is only an external one and of no help to him."

I pondered these new-found truths very deeply and then asked the Lord to show me how to put them into practice. My prayer was answered, in that for the first time I began to gain victories over temptations in my life. It was not easy for me, as there was no one of my acquaintance who knew anything about the Writings and even if they had, would have rejected them as heretical and of the devil, because they exposed the great erroneous doctrine of justification by faith alone. Such is the spiritual darkness into which many people have fallen, because they have closed their minds to truth and flee from anything which unsettles their spiritual complacency.

Here, I would like to add that the New Church minister, through whom I had obtained the Writings, corresponded with me regularly and greatly encouraged me in the new stand I was taking. He was a tremendous help (and still is) and never once let me down by failing to answer, to my entire satisfaction, the many questions I put to him.

In a way, I was fortunate in not being able to discuss these great truths with sceptical people, who, in their ignorance, would have tried to turn me against them. Although I found it very difficult to discard many false notions I had previously thought were true, the Lord in His Divine Providence, led me to a gradual acceptance

of these revelations, until I reached the stage when I had no doubt whatever that they could have come from only one Source — the Lord Himself.

That has been my experience through the Writings in the nine years I have known them, and there is no other experience to equal it. These books have definitely changed my life for the better and the Lord has thus opened an entirely new avenue in my Christian experience, which will, I feel, have eternal consequences. I think the main reason for this was because, on reading these great revelations, I not only believed them — I wanted to live them. So, by putting them into practice, I was able to demonstrate that they were true.

Other books of the Writings I have read and greatly appreciated are: — DIVINE PROVIDENCE, TRUE CHRISTIAN RELIGION, THE FOUR DOCTRINES, THE LAST JUDGMENT, EARTH IN THE UNIVERSE, DIVINE LOVE & WISDOM, ARCANA COELESTIA (12 Vols.), APOCALYPSE REVEALED, BRIEF EXPOSITION, CONJUGIAL LOVE, CORONIS, APOCALYPSE EXPLAINED (6 Vols.), DOCTRINE OF USES, CHARITY, and THE WHITE HORSE. Although these great books are all wonderful and inspiring, they are also extremely practical and contain much which can be applied to daily life. I am writing this because I believe there are many others in the world, who like myself, would derive great benefit from these books and because I am firmly convinced that only the Lord Himself could have written such Divine revelations through His dedicated and faithful servant, Emanuel Swedenborg.

A few months after I became convinced that the Writings were indeed spiritual truth from the Lord and presented revelations which were entirely new to the world, I joined the New Church. This Church (which is also known as the Church of the New Jerusalem) was formed as a direct result of the Lord manifesting Himself in His Second Coming through the great books mentioned above, and is also the Church foretold in the Book of Revelation (Chapters 21 and 22).

As for me, for the first time in my life I feel that at last I have found a religion, a belief and a Church which are all one would hope for. And perhaps most important of all, the Divine revelations contained in these books have made the Lord far more real and wonderful to me, than I would have ever thought possible. I feel I am really beginning to know Him and to understand something of the great Divine Love, Wisdom and Order behind every aspect of creation in the universe.

I don't doubt any more, nor am I vaguely sailing on an "uncharted spiritual sea", like a ship without compass or rudder. For the first time I know where I am going and what comes after the death of the natural body. It is all revealed in these great books. The Lord has kept nothing back. This in turn, has given me a new hope and assurance, not only for this life, but especially for the great spiritual life which we will all enter after death, which will continue to eternity and beside which this life is but a passing shadow.

Here are a few more quotations from these amazing books: —

We may gather that inwardly we are spirits from the fact that after we depart from our bodies, which happens when we die, we are still alive and just as human as ever.

I may add here that even while we are living in our bodies, each one of us is in a community with spirits as to our own spirits even though we are unaware of it. Good people are in angelic communities by means of [their spirits] and evil people are in hellish communities. Further, we come into those same communities when we die. (HEAVEN AND HELL 437 — 438).

We need to be led away from our evils in order to be reformed, since if we are given to evil in this world, we will be given to evil after we leave this world. This means that if our evil is not set aside in this world, it cannot be set aside afterwards. The tree lies where it falls; and so too our life retains its basic quality when we die. We are all judged according to our deeds. It is not that these deeds are tallied up but that we return to them and behave the same. Death is a continuation of life, with the difference that then we cannot be reformed. (DIVINE PROVIDENCE 277).

Since we all live forever after death then, and are assigned places either in heaven or in hell depending on how we have lived, and since both heaven and hell are necessarily in a form that causes them to act as and since none of us can be assigned to any place in that form except our own, it follows that the human race throughout the whole world is under the Lord's supervision, and that each one of us is being led by him in the slightest details, from infancy to the end of life, with a particular place foreseen and provided for. (DIVINE PROVIDENCE 203).

The need for us to purify ourselves from evils, and not to wait for the Lord to do it without our participation, is like a servant coming in with his face and clothes covered in soot or dung, approaching his master and saying, "Lord, wash me. " Surely his master would tell him, "You foolish servant! What are you saying? Look, there is the water, the soap, and a towel. Don't you have hands? Don't they work? Wash yourself!"

The Lord God is going to say, "The means of being purified come from me. Your willingness and power come from me. Therefore use these gifts and endowments of mine as your own and you will be purified. " (TRUE CHRISTIAN RELIGION 436).

When we battle against what is evil, we cannot help but fight using what seems to be our own strength, because if we are not using what seems to be our own strength, we are not doing battle. We are standing there like an automaton, seeing nothing and doing nothing, while constantly thinking on the basis of evil and in favour of it, not against it.

However, we need to be quite clear about the fact that it is the Lord alone who is fighting within us against the evils, that it only seems as though we are using our own strength for the battle, and that the Lord wants it to seem like that because if it does not, no battle occurs, so there is no reformation either. (DOCTRINE OF LIFE 96).

