



LIFE AFTER DEATH

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It's always a pleasure to meet and talk with people who are aware or who are becoming more aware that there is more to life than meets the physical eye. My subject tonight is life after death.

Now, the subject of life after death is one which needs evaluating very carefully. There is a great deal of evidence for life after death. In fact, there is evidence which comes all the way down the path of history from before recorded times, but we live in a very scientific age, an age which scrutinises everything very carefully and the first thing I want to do tonight before I talk about modern evidence and about the evidence of the greatest witness to life after death, I want to talk about how we evaluate evidence for a continuing existence of the spirit beyond the death of the physical body.

I was trained in the most rigorous of the scientific disciplines — that of physics. But during my training, I did what a lot of scientists, in fact most scientists, fail to do, which is to look at the fundamentals of the scientific method, to look back in history to the beginning of science, particularly in the 17th century, the figures Galileo and Newton in particular, and to look at upon what the whole modern scientific enterprise is based. The scientific method, which is so recent in the history of mankind, is based upon first of all observation — observing what you can with your physical senses. And following that, it is to make generalisations on what you see and then to begin to experiment. And I'm going to take as an example the sort of thing that Galileo used to do, which led Newton eventually to lay the foundations of mechanics and lead to the present enormous development in science and technology.

Galileo, apart from standing on the top of the Leaning Tower of Pisa and dropping things down on people's heads underneath, used to take a board and he would take



some kind of ball or roller which he would roll down the incline when he had set it at a certain angle. Note what he is doing — he is taking something that you can see but he's looking at it in a different way. He's saying there are all sorts of things which fall or move downwards and we will generalise and we will try to find some general law which will describe this motion, and he would experiment with different angles and would time his rolled roller down the incline for the time it would take to travel different distances.

As a result of this, he formulated physical laws, and these led with Newton, to laws which drew together the movement of the heavenly bodies, the stars and the planets, and the movement of objects on the Earth falling to the ground, leading to gravitation. The method was extraordinarily successful but what are its limitations?

Now, to try to bring home to you the severe limitations that science works under by its own choice, I'm going to show you a little experiment which you can all do as soon as you get home tonight in your own homes. I have here three glasses of water and in this first glass, I want you to imagine there is hot water. In actual point of fact, I've only bothered with ordinary water from the tap, but for the sake of the experiment, all you need to know is that this could be hot water which if you measured it with a thermometer, might measure 80 degrees centigrade. And in this second glass here, I want you to imagine that the water is near freezing point, measured by a thermometer at around nought degrees centigrade. In this third glass, we have water in an in-between temperature at 40 degrees centigrade, measured by the thermometer.

Now, you place your finger in the cold water and you hold it there for a while until your finger gets adjusted to the temperature. You take your finger out, you place it in this glass labelled 'lukewarm' and you find that the water feels jolly hot. You or some other person can then put their finger in the hot water, wait until their finger gets adjusted to the temperature, take it out and place that finger in the lukewarm water and you experience cold water.

A very simple experiment, but one which if you think about it, leads to some rather important conclusions: two fingers, one that's been in hot water, one that's been in cold; place them both in here, they read a different sensation. Science can't handle that sort of thing and so science has devised an instrument called a thermometer and with a thermometer they register something which is agreed upon by all — the amount that a lump of mercury expands up a tube when it is placed in certain environments.

Now, the point is this: the scientist, rightly, will say that this glass has water in it at 40 degrees centigrade, and that is a scientific fact. What the scientist might go on to do, which is a mistake on his part, which is to go beyond the bounds of his field, is to say



that that water is lukewarm. But I've just put one finger in, and my finger's told me it's hot. I've just put another finger in, and that finger has told me it's cold. Neither finger has told me that this is lukewarm.

We have two fields of reality here. We have the ordinary reality which mankind has known all down the ages — the reality of one's own experience: "I am hot," "I am cold," "I am lukewarm"; and we have scientific reality, which is based upon the observable pointer readings on instruments which can be agreed upon by all.

