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Swedenborg: a Near-Death-like Experienter

Revd Brian Talbot writes:

David Sunfellow (2020) describes Swedenborg as “a Near-Death-like Experienter”. I quite like this phrase “a Near-Death-like Experienter”. It means that Swedenborg experienced some aspects of the Near Death Experience. I would agree with Kevin Williams in his 2019 web-page that Swedenborg experienced a lot more than a Near Death Experience.

So what's a Near-Death Experience. Jeff Janssen (2022:3-4) described it as:

1. “rising up and painlessly leaving their physical body
2. floating above the scene of the hospital, accident, etc.
3. feeling a strong sense of peace and unconditional love
4. entering and moving along a tunnel
5. seeing a bright, warm, irresistible, loving Light
6. entering into a different realm or dimension outside of the physical earth
7. seeing and communicating with deceased friends and family members and/or religious figures
8. having a Life Review where they see all of their life experiences
9. coming to a kind of barrier or border they are not able to cross
10. returning often reluctantly, back to their physical body a profoundly changed person.”

Based on his vision of dying on 1st March 1748, which is recorded in *Spiritual Experiences*, *Secrets of Heaven* and *Heaven and Hell*, we have Swedenborg experiencing being withdrawn from the physical body, so he partially satisfies #1, #2 and #4. On the tunnel or void experience I was excited and absolutely delighted to recently discover two passages about Swedenborg moving from the darkness to the light! So much of what non-New-Church scholars and researchers, such as Kevin Williams, write about Swedenborg and NDEs, is based on chapters from *Heaven and Hell* which were re-printed as *Awaken from Death*.

Swedenborg satisfies the concept of peace in the afterlife with a chapter in *Heaven and Hell*. For #5, there are chapters on light in *Secrets of Heaven* and *Heaven and Hell*, but Swedenborg went deeper than most NDErs to an infinitely loving God. Unconditional Divine love pervades all of his theological Writings. Swedenborg spent the last 27 years of his life exploring the spiritual world, so he satisfies #6. Swedenborg met his relatives, friends and acquaintances, but he went further because he discovered their true personalities, which had lain behind their social masks in the world. Sometimes he could recognise from which community of heaven or hell they came from, or where they were going. So Swedenborg exceeds #7.

The topic of life reviews is fascinating, because over 200 years before Dr. Raymond Moody talked about them, Swedenborg was describing them. His comments about everybody's Book of Life mirrors Life Reviews exactly. Swedenborg defines our Book of Life as our memory of all our thoughts, feelings and intentions, and how they fashion our words and deeds from whichever part of our life, and their quality. They can be projected in front of ourselves as a living, more-than-cinematic, holographic, film of our life, so that everybody can see the real 'us'. He spends far more time talking about the Life Reviews of evildoers. I've only found a couple of references to good Life Reviews, and a couple of incidents in a Life Review that Swedenborg himself had.

With regard to #9, Swedenborg very rarely had restrictions placed on where he went and whom he talked to. He was allowed to enter a heavenly community by a guard, because of

his love for marriage. For #10 whenever Swedenborg was thinking about financial concerns or other worldly problems, he experienced separation from angels. When Swedenborg had had a stroke, he was unable to have visions, which distressed him greatly.

So I can see a lot of truth in Swedenborg being described as a Near-Death-like Experiencer

Jeff Janssen (2022) *Your Life's Ripple Effect: Discover How and Why Your Life Really Matters* (Life Lessons from Heaven)

David Sunfellow (2020) *500 Quotes From Heaven: Life-Changing Quotes That Reveal The Wisdom & Power Of Near-Death Experiences* (Sedona, AZ) 108, 184, 185, 214

[Emanuel Swedenborg's Afterlife Experiences - Near-Death Experiences and the Afterlife](#)
(Kevin Williams (posted on 26th September 2019)) (Accessed 12/01/2024)

(Revd) Brian Talbot