

Resurrection Services and What the Writings Teach About the First Three Days after Death

A Paper for the Council of the Clergy

By Rev. Dr. Jonathan S. Rose

January 2002

Although customary phrases in our resurrection services might imply that people are unconscious for three days after they die, the Writings teach that they are not. They are in a state of heightened consciousness among angels. If and when they reject the angels and come back to their normal external life, some look back on the experiences surrounding death as though they had been asleep and hardly even recall the experience. This is especially true of people with evil lives and people who don't believe in life after death. In our resurrection services we should avoid any language that implies unconsciousness or waking up.

For years I pictured arriving in the spiritual world as waking up in a bed, perhaps my own bed, surrounded by relatives and loved ones who passed on before me. This picture was largely based on resurrection services I had attended, amplified by some imagination of my own.

If possible, we schedule resurrection services for the third day after death, partly in imitation of the Lord's resurrection on the third day (*Doctrine of the Lord* 35), and partly because of the teachings in the Writings that mention the third day as a significant turning point in our entry into the spiritual world (*Heaven and Hell* 452; *Apocalypse Revealed* 153:1 = *True Christian Religion* 281:1; *True Christian Religion* 138; *Divine Wisdom* 102; *Divine Love and Wisdom* 390; *Heaven and Hell* 315:4 = *Last Judgment* 15; *Five Memorable Relations* 4).

In these resurrection services, after we present comforting passages from the Old and New Testaments and readings from the Writings about life after death, we often begin the second part of the talk by referring to the deceased as "just waking up." "We can picture him just awakening to find himself in a new and miraculous world." We go on to portray the person's reunion with his deceased spouse and parents, and picture him enjoying his favorite activities. This lead-in gives us a way of talking about his loves and hobbies. In fact, it serves a double purpose: it both associates him with others who have died and had resurrection services before and goes on to identify what is unique about him and how he will be missed.

Resurrection services are arguably the most difficult services for us to prepare. (Having been the college chaplain I haven't had to do as many of them as those of you who are or were pastors with a congregation; but perhaps I have made up for it by living in Bryn Athyn and attending countless resurrection services!) They

are usually scheduled just three days in advance, sometimes less. By nature, they often come without a warning, and fall on any day of the week. Many people in the congregation may know more than we do about the deceased! Therefore we often need to interview people close to the deceased to learn more.

A factor in our use of customary or thematic phrases (classicists call them *topoi*), then, is the unusually difficult nature of the services themselves. But even without time pressures, we would probably still use phrases like these, because they come from a desire to honor and dignify the deceased. A resurrection talk aims to accord the deceased a comparable dignity and honor as others who have passed on before. Using oft-heard themes and phrases is like playing taps: the familiarity of it brings dignity and depth of emotion to the service.

Because of the uses of these customary or thematic phrases, I am not arguing that we should avoid them, or even avoid the particular one about awakening that I am focusing on here. I do believe, however, that we should *modify* this particular phrase to accord more closely with what the Writings teach. Specifically we should eliminate anything that might suggest unconsciousness or waking up.

Evidence for Sleeping and Waking as Part of the Death Process

According to my research, there is just a single passage in the Writings that talks about the process of death in terms of sleep and waking. (To avoid problems with or excessive attention to issues of translation, I will present passages in both Latin and the standard English translation given by the Macintosh version of NewSearch. I have indicated in bold type any language referring to time or to the nature of the transition itself. All emphasis is mine.)

True Christian Religion 160:7

quisque enim **primis diebus** post mortem, non aliter scit, quam quod adhuc vivat in eodem mundo, in quo prius, tempus enim praeterlapsum est **sicut somnus**, ex quo cum quis **expergiscitur**, non sentit aliter quam quod sit ubi fuit;

During **the first few days** after death no one knows but that he is still living in the same world in which he lived before; for the time that has passed is **like a Sleep**, on being **awakened** from which he had no other feeling than that he still is where he was before.