The advent of this modern scientific method has been a tremendous boon to mankind. It has been wonderful. The only problem has come when scientists have forgotten the basis of their own subject and have gone beyond and have attempted to evaluate evidence that is beyond their present means of evaluation. Science can be likened to a sausage machine. I want you to think of a sausage machine which will take certain things in its entrance spout and when you turn the handle, certain things will come out.

What science does is, with its sausage machine, it puts in things like weight, velocity, electric charge, volume, length, time, and it turns the handle and it comes out with laws and eventually it turns out things like telephones, washing machines, television sets, videos, computers and spacecraft. And you see how successful this product is that scientists, understandably, are inclined to get a bit excited and to think that they can begin to pronounce on all things and forget that they can only take certain things into their sausage machine and therefore they can only expect certain things to come out at the other end — for example, hotness. The sausage machine will not take hotness. What you have to do, you have to find a way of translating that into temperature and then the sausage machine will take it.

Now, it's not only things like hotness and coldness that the sausage machine won't take. There are other things, an enormous number of other things — in fact, all the things that really matter. Let's take beauty, for example. The scientific sausage machine cannot take beauty and therefore you can't get beauty coming out in the formula at the other end. So for example, if you have two men, one a hard-headed scientist and the other a normal, sensitive person gazing at a sunset — is the sunset beautiful? One says, "Yes," the other says "Maybe, not particularly interested." That's fine so long as the scientist as scientist does not go on to say, "Beauty does not exist. Beauty is not a reality. Only the wavelength of the light coming from the sunset is a reality."

Now, it's not only beauty that won't fit into this sausage machine. There are some other things that won't go in — goodness, evil. Now, we're already aware, I'm sure, of the troubles that have been led to because we have a world that is being dominated by a sausage machine which can't handle goodness and evil, and



therefore is not able to handle the fantastically powerful products that it is producing. Goodness and evil will not fit into the sausage machine. That does not mean that goodness and evil do not exist as a reality. It simply means that it cannot come within the scope or the compass of the scientific fraternity to get to work with their instruments and make pronouncements upon what is good and what is bad. You need another sausage machine to do that, not the scientific one.

There are other things that are missing from this sausage machine that won't go in. One of them is very important to us indeed, and it's called 'understanding'. Understanding. Science does not pretend, or should not pretend, to understand life. What it sets out to do is to explain how certain phenomena arise out of certain other phenomena that precede it. One billiard ball is moving in a certain direction because it was struck by another billiard ball moving in another direction at a certain velocity. The thunder and the lightning that we see are caused by electrical discharge. That is scientific explanation. That can be very helpful, but a point comes where it ceases to be helpful. It ceases to be helpful when we try to understand life. How did life come into being? What is the life force? Why do things evolve?

And then science shows that it can't provide understanding, it can only provide explanation, the reason being that its sausage machine will not take into it the concept of purpose or meaning and because the sausage machine won't take purpose or meaning which is present in our minds almost every moment of our waking life, therefore science has nothing to say about meaning and purpose in life, and some scientists — too many in fact — have gone on to say that therefore life has no meaning, life has no purpose, little realising that they were talking about something that they couldn't take in as a premise to begin with and therefore had no right to throw out at the end.

There's something else that the scientist can't take into his sausage machine, and that's his own consciousness and his own feelings. He tries to sit there as a cool, dispassionate observer, but he has his own feelings, and do you know that today there is growing evidence that with these modern, these very modern, sensitive instruments that scientists use, there is evidence that sometimes a scientist can influence a pointer reading on a dial that he's looking at. So, scientists have made a mistake when they have assumed that they could manage to understand the world and explain it all without taking into account consciousness.

There are other things that are missing — there is free will. The scientist can't cope with the concept of free will. It won't fit into the sausage machine. He has a tendency at the end therefore to say because he can't measure free will, can't read it on his instruments, it doesn't exist. And lastly in this list, which is not complete, the sausage machine cannot take the source of life into it and into its equations — what we call 'God', and therefore, the scientist and the scientific fraternity is in no position



whatsoever to even begin to make any pronouncement as to whether God exists or not.

