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Memorabilia

Revd David Gaffney writes:

The Afterlife Explained: Swedenborg's Eyewitness Accounts ("Memorabilia") - A Brief Overview

Memorabilia: are experiences which Emanuel Swedenborg remembered from his spiritual world travels, and was instructed by the Lord to tell us. They are spread throughout his writings.

An introduction:

“The Need and Use of the Memorabilia:

In the Spiritual Diary (4123) [Swedenborg], we are told that the Memorabilia, or revelations concerning the spiritual world, are in the place of miracles, and that unless men read, and believe, and are affected by them, they will be unwilling to hear anything of the interiors of the Word. And in the Apocalypse Explained (410), we read of the importance of knowing what is in the spiritual world, in order to understand the internal sense. The Memorabilia stand related to the historical of the literal sense, which are the first introduction to the spiritual truth of the Word. It may be said that the Memorabilia are the historicals* of the spiritual world. **They are the first thing for new receivers of the Doctrine to learn, and the first to be imparted to children and the young.***

Swedenborg advised to leave out the Memorabilia:

*Swedenborg was urged by Count von Hopken not to include the Memorabilia in his Writings, but he answered that he was commanded by the Lord to publish them (Documents, I: p. 66; II: 409, 416). Cuno wrote to Swedenborg to the same effect (Doc. II: 469). **The Writings, or the internal sense of the Word, without the revelations concerning the spiritual world, would be like a house without doors, into which there can be no entrance;** or like the spiritual sense without the letter as introductory to it. The historicals* of the two worlds, as contained in the two revelations, are the things which introduce to the mysteries of the Word, **without which the Word and heaven itself would be sealed forever.**” (TOPICS FROM THE WRITINGS. "Pendleton, William F." 1946 p. 3) [My emphasis in bold]*

**Note: 'Historicals' are the sequences of everyday life, and events which occur in this life and the next; as expressed in the Bible, and the Memorabilia of afterlife events as told in the Writings of Swedenborg.*

A 'sneak preview'

"I (Swedenborg) once spoke with a newly arrived spirit who, when he lived in the world, thought much about heaven and hell. (By newly arrived spirits I mean people recently deceased, who, being then spiritual beings, are called spirits.) As soon as this spirit came into the spiritual world, he began to think as before about heaven and hell; and when thinking about heaven he seemed to himself to be in a state of joy, and when thinking about hell, in a state of despondency.

When he noticed that he was in the spiritual world, he at once asked where heaven was and where hell was, and also what the one and the other were and what they were like.

To which the people he asked replied, "Heaven is above your head and hell beneath your feet, for you are now in the world of spirits, which is midway between heaven and hell. However, as to what heaven and hell are and what they are like, this we cannot describe in a few words."

So, then, because he burned with a desire to know, he threw himself on his knees and prayed earnestly to God to be instructed. And suddenly an angel appeared at his right side, who raised him up and said, "You have begged to be instructed regarding heaven and hell. Inquire and learn what delight is, and you will know." After which statement the angel rose and vanished.

[2] Then the newly arrived spirit said to himself, "What does this mean, 'Inquire and learn what delight is, and you will know what heaven and hell are and what they are like'?"

However, departing from that place he wandered about, speaking to the people he met and saying, "Pray tell me, please, what delight is."

And some said, "What sort of question is this? Who does not know what delight is?

(From Conjugal Love #461. Translation: Rogers. See:
<https://newchristianbiblestudy.org/> (Theology/Conjugal Love))

Swedenborg's "Memorabilia"—Spiritual Journeys into the Afterlife:

In the 1700s, Emanuel Swedenborg, a Swedish scientist, thinker, and revelator was granted by the Lord the ability to explore the spiritual world firsthand. Over 27 years, he kept a “spiritual journal,” recording his encounters and observations in what he called the “memorabilia” or “memorable relations.” These are scattered throughout his major theological works and read like vivid travel reports. Swedenborg described visiting heaven, hell, and intermediate regions; conversing with angels, spirits, newly deceased people, historical figures, and even spirits from other planets ([Heaven and Hell 1](#); [True Christian Religion 851–854](#))*. Swedenborg emphasised that these were not fictional or dreamlike accounts, but real experiences witnessed while fully awake. For the New Christian Church, his memorabilia are central, providing detailed support and explanation for the Church's teachings about the afterlife. *Note: there are memorabilia at the ends of every chapter in Swedenborg's Books ‘The True Christian Religion’ and ‘Arcana Coelestia.’ (Arcana Coelestia is Latin for Secrets of Heaven)

Purpose and Value of the Memorabilia:

Making Spiritual Realities Concrete: Swedenborg did not merely speak in abstractions. He gave concrete scenes—angels interacting, people awakening after death—that make spiritual life imaginable and tangible ([Heaven and Hell 491](#); [Arcana Coelestia 68, 1880](#)).

