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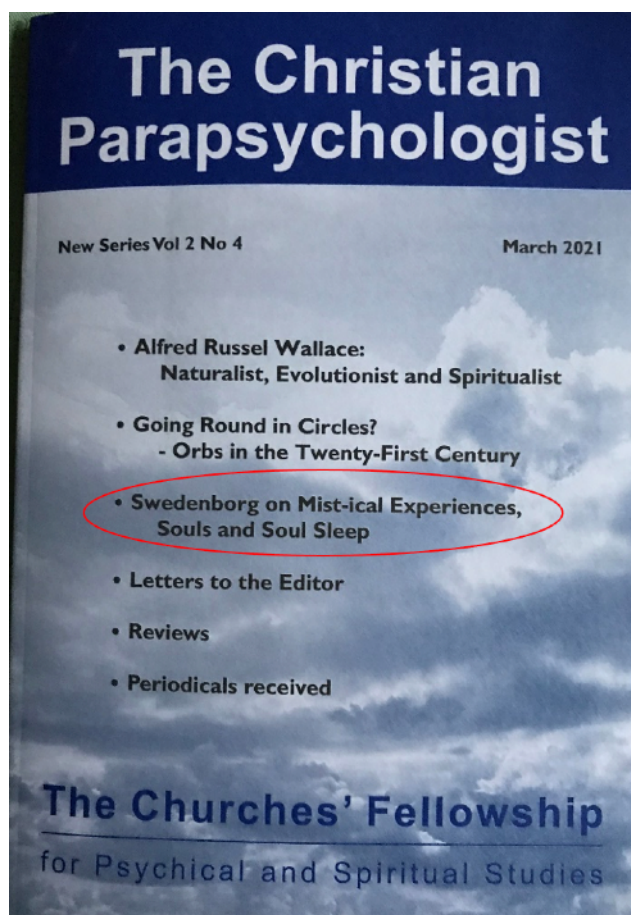
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Swedenborg on Mist-ical Experiences *by Revd Brian Talbot*



In the latest edition of *The Christian Parapsychologist*, the journal of the Churches Fellowship for Psychical and Spiritual Studies, there is an article on Swedenborg!

I know all about this article because I wrote it, and it is the second of my articles to be published in it. *The Christian Parapsychologist* has a circulation of about 150, so in some ways it is a small but unusual bit of outreach. My article takes up 19 of the 48 pages. I was surprised that I was allowed to devote one of the pages to a lovely, long quotation from *Five Memorable Occurrences*, a posthumous work of Swedenborg's!

The editor of the journal describes the article favourably as “a fascinating study through the lens of Swedenborg regarding the phenomena of apparent mists and light anomalies witnessed at various shared death experiences, after death communications, death bed visions and out of body experiences.” (backcover)

“Mist-ical experiences” is a term coined by Raymond Moody to refer to mists that are seen to leave a deceased human body. In the article I point out that in the literature on Death Bed Visions, or Shared-Death Experiences, or After Death Communications, and so on, it is not always a mist that leaves a corpse, but can be balls of light, or a flame, or a translucent person, or a partial human body through to a full human being. Some people identify this mist or ball of light or flame as the person's soul. Throughout the article I argue that, as a Swedenborgian, I believe the soul is an embodied person, but can present itself in any of the other forms, depending on what is most suitable to the beholder.

In AC 10130:2 Swedenborg mentions an *effluvium* or emission that is caused by a person's sphere or spiritual aura, which is seen in the next world:

“Everyone's will or love constitutes the entire person there, and the sphere of life from it flows out from him like breath or an exhalation, envelops him, and constitutes an extension of himself, so to speak, around himself ... There is a like emission from every human being, as also a wealth of experience makes known. But when a person lays aside the body and becomes a spirit or an angel that **emission or exhalation is not material, as it was in the world; instead it is something spiritual flowing from his love.** This love produces a sphere around him, which enables other spirits to detect at a distance what he is like.”

Thus, seeing a mist or a ball of light or a flame, or a partial person, or a complete person, is a phenomenologically-equivalent, visionary experience of an event occurring in the world of spirits, the place we are unconsciously now, and the place

between heaven and hell, where we arrive after death. The beholder is observing the first indication of what the character of the newly resurrected person is like.

I quote plenty of examples from the literature about Near-Death Experiences, Shared-Death Experiences, Death-Bed Visions and After Death Communications about to show that other people have seen and are seeing some of the things that Swedenborg saw. For example, the physical body is like discarded “old clothes” (ISB 11:3) or is just “a shell” (AC 1718; SE 2665) or “cocoon”. (e.g. AC 8848 = EU79:3) I quote a 10 year old American girl, Daisy Irene Dryden, who was dying in 1864, who could be quoting *Interaction between the Soul and Body* 11:3. The comparison between Daisy and Swedenborg is uncanny!:

“This body of mine is about worn out. It is like that old dress of Mamma’s hanging there in the closet. She doesn’t wear it any more, and I won’t wear my body any more, because I have a new spiritual body which will take its place. Indeed, I have it now, for it is with my spiritual eyes I see the heavenly world while my body is still here.”

and

“You will lay my body in the grave because I will not need it again. It was made for my life here, and now my life here is at an end, and this poor body will be laid away, and I shall have a beautiful body like Allie’s.”

Allie was her brother who died when he was 6 years old. Swedenborg’s visions are yet again confirmed and shown to be genuine!

Another section of the article is on the topic of ‘Soul sleep’, which is a belief held by some Christians that a soul after death is ethereal – probably founded on seeing a mist leave a corpse – which floats around until the trumpet sounds and the last judgment begins – and they are reunited with their reconstituted, physical body. It is a belief that is not held by Roman Catholics and Swedenborgians. Swedenborg points out that such a belief is unfair on people like Adam and Eve, who have to wait millennia to be reunited with their body, and contradicts what is said at eighteenth century Protestant Christian funerals about families meeting up and people living on in heaven. I quote various stories in the Bible to suggest that people after death have a body, whether it is Abraham, the poor man and the rich man; or Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transformation, the Souls under the Altar, and so on. Among Swedenborg’s visions, there is the amusing account of Polhem seeing his funeral through Swedenborg’s eyes and hearing it through his ears, and contradicting what the Minister was saying about being raised at the Last Judgment, when he was already resurrected, and that he already had a body, when

the Minister was telling the mourners that he would have to wait for a body. (SE(M) 4752) There is plenty of evidence to confirm our belief that we are raised in a spiritual body, and that our physical body does not have to be resurrected.

So yet again, Death Bed Visions, Near Death Experiences, Shared-Death Experiences, After Death Communications, Angel Stories, and so on, corroborate what Swedenborg experience for the last 27 years of his life. We, New-Church people, should be reassured and convinced that we have plenty of information to share about the after-life, and that there are people who want to hear what we have to say!