A Russian astronaut goes shooting up into the space surrounding this Earth. He looks around the sky, he comes back down to Earth and he reports, "I've had a look and there's no God. He's not there." An American astronaut goes up, one perhaps who has as he goes up, very little reason to believe in God. He goes up, he looks around, he is affected, he comes down. He has found God in space. Science is very wonderful. It's got a very marvellous eye, you might say, a very good eye. What it doesn't realise is that this can become a bad eye.

You all may know the story of Nelson on his flagship, being informed that the enemy fleet was on the horizon. Nelson had one good eye and one blind eye, and for reasons better known to himself than to me, he took his telescope and he put it to his blind eye. "Ships? I see no ships." Science can do that. It can put its marvellous telescope to its blind eye and look and say, "I can't see any God. I can't see any evidence for life after death."

Now, I have tremendous respect for science and the scientific movement. After all, it's what attracted me as a schoolboy. It's what I gave my life to for ten years, but we have to realise that it has severe limitations. But I want us to look at its good eye for a moment and I want to take us back to the 17th century when it all began. Now, up to the 17th century, all down the ages, mankind had known that of course there was a God and of course everyone lived on after death. Now, that cuts across all nations, all races, all creeds, all aeons until a peculiar century, the 17th century in Western Europe. What happened? At first, it seemed very innocuous. The first scientists, of course they believed in God also.

Now, what was the age they lived in? In the 17th century, we have a Christianity in Western Europe that had completely distorted and corrupted the teachings of true religion. They had taken the wonderful insights and truths and the wonderful example that had been exhibited through Jesus Christ, who had become the central figure for the Western world, and they had distorted that teaching so that it had become dogmatic, irrational and cruel.

For example, in the 17th century, the Christian Church taught that God was a god of strict justice who must punish man for his sins with everlasting, eternal agony in physical flames of fire. But, said the Christian Church, God had a son, and this son had pity for mankind and this son was prepared to stand in man's place and take a few hours' pain and agony on a cross, something that many men have done and suffered worse — a few hours' agony on a cross, and God would take that according to his strict justice as satisfying the need for the everlasting punishment of sinners in eternal flames of fire.



Also, religion at this time was superstitious. Devils and bogeys were to be found under every bed, around every corner. Every duck pond just about in England must have drowned its local witch — some poor woman trying to do good but because she perhaps had some extra special little power or found some substance that miraculously did some good, she was classed as a witch and burnt or drowned. That is the era in which modern science was born as a breath of clean, fresh, rational air. Who can blame man for turning to science and turning away from superstitious ideas of heaven and hell and superstitious ideas of devils poking into every corner of man's business?

Isaac Newton, himself a very religious man, published his epoch-making work in 1687, his *Principia*. In the following year was born a most extraordinary and unique man. This man, who was a Swede, was to grow up and was to astound the intellectual world with his scientific understanding. He was to go so far that he was going to leave his contemporaries behind and they were to begin to think that he was talking gibberish.

Emanuel Swedenborg was born the son of a simple, pious, Lutheran bishop in Sweden in 1688. He grew up and learnt through his contacts at university about this wonderful new science that was developing. He learnt all there was to know, and turned his hand first to invention, and he invented all sorts of wonderful things. He invented a mercurial air pump, he invented a submarine, he invented an airplane, which the *Guinness Book of Records* will tell us has the first known principles, modern principles of aerodynamics.

He invented many other things but his mind went beyond invention. His mind wanted to probe into how this world works and he turned his mind to focus upon physics, fundamental physics. First of all, he experimented with the magnet, and before any other scientist, he worked out that the magnet must be formed of little tiny magnets that in fact most solid substances have formed little tiny magnets, but because most of these magnets turn in on themselves, there is no overall magnetism and therefore they're not normally magnetised.

But he went further. He tried to look at the cause of the different properties of different elements and he realised long before anybody else that the reason why there were different properties with different elements was partly due to the different way in which atoms were joined together. He was the father of modern crystallography, which only really began in 1912 with the discovery of X-rays that could pierce the crystalline lattice of solid substances.