Evidence of Life After Death: His accounts illustrate continued personal existence beyond death, conveying both comfort and awakening to spiritual realities ([Heaven and Hell 1](#)).

Revealing Deeper Biblical Meanings: Swedenborg taught that the Bible holds hidden, inner meanings. His memorabilia provide vivid illustrations of these deeper truths playing out in spiritual life ([Arcana Coelestia 3212, 5850, 1880](#)).

Warnings and Inspiration: Many memorable relations show the consequences of our choices and attitudes, offering both warnings and encouragement for spiritual growth ([Heaven and Hell 512–520](#)).

A Unique Spiritual Mission: These eyewitness reports underline Swedenborg's special calling—to reveal spiritual truths, much as prophets had in earlier ages ([True Christian Religion 851–854](#); [Spiritual Experiences 4123](#)).

What Are Swedenborg's Memorabilia Like?:

Arrival in the Afterlife: Swedenborg saw newly deceased spirits, initially confused, lovingly guided by angels into awareness of their continued existence—showing death as a gentle transition ([Heaven and Hell 449](#)).

Meeting Angels: He witnessed angels whose outward appearance radiated their inward goodness and truth, emphasising that our true spiritual nature is visible in the afterlife ([Heaven and Hell 177-182](#)).

Encountering Spirits from Other Worlds: Spirits from another planet, simple and warm, expressed that love—not knowledge alone—gives life to wisdom ([Worlds in Space 39-40](#)). (Note: the planets named may not be those in our solar system but other planets in the universe, the occupants of which owned spiritual qualities which are ‘represented’ by the planets in our solar system with the same names. Or they could be spirits from the same planets as ours but from a vastly different time in the solar system’s history. [These are my own speculations])

Notable Memorabilia Topics:

6. Meeting historical figures ([The Last Judgment 48-53](#); [True Christian Religion 796-799](#))
7. Seeing how children are raised in heaven ([Heaven and Hell 329-345](#))
8. Interactions with spirits from other planets ([Worlds in Space 1-44](#))
9. The meaning of the white horse ([Apocalypse Revealed 298](#); [The White Horse 1](#))
10. Discovering the destiny of good and evil souls ([Heaven and Hell 491-520](#))
11. Witnessing the Lord in the spiritual world ([Heaven and Hell 116-123](#))
12. Experiences like hellish banquets, spiritual light, and magic ([Heaven and Hell 479, 487, 580-586](#); [Arcana Coelestia 4418](#))
13. Learning about the “Grand Man”—heaven’s human form ([Heaven and Hell 59-86](#); [Arcana Coelestia 2996, 3741](#))
14. Visiting the “Palace of Wisdom” ([Conjugal Love 56](#))
15. Meeting people from earliest times ([Arcana Coelestia 1114, 1122, 112 7](#))

Why Does This Matter? Swedenborg’s memorabilia make spiritual reality vivid and accessible. They help us picture heaven, hell, and the effect of our choices, showing that the Bible’s words have living relevance to our spiritual journey. These “spiritual field reports” invite us to deeper faith, growth, and reflection ([Heaven and Hell 491, 449](#); [Arcana Coelestia 1880, 3212](#)).

Scope and Volume of Swedenborg’s Writings on the Afterlife Swedenborg’s depictions of the afterlife are immense, spanning several major works:

Heaven and Hell: His central work on the afterlife, with 603 sections covering heaven, hell, the world of spirits, the process of dying, and the life of angels and spirits.

Arcana Coelestia (Heavenly Secrets): Over 7,000 sections explaining the inner meaning of Genesis and Exodus, frequently interspersed with explanations about the afterlife and spiritual laws. Particularly at the beginnings and ends of all the chapters, starting at the end of Chapter 2.

The Last Judgment/Continued: Accounts of spiritual judgment, the condition of souls, and the reformation of the spiritual world.

Conjugal Love: Describes eternal marriage, relationships after death, and spiritual joining.

Other major works (Divine Love and Wisdom, Divine Providence, Apocalypse Revealed, Apocalypse Explained) also contain significant teachings about the spiritual world and life after death.

In Total: Swedenborg's theological writings encompass several thousand pages with countless firsthand spiritual experiences and doctrinal explanations about the afterlife. His works document the afterlife in unparalleled detail and are considered a rich source of spiritual insight and guidance ([Heaven and Hell 445–452](#); [Arcana Coelestia 951–952](#)).

Selected Excerpts for Deeper Study:

See [True Christian Religion 851](#); [Heaven and Hell 449, 491, 513, 329](#); [Arcana Coelestia 68, 3212, 1880](#) for core passages describing Swedenborg's spiritual mission, the process of death, states after death, children in heaven, and validation of spiritual experiences.

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Revd D Gaffney, June 2025