There is a belief nowadays that goodwill is just our doing good, and if we do that, we are not doing evil. The idea therefore is that the first step toward goodwill is to do good and the second step is not to do evil. This is completely upside-down, however. The first step toward goodwill is to remove evils and the second step is to do good, because there is a law that is universal to the spiritual world and also therefore to the physical world: The less evil we intend, the more good we intend. Therefore the more we turn away from hell (from which all evil ascends), the more we turn toward heaven (from which all goodness descends). The more we reject the Devil, then, the more we are accepted by the Lord. People cannot stand between the Devil and the Lord with a flexible neck and pray at the same time to each of them. (TRUE CHRISTIAN RELIGION 437).

"Since a person was created to perform uses, which is to love the neighbour, therefore all those who come into heaven, however many they may be, must perform uses. According to uses and the love of them, the inhabitants of heaven receive all their delight and blessedness, nor does heavenly joy come from any other source. He who believes that such joy can be imparted in a state of idleness is much deceived; for in fact no idle person is tolerated even in hell, its inhabitants being in workhouses and under a judge, who sets prisoners the work which they have to perform daily. To those who do not perform their tasks, neither food nor raiment is given, but they stand hungry and naked and so are compelled to work. The difference is, that in hell uses are performed from fear, but in heaven they are performed from love, and it is not fear but love which imparts joy." (APOCALYPSE EXPLAINED 1194).

"Those who confirm themselves in doctrine and life, that faith alone, without good works justifies and saves, close heaven against themselves by making excuse for evil works. They do this by saying and believing that evils are not seen by God; or that they are remitted in the case of those who have faith; or (according to some) with those who have the confidence of faith, and (according to others) with those who are justified by faith. Many of them, therefore, think insanely in this way; "Of what importance is it to do good, when good does not save me; and what does it matter if I do evils, when evils do not condemn me? I am in grace because I have faith. And so they live to themselves and the world, neither abstaining from evil because it is evil, nor doing good because it is good. And if they do abstain from evil, it is from fear of the civil law and the loss of reputation, and not from any fear of the Divine Law and of the loss of eternal life. And if they do good, it is from the love of reward and not from the love of God; and yet according to the quality of his life, such is the man." (APOCALYPSE EXPLAINED 797:5).

No one though, should believe that we have wisdom if we know a lot, grasp what we know fairly clearly and can talk about things intelligently. We are wise only if these abilities are united to love. Love is what produces wisdom, through its desires. If wisdom is not united to love it is like a meteor in the sky that vanishes, like a falling star. Wisdom united to love is like the constant light of the sun and like a fixed star. We have a love for wisdom to the extent that we fight off the demonic horde--our cravings for whatever is evil and false. (DIVINE PROVIDENCE 35).

Evil people are constantly and intentionally leading themselves deeper into their evils. We say they are doing this intentionally because everything evil comes from us. We turn the goodness that comes from the Lord into

evil. The basic reason evil people lead themselves deeper into evil is that they are making their way farther and farther into hellish communities, getting in deeper and deeper as they intend and do what is evil. This increases their pleasure in evil as well, and it takes possession of their thoughts to the point that nothing feels more gratifying. Furthermore, when we have made our way farther and deeper into hellish communities, we are wrapped up in chains, so to speak, though as long as we are living in this world, we do not feel them as chains. They feel like soft linen or slender threads of silk that we like because they caress us. After death though, the softness of the chains turns hard, and the caresses start to chafe.

If we consider theft, robbery, plunder, vengeance, domineering, profiteering and the like, we can recognize this growth of the pleasure we find in evil. Do not the people who are committing these evils feel surges of pleasure as things go well and as obstacles to their efforts vanish? It is well known that thieves get such pleasure from theft that they cannot stop stealing; and strange as it sounds, they love one stolen coin more than ten coins freely given. It would be the same for adulterers if things were not so arranged that the power to commit this evil decreases as it is abused. Still though, for many people the pleasure of thinking and talking about it is still there, and if nothing else, there is the insistent urge to touch.

[5] What people do not realize is that this is happening because they are making their way farther and farther, deeper and deeper, into hellish communities as they commit these evils intentionally and consciously. If the evils occur in our thoughts only and not in our volition, we are not with the evil in some hellish community yet. We enter such a community when the evils are in our volition as well. If at that time we are also conscious that this evil is against the laws of the Ten Commandments, and if we regard these laws as divine, and still deliberately do it, this sends us down so deep that the only way we can be rescued is by active repentance. (DIVINE PROVIDENCE 296:3-5).

If we make these two acknowledgments, we simply reflect on the evils within ourselves and to the extent that we abstain and turn from them as sins, throw them back into the hell they came from. Is there anyone who does not know--or who cannot know--that what is evil comes from hell and what is good comes from heaven? Can anyone then, fail to see that we abstain from hell and turn away from it to the extent that we abstain and turn away from evil? On this basis, can anyone fail to see that we intend and love what is good to the extent that we abstain and turn away from evil, and that in fact the Lord releases us from hell to that same extent and leads us to heaven? All rational people can see this provided they know that hell and heaven exist and know where evil and good come from. If then, we reflect on the evils in ourselves, which is the same as self-examination, and abstain from them, then we extricate ourselves from hell, turn our backs on it, and make our way into heaven where we see the Lord face to face. We may say that we are doing this, but we are doing it in apparent autonomy, and therefore from the Lord.

When we acknowledge this truth from a good heart and a devout faith, then it is subtly present from then on in everything we seem to ourselves to be thinking and doing, the way fertility is present in a seed at every step until the formation of a new seed, or the way there is pleasure in our appetite for the food that we realize is good for us. In a word, it is like the heart and soul of everything we think and do. (DIVINE PROVIDENCE 321:7).