Swedenborg went further. He wanted to know the origin of matter. He realised that matter must come from energy, and he put forward in his own *Principia* views strikingly similar to so much of modern physics. In fact, his views go further and point



the way forward that modern physics must travel. He clearly saw that every little lump of matter is composed of enormous quantities of energy.

Swedenborg was not content with looking into matter. He cast his gaze upon the sky, and he realised what has only just in the last decade or so been realised — that the whole of space is not as Newton had said, an empty void, but the whole of space is a vast reservoir out of which new particles are being formed and disappearing, emerging and disappearing in a kind of vast cosmic dance. Only the last 15 years or so have scientists begun to realise that that was the case. Swedenborg realised that the stars were formed into galaxies and he was able to determine that these galaxies were formed of stars moving in spirals. Well before the 20th century, Swedenborg had postulated that there must be pulsars — stars that go in and out, they blink in and out. He also put forward one of the best known modern theories as to why some stars appear suddenly in the sky — they nova — they come out of the blue.

This amazing man was not content to look into matter and to look into space. He realised that there was something far more wonderful. What is the most marvellous and complex thing to be found in all of creation? The human body. And Swedenborg began to study the human body. He did this not by doing his own researches but by reading all the latest works of the day. His anticipations and discoveries are nothing short of miraculous. We still do not know how many things Swedenborg has anticipated that have since been discovered by modern science. We're getting more all the time. For example, he determined the function of the ductless glands in the body that most medical scientists of his day thought were useless bits of the body.

Swedenborg also realised that we have brain waves, that the brain has waves and pulses in and out and does so in synchronous motion with the heart, over 100 years before that was discovered. Swedenborg postulated there must be a little tiny canal running down the spine at the back which nobody had believed possible. Under the electron microscope, it has now been discovered.

Swedenborg realised that the body must be formed of living cells and that every cell must need to be fed and excrete. In one of his later visions, he had a most amazing vision as we can now see. In his vision, he was looking into the heart of living matter, and what did he see? He saw interlaced spirals. I wonder how many of you know something about the discovery, the modern discovery in 1953 by Watson and Crick of the DNA molecule. The DNA molecule was discovered to have a double helix, a double spiral — one spiral interlaced with the other.

When it comes to this sort of thing and the anticipations that Swedenborg made in brain research and other parts of the body, the list seems to be endless. Swedenborg was not content to rest with just examining the human body. He



realised there was something greater than the human body, and that is the soul, and he strove to find the soul.

He was in the process of doing this and having no success and he had reached the age of 55. He was in Holland at the time and he began to have disturbing dreams. Now, he was too good a scientist not to realise that these dreams meant something. 200 years before Freud and Jung and modern depth psychology, Swedenborg taught himself how to psychoanalyse himself through his own dreams. He kept a journal. We call it *The Journal of Dreams*. It wasn't intended for publication, it was a private journal, and in this journal, which he kept for 18 months, he wrote down the essence of the dreams he was having at night and when he could, his attempt to interpret those dreams.

His experiences were alternating between ecstatic experiences and the most horrific. His interpretations are the most searching. He realised he was looking into his own soul. He didn't spare himself. Now, he had been an extremely proud, arrogant man. Understandable — the greatest brain that had ever been. He'd gone way beyond his contemporaries.

At the end of 18 months of dream experience and dream interpretation, he learnt from his dreams that he was being humbled and he became a humble man who realised that he was being led to realise that he knew as it were as yet virtually nothing, was like a little child and had to start to learn all over again. These dreams taught him two things: one that he was proud and had to become humble; and secondly, that he was being led to give up what he loved so much — his scientific and philosophical endeavours.