First of all, it is worth noting that this does not specifically mention “the third day” after death but simply “the first days.” It is not as precisely anchored to time as other passages about the death process. For another thing, there is no indication of out-and-out unconsciousness, but rather just an indication that once the process of dying is *past* it seems *in retrospect* “like a sleep” from which one has awakened. Furthermore, these words occur in a memorable relation, in the

mouth of angels who are speaking to people who have just died. We will look further at the exact circumstances later on.

Other Language Describing Arrival in the Spiritual World

The following passages do specifically mention the second and third days after death, but don't mention sleeping or waking in connection with them, although the first passage's reference to "reviving" comes close.

Apocalypse Revealed 153:1 = *True Christian Religion* 281:1

His adjicium aliquod MEMORABILE, de sorte illorum post obitum, qui se in Sola Fide usque ad Justificationem et doctrina et vita confirmaverunt.

(1) Quando defuncti sunt, et **quoad spiritum revivunt**, quod fit communiter **tertio die** postquam cor cessavit pulsare, apparent sibi in simili corpore in quo prius in mundo, usque adeo ut non sciant aliter quam quod in priori mundo vivant;

To the above I will add something Memorable, concerning the lot of those after death, who have confirmed themselves in faith alone even to justification, both in doctrine and life. (1) When they are dead and **revive as to the spirit**, which generally takes place **on the third day** after the heart has ceased to beat, they appear to themselves in a body like that which they had before in the world, even so that they know no otherwise than that they are living in the former world

Other passages that refer to the third day use blander expressions such as to "enter," or "come into," or refer to "separation" from the body and introduction into the spiritual world, again without mentioning sleeping or waking.

True Christian Religion 138

Omnes e Sacro Ordine, qui aliquam justam ideam de Domino Salvatore nostro foverunt, dum **intrans** mundum spiritualem, quod ut plurimum fit **tertio die** post obitum, primum instruuntur de Divina Trinitate

All those of the clerical order who have cherished any right idea of the Lord our Saviour, when they **enter** the spiritual world (which generally takes place **on the third day** after death), receive instruction at first about the Divine trinity

Divine Love & Wisdom 390 (compare *Heaven & Hell* 312:4 = *Last Judgment* 15)

Plerique **post biduum** e corpore **in** Mundo spirituali **sunt; post biduum** enim cum aliquibus loquutus sum.

Men generally **enter** the spiritual world **two days** after the death of the body. For I have spoken with some **after two days**.

Five Memorable Relations 4

Quando aliquis homo post mortem **alluit** in mundum spiritualem, quod ut plurimum fit **tertio die** postquam efflaverat animam, apparet sibi in simili vita in qua fuerat in mundo,

When any man after death **comes** into the spiritual world, which for the most part takes place **the third day** after he has expired, he appears to himself in a life similar to that in which he had been in the world

Divine Wisdom VII.4 = 102

Quod **separatio** spiritus a corpore ut plurimum fiat **altero die** post ultimum agonem, scire datum est ex eo, quod cum aliquibus defunctis, qui fuerunt tunc spiritus, **tertio die** post locutus sim.

That the **separation** of the spirit from the body generally takes place **on the second day** after the last struggle I have been permitted to know from the fact that I have talked with some deceased persons **on the third day** after their decease, and they were then spirits.

Evidence for Heightened Consciousness Immediately after Death

On the contrary, the teachings given in the Writings suggest that people are alive and conscious, or perhaps super-conscious, during the process of dying and the first few days afterwards.

People are first received by celestial angels. Among the celestial angels, people experience thought, but not sight. If they wish to get away from the celestial angels (which suggests consciousness and will), they go to spiritual angels who give them the gift of sight and tell them they are now spirits (*Heaven & Hell* 450). Why would they be told they are spirits if they are truly and fully unconscious or asleep?

(Curiously we are not told what happens if one elects to, and is such as to be able to, stay with the celestial angels! Does one have the gift of sight or not? Is one told that one is a spirit or not?)