There is also something I can say from experience, because I have been allowed to talk with angels. I have talked with some who lived many centuries ago, with some from before the Flood and some from after it, with some from the time of the Lord, with one of his apostles and with many who lived in subsequent centuries. They all looked like people in the prime of life and told me that the only thing they knew about death was that it was damnation.

When people who have lived good lives get to heaven, they all enter the young adulthood of their earthly lives and keep it forever, even though they had been old and debilitated in the world. Women, even women who had become old and frail in the world, return to the flower of youth and beauty. (DIVINE PROVIDENCE 324:4).

The Resuscitation of Man from the Dead and his Entrance into Eternal Life

When someone's body can no longer perform its functions in the natural world in response to the thoughts and affections of its spirit (which it derives from the spiritual world), then we say that the individual has died. This happens when the lungs' breathing and the heart's systolic motion have ceased. The person though, has not died at all. We are only separated from the physical nature that was useful to us in the world. The essential person is actually still alive. I say that the essential person is still alive because we are not people because of our

bodies but because of our spirits. After all, it is the spirit within us that thinks, and thought and affection together make us the people we are.

We can see then, that when we die we simply move from one world into another. This is why in the inner meaning of the Word, "death" means resurrection and a continuation of life.

The deepest communication of our spirit is with our breathing and our heartbeat; thought connects with our breathing, and affection, an attribute of love, with our heart. Consequently, when these two motions in the body cease, there is an immediate separation. It is these two motions, the respiratory motion of the lungs and the systolic motion of the heart, that are essential ties. Once they are severed, the spirit is left to itself; and the body, being now without the life of its spirit, cools and decays.

The reason the deepest communication of our spirit is with our breathing and our heart is that all our vital processes depend on these, not only in a general way, but in every specific.

After this separation, our spirit stays in the body briefly, but not after the complete stoppage of the heart, which varies depending on the cause of death. In some cases the motion of the heart continues for quite a while, and in others it does not. The moment it does stop, we are awakened, but this is done by the Lord alone. "Being awakened" means having our spirit led out of our body and into the spiritual world, which is commonly called "resurrection."

The reason our spirit is not separated from our body until the motion of the heart has stopped is that the heart answers to affection, an attribute of love, which is our essential life, since all of us derive our vital warmth from love. Consequently, as long as this union lasts there is a responsiveness, and therefore the life of the spirit is [still] in the body.

I have not only been told how the awakening happens, I have been shown by firsthand experience. The actual experience happened to me so that I could have a full knowledge of how it occurs.

I was brought into a state in which my physical senses were inoperative - very much then, like the state of people who are dying. However, my deeper life and thought remained intact so that I could perceive and retain what was happening to me and what does happen to people who are being awakened from death. I noticed that my physical breathing was almost suspended, with a deeper breathing, a breathing of the spirit, continuing along with a very slight and silent physical one.

At first then a connection was established between my heartbeat and the heavenly kingdom, because that kingdom corresponds to the human heart. I also saw angels from that kingdom, some at a distance, but two sitting close to my head. The effect was to take away all my own affection but to leave me in possession of thought and perception.

I remained in this state for several hours.

Then the spirits who were around me gradually drew away, thinking that I was dead. I sensed a sweet odor like that of an embalmed body, for when heavenly angels are present anything having to do with a corpse smells sweet. When spirits sense this, they cannot come near. This is also how evil spirits are kept away from our spirit when we are being admitted into eternal life.

The angels who were sitting beside my head were silent, simply sharing their thoughts with mine (when these are accepted [by the deceased], the angels know that the person's spirit is ready to be led out of the body). They accomplished this sharing of thoughts by looking into my face. This is actually how thoughts are shared in heaven.

Since I had been left in possession of thought and perception so that I could learn and remember how awakening happens, I noticed that at first the angels were checking to see whether my thoughts were like those of dying individuals, who are normally thinking about eternal life. They wanted to keep my mind in these thoughts. I was later told that as the body is breathing its last, our spirit is kept in its final thought until eventually it comes back to the thoughts that flowed from our basic or ruling affection in the world.

Especially, I was enabled to perceive and even to feel that there was a pull, a kind of drawing out of the deeper levels of my mind and therefore of my spirit from my body; and I was told that this was being done by the Lord and is what brings about our resurrection.

When heavenly angels are with people who have been awakened they do not leave them, because they love everyone. But some spirits are simply unable to be in the company of heavenly angels very long, and want them to leave. When this happens, angels from the Lord's spiritual kingdom arrive, through whom we are granted the use of light, since before this we could not see anything but could only think.

I was also shown how this is done. It seemed as though the angels rolled back a covering from my left eye toward the center of my nose so that my eye was opened and able to see. To the spirit, it seems as though this were actually happening, but it is only apparently so. As this covering seemed to be rolled back, I could see a kind of clear but dim light like the light we see through our eyelids when we are first waking up. It seemed to me as though this clear, dim light had a heavenly color to it, but I was later told that this varies. After that, it felt as though something were being rolled gently off my face, and once this was done, I had access to spiritual thought. This rolling something off the face is an appearance, for it represents the fact that we are moving from natural thinking to spiritual thinking. Angels take the greatest care to shield the awakening person from any concept that does not taste of love. Then they tell the individual that he or she is a spirit.

After the spiritual angels have given us the use of light, they do everything for us as newly arrived spirits that we could ever wish in that state. They tell us - at least to the extent that we can grasp it - about the realities of the other life. However, if our nature is such that we do not want to be taught, then once we are awakened, we want to get out of the company of angels. Still the angels do not leave us, but we do leave them. Angels really do love everyone. They want nothing more than to help people, to teach them, to lead them into heaven. This is their highest joy.