He had a recurring dream in which he found himself with a young woman who he loved very dearly, and along came a gentleman who led this woman away from him, much to his great sadness. And then another woman was led to him and he realised eventually that she was more beautiful and wonderful than the one he had lost. He came to realise that the true interpretation of that dream was that he was to give up the science that he loved and was to be led into the exploration and revelation of the world of spirit. He had an experience of God calling upon him to take up a new work, to give up the science and to begin to learn to understand the whole spiritual world and its laws and how man is developed spiritually by God and how this is represented in the whole of the Bible and to reveal this to mankind because of the very irrational, dogmatic and cruel state to which the Christian religion had degenerated.

He gave up all his scientific work forthwith and devoted himself to his new experience, which was that of being aware of being with the deceased at the same time as he was still living in the body. Actually, Sweden was in a great stir when the



news began to get around that there was a man who claimed that he could talk with dead persons, and we have some remarkably attested instances of this power of Swedenborg's, which he only used on occasion when he deemed it was useful and wise to do. I shall mention only one of these instances. If you wish to find out more, any of the biographies of Swedenborg, of which there are many, will inform you of these stories.

The Queen of Sweden, Queen Ulrika, whilst intrigued by this story of a man who claimed he could speak with the dead, she was extremely sceptical but she called him to an audience and said, "Was it true that you can speak with dead persons?" And Swedenborg said, "Yes, so long as I have known them or known something about them."

She said to him, "Will you find out something from my deceased brother?" He had died three years previously. Swedenborg said that he would endeavour to do so. Three weeks later, Swedenborg returned, sought an audience with the Queen. She was playing cards at the time. He asked for a private audience, although the Queen said, you know, "Why not tell me here and now?" He said, "No, this is only for your ears." She withdrew to the other end of the room. Swedenborg gave her a message. Her face paled. She became consternated and said, "Only my brother could have known that fact."

There were many witnesses in the room at the time and not surprisingly, for many weeks afterwards, many carriages would draw up at Swedenborg's door with nobility longing to try to extract from Swedenborg what the Queen's secret was. He never divulged it.

That's one of several extremely well attested evidences that Swedenborg could as he claimed meet with and talk with people who have no longer a physical body. He went on to spend the last 27 years of his life from age 55 to age 84 in experiencing the spiritual world and writing accounts of it and of laws and of the true nature of God in many volumes. Later on in the lecture, I will tell you something about the wonderfully rational descriptions we get of the spiritual world and how it works.

But what I want to say first of all, now, is why was Swedenborg and his wonderful anticipations and wonderful revelations buried, as it were, virtually historically, so that only few knew of them and only a few today are as yet aware of this amazing man? One reason is that I indicated earlier: he went so far with his scientific anticipations that he seemed to be talking gibberish to his contemporaries. They couldn't understand his language because he was talking 20th century language.

The second is to be found in this book here. It is called *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer*, and it was written by the most influential philosopher of Swedenborg's day. His name was Immanuel Kant. He was the philosopher of the so-called Enlightenment and had



an enormous effect on philosophy for the next 200 years. Immanuel Kant as a young man got to know of Swedenborg, began to read his writings and was deeply impressed by them. In fact, Kant's own philosophy was modelled upon that of Swedenborg's as he even admits in this derogatory book. But Kant was a young man who was very concerned about his reputation. He wanted to become a great philosopher and he certainly did become a great philosopher, respected by the whole intellectual world, and the last thing he wanted was to become mixed up with men who claimed that they spoke with the dead, that they saw spirits. And so Kant, to protect himself, wrote an emotional treatise, this *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer*, in which he tries to make a laughing stock of Swedenborg's experiences and claims. He was to regret this later on and towards his death, he was to indicate that he hoped that people perhaps would not read this book. It was the outburst of a young man. But its effect on the European intellectual climate was enormous. Swedenborg was not to be touched with a barge pole.

And so, the 18th century rolled on. Science developed. Science talked in terms of the world being a great machine and the human body being a great machine, set in motion by God. They pushed God back to the position of being a clockmaker. As we roll on into the 19th century, we're not surprised to find that science comes up with a reason for getting rid of God altogether. It was done principally through the writings of one man, Charles Darwin. I shall have a lot more to say about Darwin and his theory of evolution in my third lecture.