The spiritual angels desire to instruct the newcomers about the life after death and do anything they can for them, again suggesting consciousness on the part of the newcomer. (What good is instructing people who are unconscious?) The angels in fact want to take the newcomer straight into heaven. If the newcomers'

life in the world has been such that they are *incapable* of being among the good, then they long to get away again.

The cycle of leaving is repeated as long and as often as necessary (“*tamdiu et toties*” *Heaven & Hell* 450) until the newcomers “find their own life”:

Heaven & Hell 450

at si vita ejus talis in mundo fuerat, ut in consortio bonorum non esse potuerit, tunc quoque ab iis cupit, et hoc tamdiu et toties, usque dum se associat talibus, qui vitae ejus in mundo prorsus conveniunt, apud quos **vitam suam invenit**, et tunc, quod mirum, similem vitam agit, qualem in mundo.

But if he had lived such a life in the world as would prevent his enjoying the company of the good he longs to get away from the good, and this experience is repeated until he comes into association with such as are in entire harmony with his life in the world; and with such he **finds his own life**, and what is surprising, he then leads a life like that which he led in the world.

This language is much like the “reviving” mentioned above.

Therefore newcomers to the spiritual world are not unconscious: they display will and thought and are offered instruction and even introduction into heaven, and repeatedly move themselves away from the greeting angels. They were just not necessarily in their *own* life, a life that suited their own nature.

The Length of Time That This Heightened Consciousness Lasts

A passage soon after the one just quoted shows that all of the above process from the moment of death up to the point of this “finding of one’s own life” generally happens within a two-to-three-day period (note the cross-reference in *Heaven & Hell* 452 to 450 just quoted above):

Heaven & Hell 452

Locutus sum cum quibusdam **tertio die** post obitum eorum, et tunc illa, de quibus supra (n. 449, 450) peracta sunt

I have talked with some **on the third day** after their decease, when the process described above (n. 449, 450) had been completed

The Writings are clear, however, that this process takes a variable amount of time. Phrases like *ut plurimum*, “for the most part,” and *communiter*, “generally,” show this, as does the reference to the process of leaving occurring *tamdiu et toties*, “as long and as often” as necessary (*Heaven & Hell* 452).

And of course there are people, a minority to be sure, but enough to warrant mentioning, who go straight to heaven or straight to hell. There are also some who bypass the normal course in the world of spirits and are held instead in caverns separated from the world of spirits. A famous phrase suggests that some go up or down within a mere hour of dying.

Heaven & Hell 491

Sunt tres status quos homo subit post mortem, antequam vel in caelum vel in infernum venit. Primus status est exteriorum ejus; secundus status est interiorum ejus; et tertius status est praeparationis ejus: homo hos status subit in mundo spirituum. **Quidam autem sunt, qui hos status non subeunt, sed statim post mortem vel auferuntur in caelum, vel conjiciuntur in infernum. Illi, qui statim auferuntur in caelum, sunt qui regenerati sunt, et sic ad caelum praeparati in mundo: qui ita regenerati et praeparati sunt, ut modo opus habeant rejicere sordes naturales cum corpore, illi statim ab angelis in caelum feruntur; vidi sublatos post mortis horam.** Qui autem interius malitiosi fuerunt, et exterius ad apparentiam boni, ita qui impleverunt malignitatem suam dolis, ac bonitate usi pro medio doloso, illi statim in infernum conjiciuntur; vidi aliquot tales statim post mortem coniectos in infernum; unum dolosissimum capite deorsum et pedibus sursum et alios aliter. Sunt quoque qui statim post mortem rejiciuntur in cavernas, et sic separantur ab illis qui in mundo spirituum sunt, ac inde eximuntur et illuc immittuntur per vices; hi sunt qui sub praetextu civili malitiose egerunt cum proximo. **Sed hi et illi pauci sunt respective ad illos qui in mundo spirituum tenentur,** ac ibi secundum ordinem Divinum praeparantur ad caelum, vel ad infernum.