When spirits leave the company of angels, they are welcomed by the good spirits who are accompanying them and who also do all they can for them. However, if they had led the kind of life in the world that makes it impossible for them to be in the company of good people, then they want to get away from these as well. This happens as long and as many times as necessary, until they find the company of people their earthly life has fitted them for. Here they find their life; and remarkable as it may sound, they then lead the same kind of life they had led in the world.

This first stage of our life after death does not last more than a few days, though. In the following pages I will be describing how we are then brought from one state into another until finally we arrive either in heaven or in hell. This too is something I have been allowed to learn from a great deal of experience. (HEAVEN AND HELL 445-451).

(See also Nos. 453-535 of HEAVEN AND HELL for a full account of what takes place in the world of spirits after man's resurrection. These revelations are so wonderful, convincing and enlightening and are described so completely, that after reading them, no one need ever again have any doubts or fears about death and what awaits us when our spirit, or soul, leaves our earthly body. This should do much to dispel the misconceptions, dread and hopelessness with which many people view the thought of physical death.)

I have talked with some people on the third day after their death, when the events described in [449](#), [450](#) have been completed. I talked with three whom I had known in the world and told them that their funeral services were now being planned so that their bodies could be buried. When they heard me say it was so that they could be buried, they were struck with a kind of bewilderment. They said that they were alive, and that people were burying what had been useful to them in the world. Later on, they were utterly amazed at the fact that while they had been living in their bodies they had not believed in this kind of life after death, and particularly that this was the case for almost everyone in the church.

Some people during their earthly lives have not believed in any life of the soul after the life of the body. When they discover that they are alive, they are profoundly embarrassed. However, people who have convinced themselves of this join up with others of like mind and move away from people who had lived in faith. Most of them link up with some hellish community because such people reject the Divine and have no use for the truths of the church. In fact, to the extent that we convince ourselves in our opposition to the ideal of the eternal life of the soul, we also convince ourselves in opposition to the realities of heaven and the church. (HEAVEN AND HELL 452).

When we first enter the world of spirits (which happens shortly after the reawakening just described), our spirit has a similar face and tone of voice as it did in the world. This is because at that point we are in the state of our

external concerns, with our deeper concerns not yet uncovered. This is our initial state after decease. Later, though, our face changes and becomes quite different. It comes to look like the ruling affection in which the deeper reaches of our minds were engaged in the world, the kind of affection characteristic of the spirit within our body, because the face of our spirit is very different from the face of our body. We get our physical face from our parents and our spiritual face from our affection, which it images. Our spirit takes on this face after our physical life is over, when the outer coverings have been removed. This is our third state.

I have seen some newcomers from the world and have recognized them by their faces and voices; but when I saw them later, I did not recognize them. People who were engaged in good affections had lovely faces, while people who were engaged in evil affections had ugly ones. Seen in its own right, our spirit is nothing but our affections, whose outward form is our face.

The reason our faces change is that in the other life no one is allowed to pretend to affections they do not really have, so we cannot put on a face that is contrary to the love we are engaged in. We are all refined down to a state in which we say what we think and manifest in expression and act what we intend. This is why our faces all become forms and images of our affections; and this is why all the people who have known each other in the world still recognize each other in the world of spirits, but not in heaven or hell. (HEAVEN AND HELL 457).

When we are being faced with our deeds after death, angels who have been given the task of examining, look searchingly into the face and continue their examination through the whole body, beginning with the fingers first of one hand and then of the other and continuing through the whole. When I wondered why this was so, it was explained to me. The reason is that just as the details of our thought and intention are inscribed on our brains because that is where their beginnings are, so they are inscribed on the whole body as well, since all the elements of our thought and intention move out into the body from their beginnings and take definition there in their outmost forms. This is why the things that are inscribed on our memory from our intention and consequent thought are inscribed not only on the brain but also on the whole person, where they take form in a pattern that follows the pattern of the parts of the body. I could therefore see that our overall nature depends on the nature of our intention and consequent thought, so that evil people are their own evil and good people are their own good.

We may also gather from this what is meant by our book of life, mentioned in the Word. It is the fact that all our deeds and all our thoughts are written on our whole person and seem as though they are read from a book when they are called out of our memory. They appear in a kind of image when our spirit is looked at in heaven's light.

I should like to add to this something noteworthy about the memory that we keep after death, something that convinced me that not just the general contents but even the smallest details that have entered our memory do last and are never erased. I saw some books with writing in them like earthly writing, and was told that they had come from the memories of the people who had written them, that not a single word was missing that had been in the book they had written in the world. I was also told that all the least details could be retrieved from the memory of someone else, even things the person had forgotten in the world. The reason for this was explained as well; namely, that we have an outer and an inner memory, the outer proper to our natural person and the inner proper to our spiritual person. The details of what we have thought, intended, said and done, even what we have heard and seen, are inscribed on our inner or spiritual memory. There is no way to erase anything there, since everything is written at once on our spirit itself and on the members of our body, as noted above. This means that our spirit is formed in accord with what we have thought and what we have done intentionally. I know these things seem paradoxical and hard to believe, but they are true nevertheless.

Let no one believe then, that there is anything we have thought or done in secret that will remain hidden after death. Believe rather that absolutely everything will come out into broad daylight. (HEAVEN AND HELL 463).

Delights changed Into Correspondences

People who have loved divine truths and the Word from a deep affection, or from an affection for the truth itself, live in the light, in uplands that look like mountains, and are constantly bathed in the light of heaven there. They know nothing of the kind of darkness we have at night in the world, and they live in a springtime climate as well. Their scenery offers them views like fields ripe for harvest and vineyards. Everything in their houses gleams as though it were made of precious stones. Looking through their windows is like looking through pure crystal.

