

## The Life of Children in Heaven Inspiration for Parents and Teachers

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The Heavenly Doctrine describes the state and education of those who enter heaven as infants. Like all who enter into the spiritual world, they first wake up to spiritual consciousness in surroundings similar to those they left on earth; this is in order that their entry into spiritual life should be one of familiarity and peace, rather than having the shock of a complete change. Adults, like infants, awaken in the peaceful sphere of the celestial angels, but these angels soon have to leave most adults because of the things contrary to the celestial sphere which they soon manifest. This is not so with infants. There is nothing contrary in their infantile life, so celestial angels can continue to be with them.

They are then assigned to angel mothers who have immediate responsibility for them. These mothers are women who tenderly loved all children while on earth and who have become angels. The children, from an implanted instinct, love them as if they were their own mothers. The place in which infants are makes one with the heaven of innocence, and it is immediately before the Lord's sight.

Infants enter heaven with an innocence (of ignorance) and a tenderness in all things, as they had on earth. But they are superior in that they are no longer encompassed with an earthly body. The spiritual body is in every way more perfect, being an exact expression of the spirit. They do not have to learn to walk and to speak laboriously as on earth, but act at once in accordance with their interiors, walking without practice and also speaking. Though their speech at first is from general affections—such affections as can be seen in their gentle facial expressions—they quickly, in about a month of our time, learn to express these affections in the words of the spiritual language. They form their first ideas from their angel mothers through visual images which can convey heavenly delights. Through these their minds are opened more and more to the delights of heaven, and they are prepared to receive more particular instruction in the ways of heaven. When they reach this stage they are transferred to other heavens, where they are taught by teachers, so that they may enter into the wisdom of the angels.

In the first instruction of little children in heaven, representative images play an important part. It is said that these are beautiful and full of wisdom from within, beyond all belief, and that through them an intelligence, deriving its soul from good, is gradually instilled into them. Everything which the children see then seems to them to be living. Thus their learning is not a matter of abstract knowledge, but of life. It is said that it is similar with children on earth in their early years. Every object which they see and play with seems to them to be full of life.

As children are instructed in heaven, their minds grow and their spiritual bodies grow correspondingly. The reason is that the intelligence and wisdom which they receive are the essential spiritual food which nourishes both their minds and their bodies, for the body is simply the external expression of the mind. By instruction, then, children advance into the strength and beauty of early adulthood, and they remain in this state to eternity. At this age, in the Lord's

Providence, they meet someone of the opposite sex, and, without all the distractions and uncertainties prevalent in this world, immediately recognize the other as their conjugal partner, and mutually enter into the full delights of marriage.

The training and education of children in heaven, first by their angel mothers, and later by the angel teachers, is done from the deepest love of the children and according to angelic wisdom. But even more important is the Divine influx from the Lord that protects them from the approach of evil spirits. For children in heaven, like children on earth, have an inherited tendency to evils of every kind. The difference is that in heaven the external senses are not developed in such a way as to call forth these evils, so they can be displaced by the good flowing in from the Lord. Yet even those brought up in heaven may occasionally be let down into the world of spirits where their evil inheritance may be called forth, so that they can more deeply realize that they have no good of themselves, but that it all inflows from the Lord.

The blessedness of this state of being withheld from evil can, to some degree, be realized in a family when harmony prevails, when neither the shortcomings of the parents nor the willfulness of the children are active. What a truly blessed state is heaven, where adults and children have no other desire than to follow the law of the Lord, and have, also, the insight and wisdom to do so!

The Lord has revealed these truths concerning the upbringing of children in heaven to mitigate our grief over their departure from this world. Furthermore, this teaching may give us instruction and inspiration concerning our children here on earth. For, so perfect is their training by the angels, and so immediately are they under the Lord's auspices, that all who die as children become angels of heaven. This can inspire us, as parents and teachers, to emulate what we are taught concerning the upbringing of children in heaven. True, the circumstances are quite different, and we must do all that we can to prepare our children for a useful life in this world—a place with which angels are not concerned—and to meet trials and problems which children in heaven do not have to face. Nevertheless, if we set first things first, and, in every decision concerning our children's welfare, place the prime importance upon their spiritual advancement, then our children here can come ever closer to the happy state of those brought up in heaven.