There are three states that man passes through after death before he enters either heaven or hell. The first state is the state of his exteriors, the second state the state of his interiors, and the third his state of preparation. These states man passes through in the world of spirits. **There are some, however, that do not pass through them; but immediately after death are either taken up into heaven or cast into hell. Those that are immediately taken up into heaven are those that have been regenerated in the world and thereby prepared for heaven. Those that have been so regenerated and prepared that they need simply to cast off natural impurities with the body are at once taken up by the angels into heaven. I have seen them so taken up soon after the hour of death.** On the other hand, those that have been inwardly wicked while maintaining an outward appearance of goodness, and have thus filled up the measure of their wickedness by artifices, using goodness as a means of deceiving – these are at once cast into hell, I have seen some such cast into hell immediately after death, one of the most deceitful with his head downward and feet upward, and others in other ways. There are some that immediately after death are cast into caverns and are thus

separated from those that are in the world of spirits, and are taken out from these and put back again by turns. They are such as have dealt wickedly with the neighbor under civil pretences. **But all these are few in comparison with those that are retained in the world of spirits**, and are there prepared in accordance with Divine order for heaven or for hell.

If the New Church is truly making a difference in the next world and our own, we are to hope that more people are regenerated and go straight to heaven, more people are staying with the celestial angels, or at least the spiritual angels, upon first arrival, and fewer people are pushing away tier after tier of spirits.

People Who Forget That They Have Died

For the newcomer, the ensuing external state in the world of spirits is so convincingly like the life they left behind that apparently many forget that they were told they were spirits. This apparently correlates with a lack of belief in life after death.

There is a memorable relation in which Swedenborg has a chance to ask a satan for his views on life after death. The satan does not believe in life after death. After a long to and fro, Swedenborg finally cannot take any more and interrupts the spirit to ask whether he remembers having lived in another world. The satan suddenly remembers, and feels great embarrassment. Of his death process he exclaims, "I saw heaven above and heard angels there uttering things ineffable."

True Christian Religion 80:4

Sed haec omnia locutus est, prorsus ut de illis cogitaverat in mundo, nesciens quod viveret post mortem, et **oblitus omnium, quae, dum primum intravit mundum spirituum, audivit**; quare etiam ad interrogationem de vita post mortem retulit quod sit ens imaginarium, et quod forte aliquod effluviosum exurgens ex cadavere in tumulo in forma sicut homo, aut quoddam quod vocatur spectrum, de quo fabulantur aliqui, tale quid in phantasias hominum introduxerat. His auditis non potui amplius retinere risum, quin erumperet; et dixi, "Satana, insanis insaniendo. Quid tu nunc? Esne in forma homo? numne loqueris, vides, audis, gradiris? **Reminiscere, quod vixeris in alio mundo, cujus oblitus es, et quod nunc post mortem vivas**, et quod locutus sis prorsus sicut prius."

Et data est ei reminiscentia, et recordatus est, et tunc puduit illum, et clamavit. "Insanio, **vidi caelum supra, et audivi angelos ibi locutos ineffabilia; sed hoc quando huc nuper allui**: at nunc retinebo hoc narraturus sociis meis, a quibus recessi, et forte tunc pudebit illos similiter."

All this he said precisely as he had thought upon these subjects in the world, not knowing that he was then living after death, and **having**

forgotten all that he had heard when he first entered the spiritual world. So again he replied to a question about a life after death, that it was a thing of the imagination; and that perchance some effluvium arising from a buried corpse in the shape of a man, or a thing called a ghost, about which some tell stories, had introduced such a notion among men's fancies.

When I heard this I could no longer keep from laughing; and I said, "Satan, you are raving mad. What are you now? Are you not now in the form of a man? Do you not talk, see, hear, walk? **Recall to mind that you have lived in another world which you have forgotten, and that you are now living after death,** and that you were even now talking just as you formerly did."

And recollection was given him, and he remembered and was ashamed; and he cried out, "I am mad! **I saw heaven above, and I heard angels there uttering things ineffable; but that was when I first came here.** I will now keep this in mind to tell to my companions from whom I came; and perhaps they too will be ashamed as I am."