These are their visual pleasures; but they are actually deeper pleasures because of their correspondence with divine heavenly qualities, since the truths from the Word that they have loved correspond to the harvest fields, vineyards, precious stones, windows and crystals.

People who have applied the teachings of the church from the Word directly to their lives are in the inmost heaven and more than anyone else are absorbed in the pleasures of wisdom. They see divine realities in particular objects. They actually do see the objects, but the corresponding divine realities flow directly into their minds and fill them with a sense of blessedness that affects all their sensory functions. As a result, everything they see seems to laugh and play and live .

If people have loved learning and have developed their rational ability accordingly and thereby gained intelligence, and if they have acknowledged the Divine Being at the same time, their delight in knowledge and pleasure in reasoning changes in the other life into a spiritual pleasure that is the delight of firsthand knowledge of what is good and true. They live in gardens where you can see flower beds and lawns beautifully marked off, surrounded by rows of trees with arcades and promenades. The trees and flowers change from day to day. Looking at all this brings pleasure to their minds generally, and the specific changes make it constantly new. Further, since all this corresponds to divine qualities, and since these people are drawn to their knowledge of correspondences, they are constantly being filled with new insights and thereby having their spiritual rational faculty perfected. They enjoy these pleasures because gardens, flower beds, lawns and trees correspond to information, insights and the intelligence that ensues.

If people have given the Divine credit for everything and regarded nature as relatively dead, simply subservient to spiritual concerns, and if they have convinced themselves of this, they are in heavenly light; and everything that presents itself to their eyes derives a kind of translucence from that light. In that translucency they see innumerable shadings of light that their inner sight seems to drink directly in. This is how they perceive deeper pleasures. The objects in their houses look like diamonds with similar variegations of light. I have been told that their walls look like crystal and are therefore also translucent, and that within them one can see what looks like fluid forms representative of heavenly things, again with constant variety. This is because this kind of translucence corresponds to an intellect that has been enlightened by the Lord, with the shadows that arise from faith in and love of natural things taken away. Things like this - and infinitely more - are what people who have been in heaven are talking about when they say that they have seen what the eye has never seen, and that from the grasp of divine things conveyed to them in this connection, they have heard what the ear has never heard.

If people have not acted covertly but have wanted everything they were thinking to be out in the open to the extent that civil law allows, then since they have thought nothing but what was honest and fair because of the Deity, in heaven their faces are radiant. Because of that radiance, the details of their thoughts and affections are visible in their faces as though presented in a form; and in both speech and action they are virtual images of their feelings. They are more beloved than others. When they are talking, their faces dim a little, but after they have spoken, then the very things they have said can be fully and plainly seen in their faces. Further, since everything around them answers to their deeper natures, everything takes on a countenance that enables others to see clearly what they represent and mean. Spirits who have found pleasure in covert activity get as far from them as they can, and seem to themselves to slither away from them like snakes.

People who have regarded adultery as unspeakable and have lived in chaste love of their marriage are more in the pattern and form of heaven than anyone else. This gives them a total beauty and a constant flower of youth. The pleasures of their love are indescribable, and increase to eternity. This is because all the joys and delights of heaven flow into that love; and this in turn is because that love comes down from the Lord's union with heaven and with the church and in general from the union of the good and the true that is heaven in general and in every individual angel in particular. Their external pleasures are so wonderful that they cannot be described in human words.

Still, what I have said about the correspondences of pleasures for people who are involved in heavenly love is only a little.

This enables us to know that after death our pleasures do change into corresponding ones, but that the love itself remains the same forever, especially marriage love, the love of what is fair, honest, good and true, the love of information and insights, the love of intelligence and wisdom, and the rest. The things that flow from these loves like streams from their spring are pleasures that not only last but are raised to a higher level when they are changed from natural pleasures into spiritual ones. (HEAVEN AND HELL 489-490).

Divine Love & Wisdom

Nothing is done in or through the body except from volition and through thought; and since these two are acting, every element of volition and thought must necessarily be present within the act. They cannot be separated. This is why we draw conclusions on the basis of deeds or works about each other's purposeful thought, which we refer to as "intent."

I have learned that angels can sense and see from someone's single deed or work everything about the intention and thought of the one who is doing it. From the person's volition, angels of the third heaven see the purpose for which it is being done, and angels of the second heaven see the means through which the purpose is working. This is why deeds and works are so often mandated in the Word, and why it says that we are known by our works. (DIVINE LOVE AND WISDOM 215).

According to angelic wisdom, unless volition and discernment, or desire and thought, or charity and faith, devote themselves to involvement in works or deeds whenever possible, they are nothing but passing breezes, so to speak, or images in the air that vanish. They first take on permanence in us and become part of our life when we perform and do them. The reason is that the final stage is the composite, vessel and foundation of the prior stages.

Faith apart from good works is just this kind of airy nothing or image, and so are faith and charity apart from their practice. The only difference is that people who put faith and charity together know what is good and are able to intend and do it, but not people who are devoted to faith apart from charity. (DIVINE LOVE AND WISDOM 216).

There are two abilities within us, gifts from the Lord, that distinguish us from animals. One ability is that we can discern what is true and what is good. This ability is called "rationality," and is an ability of our discernment. The other ability is that we can do what is true and what is good. This ability is called "freedom," and is an ability of our volition. Because of our rationality, we can think what we want to think, either in favor of God or against God, in favor of our neighbor or against our neighbor. We can also intend and do what we are thinking, or when we see something evil and are afraid of the penalty, can use our freedom to refrain from doing it. It is because of these two abilities that we are human and are distinguished from animals.

