

# INTRODUCING SWEDENBORG'S HEAVEN & HELL

## Introduction

Of the 30 volumes of Emanuel Swedenborg's spiritual writings, *Heaven, and its wonders, and Hell*, to give its full title, is the most widely known and read. Over the 250 years since being published in 1758, it has been translated into most of the world's languages with numerous reprints. Its pages, approximately 500 in most English versions, have been a source of enlightenment to many people.

The book provides insight into the connection between the natural and spiritual realms. It explains that every person lives on after death in a spiritual body, supporting what Paul had to say in 1 Corinthians 15:44. Continuation of life is shown to be similar in many ways to this life yet more open and manifest, something which Swedenborg himself directly experienced and recorded.

Swedenborg did not set out to write a sensational book. As a serious scientist he was more interested in giving a methodical description. The opening paragraphs deal with the construction and purpose of the spiritual realm, and he shows how everything depends on the way that life from God is received by each individual. In the end we come to realise that the kingdom of heaven is within us for we see 'Heaven' and 'Hell' as essentially states of being rather than places. In consequence, the descriptions and concepts included in the book bear no relation to traditional presentations of heaven and hell. They do, however, provide us with principles for ordering our lives here and now, ready for taking forward into the life beyond.

People have been led from the brink of despair by reading Heaven and Hell through the comfort it has brought them. They have been able to take up their life again in the realisation that their life's destiny can be begun here with death not being the end of life but its continuation on a higher and more radiant plane.

## Content of Book and Reading Approach

*Heaven and Hell* is helpful in many ways providing detailed descriptions of so much:

- the search for the harmony between heaven and earth
- the deepening of an understanding of God
- an awareness of the influence of angels in this realm
- knowledge about the afterlife
- the process of dying
- the experience on first waking in the spiritual realm

The approach to reading the book varies between individuals. Some prefer to read the whole book from beginning to end. It is recommended that the "Contents" be scanned first of all in order to gain an appreciation of the variety of the detail. In doing so, it will be quickly noticed that there are three main

sections:

1. Heaven
2. The World of Spirits (which includes the description of resurrection and the awakening process)
3. Hell

Should a topic be noted that has particular relevance or interest, it would be worthwhile reading that first. We would point out that whilst very important in the overall context of the book, there are several opening chapters which are rather abstract.

For those who are short of time the following key paragraphs (not pages) give an excellent idea of the depth and clarity of Swedenborg's thought:

<i>The experience of dying</i>	445, 449-450
<i>Meeting friends after death</i>	494
<i>What each person takes into the spiritual realm</i>	461
<i>Little children in heaven</i>	329
<i>Beauty in heaven</i>	459
<i>Growing 'young'</i>	414
<i>Innocence</i>	278
<i>Happiness in heaven</i>	403

## Relevance Today

The question is sometimes asked "Why should I read Heaven and Hell which is 250 years old?" Scientific knowledge is constantly growing but the essential truth concerning ultimate reality and purpose to our existence stands the test of time. It is worthwhile briefly mentioning that some descriptions recorded by Swedenborg do strongly correlate with experiences of those who have survived a time when they were determined clinically dead. Researchers into these near-death occurrences have concluded that this book is a source for understanding the transition process. Swedenborg's experiences took him much further into that transcendental realm.

## Invitation

In his "Preface" to ***Heaven and Hell***, Swedenborg says that the opening of his awareness into the spiritual 'world' is really a new revelation for humankind which had become very largely ignorant of spiritual realities. From now on, those with a belief in a life after death may not be led into denial by the worldly thinkers to whom only the material is real.

We invite you to take up this challenge to look beyond the material by borrowing or purchasing a copy of the book. Reading the specific paragraphs listed earlier at the very least should open up a realm to you which you will quickly discover is all around even now. We feel sure you will want to read in more detail and be transported into a space where these two realms of spirit and physicality merge into one harmonious whole and where our world takes on new meaning and importance.

## Quotation

*Heaven's delightfulness* From paragraph 399

*"Just how delightful heaven is can be seen from the fact that everyone in heaven finds it delightful to share what they enjoy and have received with each other. And since this is what everyone in heaven is like, you begin to see just how great heaven's delightfulness must be. Sharing delight is the very nature of every kind of love and it comes from loving the Lord whose love itself is to share everything it has with everybody and wanting everyone's happiness."*

## Availability of the Book

Paperback - translation only

Deluxe\* paperback

Deluxe\* hardback

\*Deluxe versions include an introduction to key ideas, study notes and index

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