Even in the case of this satan, there is no evidence that he was unconscious just after he died. Instead he had a transcendent experience. He saw heaven and heard angels uttering things ineffable. Later, however, his evil heart and his lack of belief in life after death caused him to ignore and forget what he had experienced.

We can well imagine that for someone who has no belief in life after death, the process of seeing beautiful, loving, welcoming angels, being shown things in heaven, and being told she is a spirit is difficult to process. It must be profoundly disorienting. What vessel would she have to put such an experience in?

Once the experience was over, the newcomer might put it out of her mind, as if she had been unconscious, and had woken up.

A Parallel with the Transfiguration

A transcendent experience like the death process can seem *in retrospect* like one was asleep. Recall that the only passage to speak of sleep referred to the impression one has *after it is over*. What follows is a sense that one's life has simply continued without interruption. To quote again the only passage to speak of sleeping and waking:

True Christian Religion 160:7

tempus enim praeterlapsum est **sicut somnus**, ex quo cum quis **expergiscitur**, non sentit aliter quam quod sit ubi fuit;

for the time that has passed is **like a Sleep**, on being **awakened** from which he had no other feeling than that he still is where he was before.

There is an interesting parallel to this in the transfiguration. Because a transcendent spiritual experience is an experience of the spirit but not of the body, people see it in retrospect as a kind of sleep. Although the transfiguration was a most beautiful experience, a vision of the Lord's true nature, glory, and power – perhaps the greatest vision anyone on earth has ever had – the Writings indicate that the disciples looked back on it as a kind of sleep. The following passage uses very similar language to the one just quoted (*True Christian Religion* 160:7) both in the sense of *retrospect* and in its being *like* a sleep.

True Christian Religion 777

Quod nec Apostoli ante resurrectionem Domini in Humano glorificato oculis corporis Dominum viderint, sed in spiritu, quod apparet **post evigilationem sicut in somno**, constat ex transformatione Ipsius coram Petro, Jacobo et Johanne,

Quod tunc gravati sint **somno** (Luc. ix. 32).

Neither did the apostles before the resurrection see the Lord in His glorified Human with their bodily eyes, but in spirit, which *seems, after one is awakened from it, like the state of sleep*. This is evident from the Lord's transfiguration before Peter, James, and John, for it is said, That they were heavy with **sleep** (Luke ix. 32).

Ironically, human beings have an inverted sense of reality. A highly conscious state seems like sleep to us, and our normal state of lowly consciousness seems like wakefulness.

Forgetfulness as a Function of Disbelief

The impression of having been asleep may be compounded by a lack of belief. It seems that the disciples were only dimly aware of the Lord's true nature, and so a vision of Him in shining light was perhaps difficult to process as part of their waking reality. Certainly the aforementioned satan had no belief in life after death, and so put it out of his mind later on.

But if someone had a belief in life after death, and had been taught about angels, heaven and hell, and the process of dying, he would be more open to an experience of this kind. Presumably he would be far less likely to reject it or forget it. His belief ahead of time in the possibility of such an experience may even make it seem less like a sleep once it is over.

A Fuller Examination of *True Christian Religion* 160

No passage says that we are out and out asleep or unconscious during the three days following death. The only passage to suggest that in retrospect it seems like a sleep is *True Christian Religion* 160. I believe that this must be a key passage on which the usual language about waking up in the spiritual world is based.

It is ironic that this impression would be based on *True Christian Religion* 160. This passage deserves a study all its own; I can only give it cursory attention here. It is a somewhat unsettling and disturbing passage in that it stands in apparent contrast with the descriptions given in the *Arcana* and *Heaven and Hell* about the process of awakening after death.

Permit me to recount the main points of this memorable relation: Swedenborg and several angels are out for a walk in the world of spirits, having an enjoyable conversation about the number of stars in the natural world. As they are talking, Swedenborg notices a paved road (*viam stratam*) so thickly crowded with spirits that there is hardly a yard's distance between them (*vix vestigii locus daretur inter duos*). Swedenborg mentions to the angels that he had seen this road before with spirits like the ranks of an army on it (*spiritus sicut turmas exercitus super illa*). Swedenborg had heard that it was the road traveled by all who leave the natural world (*quod audiverim, hanc viam esse, quam omnes, qui e Mundo naturali decedunt, pertranseunt*).