Charles Darwin put forward an absurd, irrational theory of the origin of species. For some reason, the climate was such that intellectual men of all kinds seized on this and believed it and could not see the irrationality behind their thinking. The Christian Church, which was based on so much dogmatism, irrationalism and superstition, was powerless to point out the absurdity of Darwin's theory. Darwin's theory took hold: God is not needed as a maker or machine. According to Darwin, somehow species evolve by blind chance meeting of forces and particles and atoms.

We roll on into the 20th century and something else happens to make man dismiss God and the afterlife — the Great War. How many men and women asked, "If there is a God, if he is good, why is such an atrocious war affecting so many ordinary men, women and children allowed to happen?" I shall take up that subject in my second lecture on God and innocent suffering. But as a result, primarily, of Darwin and the Great War, we reach an era which you are all familiar with where the climate of opinion is that science finds no evidence, certainly no reasonable, strong evidence, for God and a life after death.

In the meantime, what has happened to fundamental physics that started all this going? Fundamental physics found a problem, and I'm not referring to Einstein. Einstein's another of the great scientists of the 20th century who was not irrational



who could see that there was no way of doing away with God. Einstein of course had seen beyond Newton and realised that Newton's laws were only approximate, but physical science met a problem that even Einstein couldn't cope with. Fundamental physics discovered that it couldn't understand its own discoveries. It could develop formulae, it could calculate, it could predict, but it could not understand what it was uncovering, and Einstein himself could not accept the physics that developed in the '30s and the '40s and the '50s. He died still unable to take it. Science was discovering it was coming up against its own limits: it could not understand itself.

There were several far-sighted scientists who began to realise that science must begin to look beyond the self-imposed limitations it had given itself in the 17th century, and it began to look at things like the human aura. And we have the Kirlian couple in Russia of all places in the '40s, developing instrumentation to photograph the human aura. Then we have, as you are probably well aware, experiments with telepathy, psychokinesis, clairvoyance, out-of-body experiences, radiesthesia and so on. We get a growing number of scientists realising that the limits of science have been far too narrow.

And I bring us now to that branch of modern paranormal study, that of resuscitation research. Particularly due to the development of modern life-support machines, it became increasingly evident that there were persons who were being classed as clinically dead on their beds in hospital with their heart stopped beating, having completely lost all form of consciousness, who after a period of up to about 20 or 25 minutes were being brought back to life and were describing the most amazing things. Some of them were describing things that happened in the ward whilst they were supposedly dead and unconscious.

Raymond Moody, an American doctor, collected together a whole lot of these reports, discovering that there was tremendous similarity between what one person was reporting and another and he classified this so that one could present a coherent story of the experience of persons who had been for a period clinically dead. The story goes roughly as this.

After a sense of peace and elation, the patient would experience a feeling of being rushed somehow along some kind of dark tunnel, and suddenly emerging at the other end to find himself looking down upon his own body upon the bed and nurses and friends around about. In this state, the patient discovers that he has heightened senses, that his new experience seems more real than his ordinary experience in the physical body. He finds that he can think at enormous speeds compared to what he was used to. He finds that he cannot communicate with those around his body upon the bed.



Many of these patients report seeing a bright being of light. You can't distinguish the features. All that you sense is powerful brightness and what is even more powerful — a sense of being loved and accepted and as it were telepathically, the patient hears the being of light asking questions like, "Are you ready to die?" And then they are given a review of their past life at great speed but with great intensity, they are taken through all the emotions and thoughts they've had right from infancy up to the present time and as they're going through this, what is brought home to them that the meaning of life and its importance is in love, it's in loving relationships; and secondly in learning true spiritual knowledge. Then many patients report coming up against a kind of barrier or fence or wall or gate. They would like to go through but they can't. Something is stopping them. And then they are suddenly pulled back at high speed into their body and they come to and find themselves on the bed.

Now, since Moody's book, it has been found that there have been countless experiences of this sort from many countries all over the world, and it has nothing to do with whether the patient is a Christian or a Buddhist or of some other religion. The accounts are strikingly similar, granting the differences that will come from different cultures.

