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Who wants to live for ever??!!

by Revd David Gaffney

“.. those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.” (Isaiah: 40:31)

I do! Providing that I do it - the living that is - in heaven. There is great doubt in the world these days about life after death. This is said to be partly due to us being continually bombarded with stuff that keeps us in a materialistic mindset. If we do a bit of research, then we will find a wealth of evidence out there that life after death is an inescapable reality whether we believe it or not. So if the life in this world is preparation for the next, then it may help us to at least keep an open mind on the subject as our Lord tells us that how we live this life will affect the quality of the next one. See for instance the tale of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31.

The Writings of Swedenborg are full of descriptions of what it is like in the Spiritual World: heaven, hell and the temporary intermediate spiritual world in-between them.

The following books from Swedenborg give details of the Spiritual World:

Heaven and Hell: is a description from beginning to end of the structure of the Spiritual World and how people live their lives there.

Arcana Coelestia: Details masses of information about what it is like there and how things we do here will affect the quality of our eternal lives, including examples. These descriptions can be found at the beginnings and ends of all but the first two chapters of all twelve volumes of the book.

The True Christian Religion: Details at the ends of all the chapters all kinds of experiences which Swedenborg has during his spirit world travels. Most of these relate to the quality of the lives after death of people who thought they were Christians whilst in the world; but who were in actuality living it in egocentric ways.

Conjugal Love: Also contains - at the beginnings and ends of chapters - wonderful stories of the things Swedenborg experienced in the Spiritual World.

I'm fairly sure, that Swedenborg, somewhere in this Writings tells us to read this 'inter-chapter material' as an entrance to the rest, as it serves to give us an affection or appetite for what lies in the main body of the texts. Otherwise, Swedenborg's writings can be hard to get into.

The shamans of the Great Spirit worshippers such as the North American Indians and Australian Aborigines also had tales to tell.

"Black Elk's Great Vision" is a scintillating read about a Sioux Indian boy, Black Elk, who is called by good powers in the spirit world to be a prophet for his nation. You may notice that there is much similarity between the symbolism of this account and the symbolism in the Revelation of John in the Bible. (You can find it by Googling - "Black Elk's Great Vision".)

Also, I include an interesting quotation from a book called 'Understanding Aboriginal Culture' by Cyril Havecker who is an expert on Aboriginal culture and spirituality:

"The next dimension is not, according to the Wirinun (aboriginal shamans), some weird strange place. With a few improvements, life there is much the same as it is here on Tya (Earth). People think much more clearly and comprehensively, feel more intently, and act with greater speed. They know more and do more without suffering fatigue. In every way, it is a progressed form of our life."

The book goes on at length to discuss to nature of life in the hereafter. Compare it with these words from the book of Isaiah:

".. those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint." (Isaiah: 40:31)

Here also is a convincing and supportive passage detailing the quality of life hereafter. From Swedenborg's book Heaven and Hell: Section 461:

461. AFTER DEATH MAN(MANKIND) IS POSSESSED OF EVERY SENSE, AND OF ALL THE MEMORY, THOUGHT, AND AFFECTION, THAT HE HAD IN THE WORLD, LEAVING NOTHING BEHIND EXCEPT HIS EARTHLY BODY.

It has been proved to me by manifold experience that when man passes from the natural world into the spiritual, as he does when he dies, he carries with him all his possessions, that is, everything that belongs to him as a man, except his earthly body. For when man enters the spiritual world or the life after death, he is in a body as he was in the world, with no apparent difference, since he neither sees nor feels any difference. But his body is then spiritual, and thus separated or purified from all that is earthly; and when what is spiritual touches or sees what is spiritual, it is just the same as when what is natural touches or sees

what is natural. So when a man has become a spirit he does not know otherwise than that he is in the same body that he had in the world and thus does not know that he has died. [2] Moreover, a man's spirit enjoys every sense, both outer and inner, that he enjoyed in the world; he sees as before, he hears and speaks as before, smells and tastes, and when touched, he feels the touch as before; he also longs, desires, craves, thinks, reflects, is stirred, loves, wills, as before; and one who takes delight in studies, reads and writes as before. In a word, when a man passes from one life into the other, or from one world into the other, it is like passing from one place into another, carrying with him all things that he had possessed in himself as a man; so that by death, which is only the death of the earthly body, man cannot be said to have lost anything really his own. [3] Furthermore, he carries with him his natural memory, retaining everything that he has heard, seen, read, learned, or thought, in the world from earliest infancy even to the end of life; although the natural objects that are contained in the memory, since they cannot be reproduced in the spiritual world, are quiescent, just as they are when one is not thinking of them. Nevertheless, they are reproduced when the Lord so wills. But more will be said presently about this memory and its state after death. A sensual man finds it impossible to believe that such is the state of man after death, because he cannot comprehend it; for a sensual man must needs think naturally even about spiritual things; therefore, any thing that does not appeal to his senses, that is, that he does not see with his bodily eyes and touch with his hands (as is said of Thomas, John 20:25, 27, 29) he denies the existence of. (What the sensual man is may be seen above, n. 267 and notes.)

And I include here a web address if you want to check it out and read around the subject. <http://smallcanonsearch.com/read.php?book=hh§ion=461>

I wish you productive thoughts on the subject: Rev. David Gaffney. March '19.