



VAN DUSEN: A GUIDE TO SWEDENBORG TEACHINGS AND “HEAVEN AND HELL”

Emanuel Swedenborg was an 18th century Swedish pluralistic-Christian theologian, scientist, philosopher and mystic. His teachings on the existence of etheric or spirit world, afterlife visitations remains as viable today as when first recorded by Swedenborg. There is extensive literature available on the above accessible through, books, articles, similar publications that can be found on the Swedenborg Foundation’s website.

In context, Swedenborg’s original record of ‘nightly visitations’ to etheric spirit realms, out-of-body experiences, angelic beings and more associated with the afterlife is well documented. The foundation’s website also links potential students and seekers of Truth to branches across the world. A key component of the teachings stress that people studying this work should use their reasoning and intuitive abilities before accepting Swedenborg writings.

The book “Heaven and Hell” (along with several other Swedenborg books) was given to me in 2019 by great friends Alwyn and Laurie Lewis from Hobart. Van Dusen, a Swedenborg follower, student, and author compiled an explanatory PDF document outlining the basics of Swedenborg teachings. A short extract from the book “Heaven and Hell” translated by George F Dole in 1979 also appears below.

–Philip Crouch, Tasmania 2020

VAN DUSEN: A GUIDE TO THE ENJOYMENT OF SWEDENBORG

[P:1,PDF] VAN DUSEN ‘A GUIDE’ ON SWEDENBORG’

‘Swedenborg’s theological writings help some people to soar, to wander in spiritual worlds, and to gaze upon the design of creation. For others, these same books are dull stuff. Same books. Different reactions. It would be easy to say those who soar have spiritual insight, while the others are dull clods, but I don’t believe it.

Although we do not yet fully know why some soar and others are left behind on earth, we know enough to help many more enjoy the writings. If you take a volume like *Divine Love & Wisdom* and read it as you would any novel or non-fiction, you have a good chance to be left behind on earth. It is something different. Some people, like the blind and deaf Helen Keller, were inwardly prepared by their experiences and took off with the first few passages. My purpose is to help you soar also.



My focus is Swedenborg's theological writings, all completed late in his life. His 150 or so scientific works, completed earlier, are qualitatively very different. They read like the efforts of scientist in the 1700's to piece together what little was discovered with intense reasoning and speculation. Having surveyed almost all the knowledge then known, in 1744 he turned inward and explored the nature of mind itself.

He had a series of spiritual experiences. Thereafter he wrote some 30 volumes of the richest theological/psychological material we could hope to find. These 30 volumes are our focus. In contrast to the analytical reasoning of his prior scientific works, these read like the reports of a seasoned traveller who has come back from very moving experiences in an amazing land. He knows.

He reports. He later saw his long journey thru all the sciences as merely preparation for this spiritual journey. Swedenborg patiently wrote and copied these 30 volumes of his theological works with a quill pen and saw them through the press at his own expense. For some 200 years people excited by these writings have continued to make them available in dozens of languages. Yet only a few thousand people are privileged to have seen into their richness. Beyond this small circle there are millions who know nothing of them, or seeing them, find no riches.

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Here is the secret. Swedenborg's theological writings are always referring to real life and experience. *There is nothing in the writings, including God Himself, that you cannot find in your experience. And this is the way to understand them.*

Under stand, get *under* or in them. As an intellectual statement, 'life is love', is merely a rosy platitude. But be careful of what you say of the love that is my *life*, for I will be checking its validity against my experience. If you take the writings as abstract theorizing about good, wisdom, spirits, etc. they do soon fall dead. **But continuously check them against the very fabric of your experience and they unfold an exciting story.** There are many other clues as to how to proceed, but this is number one. Enter the writings.

They are talking about you personally. Everything said can and should be checked against your life. There is not a trace of abstraction in this theology. Cut it and *you bleed*. It is far easier to remember this way. Nothing is really understood until it is lived. Besides, it is a central purpose of the writings that they become 'of the life' so that they might live. This was the point of my pamphlet on *Uses .2 Use is at the core of "Heaven and Hell,"* [Book].



If I think of my life in relation to others, how I fit in, how I contribute, I literally live in a world which opens out into endless larger spheres. But, in contrast, if I think of myself only, what is in this for me, I literally live in a closed in, narrowing world. This is the difference between heaven and hell.

In the heavenly attitude I am in a world where I am of some use. My use is my place, my function, how I fit into the scheme of things. In the attitude of hell I am thinking of myself; how is this good for me? What pleases and displeases me? Others are pushed aside as less important. In the larger social sphere I am useless or even anti-use.

In this for-me-first world I am never pleased enough, comfortable enough, rich enough. It is hell. **Oddly enough I am more considerate of myself in the heavenly world. I must eat properly and go to bed early enough, to be able to work tomorrow.** It even includes business. I make things and sell them. People buy them because it pleases them. I am useful to them. Yet I can thereby make a living. This is an example of how I have interiorized or linked to my life experience Swedenborg's concepts of uses, heaven and hell. I see heavens and hells all around me. Feel free to use your imagination to visualize.

GEORGE F DOLE TRANSLATION: "HEAVEN AND HELL" EXTRACT

[P:445]

MAN'S AWAKENING FROM THE DEAD—AND ENTRANCE INTO ETERNAL LIFE

'When the body can no longer fulfill its function in the natural world corresponding to the thoughts and affections of its spirit (which the person receives from the spiritual world), then we say that the person dies. This happens when the lung's respiratory motion and the heart's systolic motion cease.

The person, however, does not die. He is simply separated from the physical component which was serviceable to him in the world. The actual person is still alive. We say that the actual person lives because of his spirit. For the spirit does the thinking in a person, and thought together with affection constitutes the person.

We can see from this that when someone dies, he simply crosses from one world into another. This is why "death" in the Word, in its inner meaning, refers to resurrection and to continuity of life.'



Suggested resources:

Heaven and Hell - Emanuel Swedenborg: First published 1758, 56th printing,
Revised Dole Translation, 1979, ISBN: 0-87785-153-0, USA,

<https://swedenborg.com/emanuel-swedenborg/about-life/>

Van Dusen PDF: <http://www.swedenborg.com.au/Websites/saa/images/pdf/A-guide-to-the-enjoyment-of-Swedenborg.pdf>

<http://www.swedenborg.com.au/spiritual-philosophy>

Comparative teachings can also be found in The Universal Spiritual
Brother&Sisterhood,USB. "*Spiritual Light.*"

<http://www.theusb.org/usb-teachings/#principal-book>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T5rSANGx4WU&index=7&list=PL_kBQnjZGUqGCN9jZwQTFfX2Y7IzIPO63