The road delivers the newly arrived spirits to the center of the world of spirits, a point with access to the east, south, north, and west of the world of spirits. While spirits are there they are in the external state. Later on they come into their internal state, are explored, and are taken to their places in heaven or hell.

Swedenborg and the angels then decide to stop at the end of the road and select twelve newcomers to interview about their beliefs about heaven and hell and life after death. Because the newcomers had recently arrived, they had no idea they were not still in the natural world (subsection 3).

All twelve newcomers express their opinions. They seem fully awake, expressing opinions and commenting now and then on each other's views.

Their answers turn out to be so poor that the angels and Swedenborg are stupefied. Swedenborg and the angels then decide to say something "to awaken them from sleep" (*ad excitandum illos e somno*, subsection 7).

The angels' method of "waking" the newcomers is to say the following, which contains the only reference to waking and sleeping in connection with death:

True Christian Religion 160:7

Est caelum et infernum, et est vita post mortem; quod sint, convincemini, dum **ignorantiam** de statu vitae, in quo nunc estis, **discutimus**; quisque enim primis diebus post mortem, non aliter scit, quam quod adhuc vivat in eodem mundo, in quo prius; tempus enim praeterlapsum est sicut somnus, ex quo cum quis expergiscitur, non sentit aliter quam quod sit ubi fuit. **Simile est cum vobis hodie**; quare locuti estis similiter ut cogitavistis in mundo priori.

There is a heaven and a hell and a life after death; of this you will be convinced when we have **dispelled your ignorance** of the state of life in which you now are. During the first few days after death no one knows but that he is still living in the same world in which he lived before; for the time that has passed is like a Sleep, on being awakened from which he had no other feeling than that he still is where he was before. **So is it with you now**; and therefore you have been speaking just as you thought the former world.

It is this dispelling of ignorance that is meant by waking them up. Here the angels and Swedenborg actually tell them that they are currently asleep but are about to be woken up. The meaning is obviously not literal; they are having a conversation.

Then the angels “wake them up”:

True Christian Religion 160:7

Et angeli **excusserunt ignorantiam**, et tunc se viderunt in alio mundo, ac inter illos, quos non cognoverunt; et tunc exclamabant, "Oh ubi sumus?" Et diximus, "Non amplius in mundo naturali sed in mundo spirituali, et nos sumus angeli."
Tunc **post evigilationem**, dixerunt, "Si estis vos angeli, monstrate nobis caelum."

The angels then **dispelled their ignorance**; and they saw that they were in another world, and among those with whom they were not acquainted; and they cried out, "O where are we?"

We said, "You are no longer in the natural world, but in the spiritual world, and we are angels."

Then, **being quite awake**, they said, "If you are angels, show us heaven."

The waking up that is referred to, then, is the unpleasant moment of becoming aware that they are in a foreign world among people they don't know.

Up to that point they were conscious in the usual sense: they were walking, talking, expressing opinions, interacting with each other. They were asleep only in the sense that they were unaware of their true circumstance. The waking up

that is referred to in this key passage is the revelation that they are no longer in the natural world.

Soon afterwards, Swedenborg and the angels take them to heaven as they have requested, but they are found to have hollow occiputs and are urged to leave quickly before being thrown out.

***True Christian Religion* 160 and Other Accounts of the Death Process**

True Christian Religion 160 is challenging. It gives us quite a different picture of the process of death and arrival in the world of spirits from what we read in the earlier accounts given in *Arcana Coelestia* 168–189, 314–323 and *Heaven & Hell* 445–452. The two may map onto each other in ways that are not immediately obvious, but in so doing the *True Christian Religion* passage certainly gives a different angle from the other passages. In it we hear nothing about celestial angels first greeting newcomers. Instead they are walking along an extremely crowded paved road. Perhaps the spiritual angels giving light is paralleled by Swedenborg and the angels waking the newcomers up to where they really are and what has happened. (In *True Christian Religion* 160, we don't hear anyone tell the newcomers they are spirits; the closest thing to it is that Swedenborg and the angels tell the newcomers, "we are angels"!)