It's also been found that some of these reports are not of pleasant experiences, that some of them are highly unpleasant. That has been brought out particularly in a book by Dr Maurice Rawlings, called *Beyond Death's Door*, which he wrote because he felt that Moody seemed to have come across only the cases of a happy experience. Dr Rawlings, who, before he started his research into this (he's a doctor working with cardiovascular disease), he didn't believe in life after death, but he hadn't worked on this very long before he had to change his mind.

How are we to evaluate this sort of account? Now, this is where we come back to my original experiment. We come back to the question of, "What is reality?", "What is truth?" If I say I've got a toothache and the dentist looks in my mouth and he can't find anything, is my toothache a hallucination? I go to the doctor, I complain of pains here, pains there and feeling very ill. He checks me over, he finds nothing. He sends me to a specialist, I'm given all the tests there are, they find nothing. "Go away. It's all in your mind. It's all in your mind, it's not real." What is real?

These patients that I mentioned in connection with resuscitation claimed that what they experienced when they were in the state classed as clinically dead was more real, was not hallucination, was nothing like a dream, was more real than their everyday waking experience. The same was claimed by Emanuel Swedenborg that in the spiritual world, he was more real in a more real and solid existence than in the natural world. How are we to evaluate? Are we to go along with sausage-machine scientists and say, because it is only a subjective experience, it must be a delusion, a hallucination, in which case we've got to say all toothache, all sense of pain is



delusion, is hallucination, and only the pointer readings on the scientists' scale have any reality.

And now I'd like to come to Swedenborg's own account of the spiritual world after death, and realise that this is based upon 27 years of study and experience by the man who is undoubtedly going to become recognised one day as the world's most astounding scientist. I will try to abbreviate it because I don't want to lengthen this lecture too much because we're in a bit of a confined area, and you may begin to have some very good questions building up in your minds.

Swedenborg confirms that when the spirit leaves the body at death, it awakens in an environment which seems more solid and more real than this and that the person is at first surrounded by beings of a very high, loving quality. Since the person who dies is normally not of such a high loving quality as yet, is not sufficiently spiritually developed, after a while these very high loving beings withdraw and they are replaced by others who are very understanding and very wise but haven't quite the same depth of love. If the person who has just died is not yet sufficiently advanced to key in to that level, these high beings withdraw and the process goes on until the newly awakened person's spirit finds that he is surrounded by people very similar to himself, very similar to the state he is in at the time he awakens in the spiritual world, and he starts to live there. He starts to move around, find company, find shelter, houses, homes, places to go and talk and to amuse himself, places to go and study books and discuss higher or lower things. He has absolute freedom to go wherever his heart draws him.

And as his inner heart begins to, or inner quality of spirit begins to come out because there is so much freedom in the spiritual world, he begins to change his company. If he is basically of a selfish character and the selfishness begins to emerge, he finds himself selecting a more and more selfish company by himself until eventually, if this process continues, he begins to find himself attracted towards some dark hole or cave in the ground through which very often will be seen lurid flames and smoke: a picture suggestive of the old superstitious Christian idea of hell, but with a very big difference. Everything that the spirit sees around him in the spiritual world is a reflection of his own state. If his inner state is barren and this barrenness is coming out, he finds himself in barren territory. If his inner state is warm and loving with a mind that's ready to grow with new and wonderful spiritual ideas, he finds himself in luxurious paradise.

Going back to the spirit who is becoming more and more openly selfish — his lusts are beginning to burn. Those burning lusts are seen as flames, but he doesn't see the flames. What's attracting him is the company down in those holes — people with whom he can let rip and do anything that he wants and so he is attracted and goes down and joins companies that in the spiritual world are seen to be, as it were, lower



down, and there he joins people like himself who are as hard and cruel and lustful as himself. And you can imagine what sort of existence that is.