These two abilities are gifts from the Lord within us. They come from him constantly and are never taken away, for if they were taken away, that would be the end of our humanity. The Lord lives in each of us, in the good and the evil alike, in these two abilities. They are the Lord's dwelling in the human race, which is why everyone, whether good or evil, lives forever. However, the Lord's dwelling within us is more intimate as we use these abilities to open the higher levels. By opening them, we come into consciousness of higher levels of love and wisdom and so come closer to the Lord. It makes sense then, that as these levels are opened, we are in the Lord and the Lord is in us. (DIVINE LOVE AND WISDOM 240).

Anyone who has any sense at all and has not become inwardly convinced of false principles on the grounds of intellectual pride, on hearing people talk about higher things or on reading about them understands, retains them, and eventually affirms them if there is any desire for learning. This holds true for evil and good people alike. Even evil people who at heart deny the divine gifts of the church can understand, discuss, and preach higher things, and can defend them in scholarly writing. However, when they are left on their own to think about them, their thinking is based on their hellish self-centeredness, and they deny them. We can see from this that our discernment can be in spiritual light even though our volition may not be in spiritual warmth.

It also follows from this that our discernment does not lead our volition, or that wisdom does not give rise to love. It merely teaches and shows the way. It teaches how we should live and shows us the way we should follow. It also follows from this that our volition leads our discernment and gets it to work in unison with itself. The love

that is the substance of our volition gives the name of "wisdom" to whatever in our discernment it finds harmonious.

I will be showing below that on its own, apart from discernment, our volition accomplishes nothing. Everything it does, it does in conjunction with our discernment. However, our volition gains the cooperation of our discernment by flowing into it, and not the other way around. (DIVINE LOVE AND WISDOM 244).

There are three levels of the human mind called earthly, spiritual and heavenly; that these levels can be opened in us in sequence; that the earthly level is opened first; and that afterward, if we abstain from evils as sins and turn to the Lord, the spiritual level is opened, and ultimately the heavenly level. Since the sequential opening of these levels depends on how we live, it follows that the two higher levels may also not be opened, in which case we stay on the earthly level, which is the most remote.

It is recognized in the world that we have an earthly self and a spiritual self, or an outer and an inner self. It is not recognized that the earthly self becomes spiritual by the opening of a higher level within, and that this opening is accomplished by a spiritual life, a life in accord with divine precepts, and that unless we live by these precepts, we remain centered on the physical world. (DIVINE LOVE AND WISDOM 248).

(A detailed explanation of Degrees, including those of love and wisdom, spiritual and natural degrees in their successive and simultaneous order, the degrees of the natural mind and the origin of evil, as well as many other remarkable disclosures, may be found in Part 3 of DIVINE LOVE & WISDOM. This should prove a rich and rewarding field of study for those who wish to go more deeply into the Divine operation in all things, and thus see the perfect order through which the Lord works in every aspect of His creation.)

Even though we say that functions are useful because they relate to the Lord through us, we cannot say that they are from us for the sake of the Lord. They are from the Lord for our sake because all useful functions are infinitely united in the Lord, and none of them are in us except as gifts from the Lord. We can actually do nothing good on our own, only from the Lord, and the good we do is what we are calling useful functions. The essence of spiritual love is to do good to others for their sake and not for our own. This is infinitely more so in regard to the essence of divine love. It is like the love of parents for their children. They do good for them out of love, for the children's sake, not for their own sake. We can see this clearly in the love mothers have for their little ones.

People believe that because the Lord is to be revered, worshiped and praised the Lord loves reverence, worship and praise for his own sake. In fact, he loves them for our sake, because they bring us into a state where something divine can flow in and be felt. This is because by these activities we are removing that focus on self that prevents the inflow and acceptance. The focus on self that is self-love hardens and closes our heart. It is removed by our realization that in our own right we are nothing but evil and that nothing but what is good comes from the Lord. This yields the softening of heart and humility from which reverence and worship flow.

It follows from this that the purpose of the useful functions the Lord provides for himself through us is that he may bless us out of his love; and since this is what he loves to do, our receiving it is the joy of his love.

No one should believe that the Lord is with people who simply worship him. He makes his home with people who do his commandments - that is, his useful functions - and not with the others. (DIVINE LOVE AND WISDOM 335).

How our Intentions and Objectives are Manifested in our Spiritual Sphere After Death

Anyone who reflects may see that man has communication with heaven by means of internal things, for the whole of heaven dwells within internal things. Unless a person is in heaven as regards his thoughts and affections, that is, as regards the thoughts in his understanding and the affections in his will, he cannot go to heaven after death, since he has no communication with it at all. During his lifetime a person secures that communication by means of truths in his understanding and goods in his will, and unless he secures it then he cannot do so subsequently, since his mind cannot be opened after death to interior things if it has not been opened to them during his lifetime.

Without our awareness, we are surrounded by a kind of spiritual aura that reflects our desires. Angels can detect this aura more capably than the keenest nose on earth detects a scent. Some people have concentrated only on the outer level of life; that is, they have indulged in the satisfaction of hating their neighbor, the revenge and

cruelty this leads to, adultery, a sense of superiority and contempt for others, fraud, greed, deceit, decadence and so on. The spiritual aura that envelops people like this is as offensive as the earthly stench given off by corpses, dung, ripe garbage and so on; and people who had lived this way take the aura with them when they die. Since they are saturated through and through with it, they cannot live anywhere but hell, where such auras exist.

Others have concentrated on an inner level, though. They are the ones who have enjoyed practicing goodwill and charity toward their neighbor, and especially those who have found bliss in loving the Lord. They are surrounded by a pleasant, agreeable aura that is the atmosphere of heaven itself, and accordingly they are in heaven.