There is both a similarity and a difference in the way one arrives in the world of spirits in these accounts. In the earlier accounts newcomers find where they belong by rejecting good influences from the highest celestial ones on down to their own comfort level. In *True Christian Religion* 160, newcomers arrive in the center of the world of spirits, and then presumably follow their interests toward any of the four points of the compass.

The best I can do at present by way of reconciling these seemingly distant accounts is to say that *True Christian Religion* 160 may be talking from the *outside* about how newcomers appear to others in the world of spirits; whereas *Arcana Coelestia* and *Heaven & Hell* are clearly talking about death from the *inside*, and what the experience of death is like for the newcomer. The latter accounts seem to me more comforting and wonderful.

Although *True Christian Religion* 160 may have given our resurrection services customary phrases about sleep and awakening, we would never say, "We can picture him now just awakening to the realization that he doesn't know where he is or who he is with, having walked up the crowded highway to the center of the world of spirits." But then again neither would we say, "We can picture him now finding his own life after rejecting celestial angels, spiritual angels, and several groups of good spirits."

Conclusion

For a number of people, a resurrection service is the only New Church service they will ever attend. For others, it will be the first service, and will begin an ongoing contact with and interest in the New Church. For the rest, including the most seasoned and devoted members of the church, it serves as a reminder of core beliefs.

Some of the people attending our resurrection services have extensive knowledge of the Writings. They will be aware of passages that present a transcendent experience just after death, in which the newcomer sees heaven and hears angels uttering ineffable things. They may also know that an awakening after three days may be the result of disbelief in the afterlife, or rejection of angels and good spirits.

Others have probably read about near-death experiences, which are anything but unconscious. Probably a few in every congregation have had a near-death experience themselves.

It seems a mild disservice to the deceased, to the congregation, and to the Writings to suggest a picture of the deceased just waking up after three days.

Of course no one wishes to attribute an evil heart or false beliefs to the deceased. If picturing him awakening on the third day does this at all, we should stop.

If the deceased had a background in the New Church, we hope that she acquired enough information about heaven and hell and life after death that she is unlikely to forget that she is a spirit or to look back on her death process as a sleep.

Whatever the deceased's religious beliefs, it is our hope that he took the express route to heaven and stayed with the celestial angels or the spiritual angels; if not, we hope he found good spirits to stay with before the resurrection service even began.

In closing, then, I suggest that we slightly modify the grand phrases in our resurrection services to reflect what the Writings teach, without introducing anything that would be inappropriate or would dishonor the deceased. We should avoid anything that would suggest unconsciousness, including references to waking up. It seems good instead to say, *Life is perhaps now settling back to normal for him/her after a transcendent experience in which angels welcomed him/her to the spiritual world.*

Appendix

Added Long after the Fact (March 28, 2011)

I wish I had seen it earlier, but I just found *Spiritual Experiences* [= **Spiritual Diary**] 5099, which greatly supports the case stated in this paper.

In it Erik Brahe confesses faith at the end of his life, and is executed at 10:00am. Swedenborg starts a conversation with him at 10:00pm, and talks with him for “several days” on end. Then after the second day (*post biduum*) Erik began to return to his former state of life, which was to love the things of the world; and after the third day (*post triduum*) he was back to being such as he was in the world, and was carried away by the evils he had imbibed in the world.

Yet in that intervening period he was hardly asleep. Swedenborg was talking to him endlessly, starting 12 hours after he passed away.

And the paper should have dealt with Hosea 6:2 (“After two days He will revive us; on the third day He will raise us up”), since that is no doubt the source of Swedenborg’s language in *Spiritual Experiences* 5099 and in some of the other passages mentioned.