But the key point is that those spirits are attracted by their own nature into those communities, and Swedenborg described them as being called 'hells' or 'hellish communities'. I'm not going to say any more about that side. It's a very distressing side. If you read Swedenborg's best known book, entitled *Heaven and Hell*, you will find descriptions given in the later part which deals with hell. Fortunately, the bulk of the book deals with heaven.

Let us follow a spirit who, however rough and ready he might be, poorly taught and instructed in this life, has really what you might call, for simplicity, a heart of gold. As this heart of gold begins to emerge, the spirit finds himself seeking out more lovely spirits like himself, and he begins to desire instruction in spiritual truth and he finds himself going to what you might call schools or colleges and is instructed by spirits who are in advance of himself. He himself may become a teacher after a while for those who are not quite as advanced as he is, and as time goes by, through instruction which is not academic, but which is related to immediate life, here and now experience, he finds his love growing in wisdom. He finds that he has a particular personality which is geared to serving other people in a particular way, and he begins to learn the ideas, the truths that are needed to bring this out and develop his use, and he moves upwards. Eventually, he finds an eternal home. He comes into what Swedenborg would call a heaven or a heavenly community. He feels immediately that this is the place that he's always been intended to go. It's his home, and he joins and is welcomed by persons like himself.

This is not the end of the story, for such spirits who are now called by Swedenborg 'angels', continue to desire, to grow in love and wisdom. They desire to become better and better and better at serving their fellow human beings through the special talents that they have been given by God. These angels, as we can now call them, for there are no other angels — there is no special race of angels. Christianity taught it falsely for it is not in the Bible — these angels are each a married pair, or perhaps it will be better not to use the term 'married' because it has the wrong connotations, and Jesus himself chose to not use this term 'married' for the condition of angels. He used the term 'conjugal', conjugal pairs. That's to say, unlike ordinary marriage in this life, which is so often a marriage of convenience or a marriage of externals, every angel is really a man and wife who are becoming more and more one in heart and mind and life.

So, we find a picture of a destiny that we all face — a destiny which is there from our conception: to serve mankind in a special way and to go on becoming better and better at so serving. Swedenborg found that the angels in the heavenly communities do not live for themselves but they busy themselves during the working period of



their day with instructing those in the world of spirits, with going down into hellish communities to help bring about a bit more order when they're getting too disorderly, and to become close to men and women on Earth, to inspire them with the highest ideals and the best impulses.

Conversely, the hells provide devils, that's to say, persons who have allowed themselves to become devilish. They also are endeavouring not to serve mankind but to destroy man's spirit and soul by infusing into man as many selfish and lustful and cruel and destructive ideas as possible. So Swedenborg discovered that we here on Earth are held in an equilibrium between a pressure that comes from the hellish side of the world and a pressure that comes from the heavenly side, which leaves us here in this life with a free choice to accept one quality of impulse in life or the other, and that when we enter the spiritual world, we are permitted to go wherever our heart takes us and that God condemns no-one to any particular community but merely tries to draw men and women out of hurtful, unloving communities into better ones. That in very, very brief detail is the story that Swedenborg gives of the spiritual world.

He died in London at the age of 84 on a day that he had, predictably, predicted that he would die, on March 29th, 1772. He left behind a number of people who had been inspired by what he had to say and what he had to write but he made no effort to found a religion, an organisation. What he did do instead was predict that mankind was about to enter a wonderful new spiritual era. No organisation, but a prophecy of what would inevitably happen, because, as he put it, the spiritual world was in his own day being purified. I won't go into those details now. That's another story.

But there's a purification going on in the spiritual world in which our minds are living and present now and because of that it gave greater freedom for man on Earth to free himself from dogmatic irrationalities of religion and to begin to have his mind swept clean, first of all by scientific agnosticism and atheism and then to begin to turn back towards a truer understanding of religion, of God and of the spiritual world. And of that story, Swedenborg has so much to tell us. There is nothing dogmatic, there is nothing that forces one to have to accept what he says, but there is so much to inspire and uplift the mind and open it to new visions of spiritual understanding way beyond anything the Christian Church had ever been able to do.