Auras perceived in the other life always rise out of the different types of love and resulting desires we had nurtured. So auras rise out of our life—love and its attendant desire being the substance of life itself. Since they rise out of varieties of love and desire, they rise out of the aims and goals inspiring us to will and act as we do. We always aim at what we love, so our goals constitute our life and determine its quality. This is the main source of our aura. It is perceived in exquisite detail in heaven because the whole of heaven abides in an atmosphere of purpose.

These remarks show the nature of a person focused on what is within and the nature of a person focused on the surface. They also demonstrate the reason why we ought to engage not only with what is on the surface but also with what is within.

When the outer dimension monopolizes people's attention, they do not care about this information, no matter how sharp a genius they possess in the affairs of public life and no matter how strong a reputation for scholarship they have gained from knowing facts. They do not care because they do not believe in anything they cannot see with their eyes or touch with their hands. So they do not believe in heaven or hell. If you told them that right after death they were going to the other world, where they would see, hear, speak and sense by touch more perfectly than in their body, they would reject it as nonsense or a fantasy. Nonetheless it is the actual truth. The same thing would happen if you told them that the real person is the soul or spirit that lives on after death rather than the body it carries around in the world.

The consequence is that people who are wholly absorbed in superficialities do not care what you say about the inner plane, even though inner qualities are what will render them fortunate and happy in the kingdom where they are going and will live forever. Most Christians share this disbelief.

The failure of Christians to believe is something I was permitted to learn about by talking to people arriving in the other life from the Christian world. In the next life they are not able to hide what they have thought, because one's thoughts lie open to view there. Neither are they able to hide what they have held as their goals—which is to say, what they have loved—because it reveals itself in their aura. (ARCANA COELESTIA 4464).

Love Toward the Neighbour

Another reason the force of their cravings leads people to confirm falsity is that they do not know what heaven is, what hell is, what love for their neighbor is, and what love for themselves and for worldly advantages is. If they did know, or even if they merely wanted to know, they would think very differently. Who today has any idea that love for our neighbor does not mean giving our things to the poor, helping everyone with our wealth, and benefiting people in every way without regard to their goodness or evil? If we did such things, we would be deprived of our own resources and end up impoverished and wretched ourselves. That is why people reject the doctrine of charity and embrace the doctrine of faith. Afterward they harden themselves against charity with many arguments.

We were born in sin, they think to themselves, so we can do no good on our own; and if we do charitable, pious deeds, we cannot help taking credit for them. Under the inspiration of these ideas on one hand and the stimulus of their cravings on the other, they take sides with those who say faith alone saves us. Armed with this belief, they harden themselves still further, until they deny that acts of neighborly love are necessary to salvation. Once those deeds are dismissed they fall into the new idea that because we are like this, the Lord has provided a means of salvation, which is called faith. Finally they arrive at the concept that we are saved if we have the confidence or assurance to say, even at the moment of death, that God takes pity on us when he looks on his

Son, who suffered for us. They neglect to consider what the Lord said in [John 1:12, 13](#) and a thousand other places.

This then is why the churches have deemed faith alone essential—though not to the same extent everywhere, because the church leaders cannot profit off faith alone, only off the preaching of good deeds.

If these same people had known what charity toward one's neighbor was, they never would have fallen into that false theology. The foundation of charity is our doing what is right and fair in every arena in which we have any duty or responsibility. For instance, when judges punish wrongdoers in accord with the law, acting with zeal, they are exercising charity toward their neighbor. They seek their neighbor's reform, so they want what is good for her or him. They also wish well to society and their country in trying to stop the criminal from doing more harm to either of these. They can love the evildoer who straightens out, just as parents can love the child they discipline. At the same time they love society and their country, which is their overall neighbor. The same holds true for all other instances. (ARCANA COELESTIA 4730:2-3).

(An excellent summary of love toward the neighbour, or charity may be found in THE NEW JERUSALEM & ITS HEAVENLY DOCTRINE Nos. 84-105 and the whole subject of this fundamental Christian teaching in all its aspects is thoroughly covered in Chapter 7 of TRUE CHRISTIAN RELIGION. After a study of this chapter one has an entirely new conception of how the Lord means us to exercise love and charity in all spheres of our daily life.)

These are just a few significant quotations from the Writings, each book of which has something new and wonderful to offer in the way of Divine revelation and truth. I cannot speak too highly of these remarkable books and strongly recommend them to all serious thinkers who are seeking spiritual enlightenment.

However, these wonderful teachings and revelations will be of no use to us unless we are prepared to apply them to our lives. We must be willing to say: "This concerns me, personally. What can I do about it? Where must I start?" It is only when we begin to think in this way, that the Lord can speak to our hearts through the Writings and show us how we can co-operate with Him, as He gradually brings about our reformation and regeneration. It is my sincere hope that the preceding quotations and my own humble experience may help others to see what is involved in all this, in which case this booklet will not have been written in vain.

"There is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known." (LUKE 12:2).

"If ye love Me, keep My commandments." (JOHN 14:15).

"Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." (JOHN 15:14).

"These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." (JOHN 16:33).

HEAVEN AND HELL ARE FROM THE HUMAN RACE

People in the Christian world are totally unaware that heaven and hell come from the human race. They actually believe that angels were created in the beginning and constitute heaven, and that the devil or Satan was an angel of light who became rebellious and was cast out together with his faction, and that this gave rise to hell.

Angels are utterly amazed that there can be this kind of belief in the Christian world, and even more so that people know absolutely nothing about heaven, even though this is a primary doctrine of the church. Knowing that this kind of ignorance is prevalent, they are profoundly delighted that it has now pleased the Lord to reveal to us so much about heaven - and about hell as well - and so as much as possible to dispel the darkness that is rising daily because this church is drawing to a close.

