

# Life After Death

**Of the many questions about life than can be pondered, the most awesome of all is whether or not we shall continue to live on after physical death. Within this basic question are many other important questions: Is there a heaven and a hell? Does one particular religious belief provide the way to eternal life and salvation? If so, which one? Or perhaps the question may be more personal: "Will I see my loved ones after death?"**

Like other Christian Churches and most major religions, the New Church believes there is certainly life after the death of our physical bodies. But there are significant differences in the way we understand it. We believe that death is a natural process that it leads to the continuation of human life in the dimension of the spiritual world.

This is true for absolutely everyone because each living person, from God, is in possession of an immortal soul. During our life here the quality of our soul, or spirit, is ours to determine, and in all the thousands, perhaps millions of decisions we make, we make a choice about our life's primary love and central delight. If we consciously and deliberately make decisions that serve life itself and further the well being of others, then, after we die, we come into an environment called heaven, where all those present have this type of love as their basic motivation in life. They can only live together in peace, harmony and joy. If on the other hand we persist in consciously and deliberately making decisions to live only for ourselves and our own enjoyment, we then begin to develop a strong and deep self-interest.

Eventually our great love and delight in life are such things as the manipulation of and dominion over others, hatred, revenge and jealousy. And after death we will come into an environment called hell where all inhabitants have similar self-regarding ambitions and delights. Such are the consequences of repeated selfish and self-centred decisions that we can so easily make in this life.

Note then that finding yourself in either heaven or hell does not depend ultimately on the type of religious belief that you hold. It depends on the kind of person you have chosen to become. And on this point it is important to understand that people, whose upbringing and circumstances in this world have deprived them of either experiencing love or the opportunity to make free choices in life, enter the spiritual world after death with a full opportunity to then begin making real choices about themselves in a way that they never could here. No one is condemned or cast into any place or state in the afterlife which to them is disagreeable or even foreign. Those who love good find themselves in heaven; those who knowingly and deliberately love evil willingly find themselves in hell. No one, not even God, judges the person. Only we judge ourselves and this by our reaction to seeing spiritual truth. The type of reaction will be consistent with our primary love, whether good or bad.

And in the afterlife we believe that we shall be living in a world quite similar to the one we know here. We shall have a body and a world in which to be active and useful. And there will be other people with whom we shall interrelate. We will be drawn to people with whom we have a deep affinity and we will certainly be meeting again those whom we have loved and known here. However in that world are certain effects or laws which do not operate in our current physical environment. There we cannot help being much more open and honest about our true selves; in fact, the quality of our inner life will be projected out onto our immediate surroundings and others will clearly see them for what they are. We will even have a personal outer appearance which matches this inner state, and this is the case whether we like it or not.

In such a world, in which everything is fully revealed, we will find out whether those here with whom we lived and whom we loved, are truly compatible to us and we to them. If we are compatible - if we truly enjoy and appreciate each other's presence - we will remain together. But if it turns out that there are only superficial reasons for the existence of the relationship, we will happily separate and form new ones. Again, no external authority forcibly imposes an unwanted situation onto anyone. Nobody is separated from another person with whom they truly wish to be; only an inner sense of discomfort when together causes separation. In no way whatsoever do any of us here need fear we may unfairly miss out or get second best on coming into the spiritual world. It is our choices here that determine the quality of our experiences in the hereafter.

To contemplate the notion of living for ever is indeed overwhelming. Yet we know what it is like to completely lose ourselves in a sense of timelessness when occupied with something we greatly enjoy. But unlike here, in the spiritual world, this satisfying and fulfilling experience of time is the norm not the exception. There, the present moment will be experienced fully and we shall give ourselves completely to the current activity. It will seem, to us, like heaven.

Roseville New Church