

Waking up to a new life “on the third day,” after the Resuscitation Process

Some thoughts by Grant Odhner
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Swedenborg often mentions the third day as the time when people are resurrected and enter the spiritual world (SE 5492; HH 452; AR 153=TCR 281; 5 Mem 4; TCR 138). Sometimes he says “after two days” (DLW 390; D.Wis 7.4). This, of course, follows the Lord’s resurrection on the third day (and Hosea 6.2). It certainly seems like the teaching that we enter actively into a new life in the spiritual world on the third day should have the status of a “general principle” in our thinking.

However, we should also be clear on the following points:

- **People actually become conscious (“wake up”) soon after death, in the resurrection process**
This is clear in the treatments about resuscitation. And in SE 5099 Swedenborg relates that Erik Brahe was executed, and he spoke with him “twelve hours afterwards; and, after that, for several days almost continually.”
- **Some people pass right from that initial state to their eternal home**
That is, some people remain with either the celestial, spiritual, or natural angels, and progress to their final home from that association (HH 491). The introductory angels do not leave the person, the person always leaves them (HH 450). (cf. AC 5175: some “food” absorbed right from “mouth” of GM.) Wouldn’t this likely be true of infants and young children—all children? (cf. HH 332)
- **Thus people do not literally wake up again, to find themselves in the world of spirits; they have already been awake in the spiritual world.**
- **Only those people go on to the world of spirits, and appear to “wake up” (again) there, who require “vastations”**
These people cannot enter their final home directly from being resuscitated, because their outer self is not in full correspondence with their inner self.

Though it seems that most people do need to spend time in the world of spirits, we should not, perhaps, assume in a resurrection service that an individual will be one of them. (Jonathan Rose wrote a paper for CC making these points - 2002.)

Still, it seems to me that it is legitimate for us to think of most people entering the spiritual world in a new way on the third day after death. In other words, that is when

most people “wake up” to find themselves in their own life again (albeit in a new place)—either in their own society of heaven or hell, or in the world of spirits.

The Writings’ treatments of the resuscitation process in HH (and in AC and SE) can easily imply that there is a smooth and conscious transition from a spirit’s being with resuscitating angels and spirits to being in the life that he had led before on earth in the world of spirits.

This does not address a phenomenon that the Writings face us with: the idea that people often wake up in the other life in similar circumstances to those in which they died (SE 885; 5 Mem 4; cf. SE 1289, 1337), and don’t realize that they have died (*ibid.*; TCR 797.2; AR 153.1-2). The notion that people don’t realize that they have died seems to contradict the fact that spirits are clearly conscious of the resuscitation process while they are experiencing it.

To me the resolution to this seeming contradiction is *clearly suggested* in Swedenborg’s accounts of resuscitation, even though it is not as *explicitly stated* as it might be.

After describing the new spirit’s departure from the good spirits who were attending him, HH 450 says, “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.”¹

Why is it surprising? —because he has temporarily forgotten all the amazing states he just went through! That is certainly like a kind of “waking up” to a new life – because he is now living a life that is “his own” *and*, at the same time, a life that is free from earthly limitations. AC 316, a parallel to HH 450, adds a suggestive phrase: “And then, wonderful to say, he leads with them a life like that which he had lived when in the body. But after sinking back into such a life, *he makes a new beginning of life*. ... Such as have been in faith toward the Lord, are *from that new beginning of life* led step by step toward heaven.”

In TCR 797.2, the resuscitation process is described as being like a sleep, and the spirit’s beginning a new life is described as a “waking up”:

I have heard that when [Melancthon] first entered the spiritual world, a house was prepared for him like that in which he had dwelt in the world. This is done for most of the newcomers there, and for this reason they do not know but that they are still in the natural world, *and the time that has passed since their death seems to them merely as a sleep*. Also everything in his room was like what he formerly had; a similar table, a similar desk with compartments, and a similar library; so that as soon as he came there, *as if he had just awakened from a sleep*, he seated himself at the table and continued his writing....

HH 493 also speaks to this phenomenon:

¹ Emphasis here and in what follows is mine.

The first state of man after death resembles his state in the world, for he is then likewise in externals, having a like face, like speech, and a like disposition, thus a like moral and civil life. And in consequence *he is made aware that he is not still in the world only by giving attention* (advertit ad) *to what he encounters, and to what is said to him by the angels when he was resuscitated, that now he was a spirit* (n. 450).

After death reflection is granted by the Lord only when people are ready for it. This is repeatedly taught. Spirits don't know they are in the other world, and don't realize the nature of that world unless given to reflect (see passages below). That is what makes it possible and likely for a person to "wake up" again on the third day and once again come to the realization that they have died and are in a new world.

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Reflection being granted after death.

SE 735.

Spirits especially, stay after death in a state devoid of reflection. This is also the reason that they cannot tell but that they are earthly people, living in the world as before. So they remain in their illusions and live on as the character they had been at death. But as soon as the power of reflection is given them by the Lord, they know that they are in the other life – a belief to which they can hardly be brought until they are given something, or rather many things, to reflect on. But illusions rooted into their character still remain.

SE 1903-1904

Souls after death are unaware of being in the other life, when they are not enabled to reflect

1903. Souls have lost nothing whatever of the properties they had had in their bodily life, as you may see stated here and there [207, 364, 400, 1243, 1719], and consequently they cannot realize and do not know that they are in the other life, but think they are in the world. This is because they lack the reflection which is aroused by memories, and this fact is not aroused in their memory except by objects. There are not any objects unless presented by those who are in company with them. Reflection is given, of course, that they are in the other life, but by the Lord.

1904. That without reflection they cannot realize that they are in the other life can be further evident from the nature of reflection. A person is not aware of distances without reflection on what intervenes, nor of times without reflection on the same, besides many other examples. For reflection makes one aware of quality and quantity. 1748, 7 May.

Also: SE 352, 1243, 1939, 2030-2032, 2053, 2330, 2540, 3101-3103, 4618; cf. 2199, 2590, 2838.

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