[2] So they want me to testify on their behalf that in all heaven there is not a single angel who was created as such in the beginning, nor is there in all hell a devil who was created as an angel of light and cast out. Rather, all the people in heaven and in hell are from the human race - in heaven the ones who have lived in heavenly love and faith, and in hell the ones who have lived in hellish love and faith. Hell as a whole is what is called the devil and Satan. The hell at the back, where the people called evil demons live, is the devil, and the hell that is in front, where the people live who are called evil spirits, is Satan. We will describe later what each hell is like.

[3] They insisted that the reason the Christian world has adopted this kind of belief about people in heaven and people in hell is that they have taken a few passages of the Word, understanding them only in their literal

meaning, with no enlightenment or instruction based on genuine doctrine from the Word. Yet the literal meaning of the Word, without the light of genuine doctrine, leads the mind astray in all directions, giving rise to ignorance, heresy and error.

312. This belief among church people is also the cause of their belief that no one will arrive in heaven or hell before the time of the Last Judgment, which they have come to believe will be a time when everything they can see perishes and new things come into being, when souls will return into their bodies and then begin once more to live as people because of this reunion. This faith implies the other, about angels having been created in the beginning, for it is not possible to believe that heaven and hell come from the human race when you believe that no one is going to get there until the end of the world.

[2] So to convince people that this is not the case, I have been allowed to associate with angels and to talk with people in hell for several years now, sometimes constantly from morning until evening, and so to learn about heaven and about hell. The purpose of all this is that church people should remain no longer in their mistaken beliefs about a resurrection on Judgment Day and about the state of their souls in the meanwhile, or about angels and the devil. Because this faith is a mistaken one, it brings darkness with it; and for people who think about such things on the basis of their own intellect, it leads to doubt and eventually to denial. They are actually saying in their hearts, "How can such a vast heaven and so many stars be destroyed and disappear, along with the sun and the moon? How can stars that are larger than the earth fall on the earth? How can bodies that have been eaten by worms and destroyed by decay and scattered to the four winds be reunited to their souls? Where have these souls been in the meanwhile, and what have they been like without any of the senses they had in their bodies?"

[3] There are many other questions like these, which do not accord with belief because they are incomprehensible, and for many people they are destroying any belief in a life after death, in heaven and hell, and along with these the rest of the contents of the faith of the church. This destruction can be observed in people who say, "Who has come back from heaven and told us that it exists, or from hell, to say that it exists? What is this business about people being tortured by fire to eternity? What is this Judgment Day? Haven't we been waiting for it for centuries, all in vain?" along with any number of other things that imply a denial of everything.

[4] Many people who are particularly skilled in worldly affairs think like this; so to prevent them from further disturbing and misleading people of simple faith and simple heart and bringing on a hellish darkness concerning God, heaven, eternal life and the other matters that follow from them, the deeper reaches of my spirit have been opened by the Lord, enabling me to talk after their death with all the people I have ever known during their physical lives. I have talked with some for days, with some for months and with some for a year. I have talked with so many others that it would be no exaggeration to talk in terms of a hundred thousand, many in heaven and many in hell. I have talked with some just two days after their deaths and told them that now their funerals and burial rites were being performed so that they could be interred; to which they have responded that it was a good thing they had cast off what had served them as a body for their functions in our world, wanting me to say that they were not dead at all. They were just as alive and just as human as ever, having simply crossed over from one world to another. They were not aware of having lost anything, since they were just as much in a body as before, enjoyed volition and understanding just as before, and had thoughts and affections, sensation and desires similar to the ones they had in our world.

[5] Many people who have just died, when they have discovered that they are living persons just as they were before, and in a similar state (for our first state after death is like the one we were in on earth, although this changes gradually for us either toward heaven or toward hell), have been moved by a newfound joy at still being alive. They have said they would not have believed it. They were absolutely amazed that they had been in such ignorance and blindness about the state of life after death, all the more so that this is true of people within the church, who could be in more light about such matters than all the rest of the whole world. Now for the first time they were seeing the reason for this blindness and ignorance, namely, that their outward concerns, their concerns for worldly and bodily matters, preoccupied and filled their minds so completely that they could not be raised into heaven's light and look into ecclesiastical subjects beyond the formalities of doctrine. When bodily and worldly matters are loved as much as they are today, nothing flows in from them but darkness when the mind tries to press further.

313. Many of the scholars of the Christian world are dumbfounded when they find themselves after death in bodies, wearing clothes and in houses the way they were in this world. When they call to mind what they had thought about life after death, the soul, spirits and heaven and hell, they are embarrassed and say that they had been thinking nonsense. They say that people of simple faith had been far wiser than they. Some scholars were examined who had completely convinced themselves in this kind of belief and attributed everything to nature. It turned out that their inner natures were completely closed off, while their more outward natures were open. This meant that they were not looking toward heaven but toward the world, and therefore toward hell; for to the extent that our deeper natures are opened, we look toward heaven, while to the extent that they are closed and our more outward natures are open, we look toward hell. Our deeper levels are formed for the acceptance of heaven and our more outward ones for acceptance of the world; and if we accept the world without accepting heaven at the same time, we are accepting hell. (HEAVEN AND HELL 311-313).

"Blessed are they who have not seen but who yet have believed" (JOHN 20:29)

With the New Church there is no hysteria, no ranting and no gimmickry, and no dictatorship, no continuous repetition of meaningless phrases and no threats or compulsion. We are taught the meaning of free will, and how it should be exercised in our daily lives. The Lord only stands at the door (of our hearts) and knocks. He never forces His way in. It is up to us to open the door and invite Him in, so that He might transform us into the loving and useful vessels He wants us to be. It is up to us to open the door and welcome Him in.

It is stressed that with the New Church there is no connection whatever with spiritualism or reincarnation, both of which are strongly condemned by this Church.

I can say very definitely that the doctrines of this Church as given in the Writings and applied to life have changed my entire conception of what Christianity is all about.

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