

PICTURING HEAVEN AND HELL

In the spiritual world there are lands just as in the natural world, and there are plains and valleys, mountains and hills, also springs and rivers. There are parks, gardens, groves, and forests. There are cities, with palaces and houses. There are writings and books; there are occupations and businesses. There are gold, silver, and precious stones. In a word, there are all things and each thing there that are in the natural world; but those in heaven are immeasurably more perfect (*True Christian Religion* 794).

An Excerpt from True Christian Religion 78:1,2,5:

“I will now show you how all kinds of animals and vegetables were produced by God.”

He [the angel] led me away to a broad green field and said, “Look around.” And I looked around, and saw birds of most beautiful colors, some flying, some perched upon the trees, and some scattered over the field plucking little leaves from roses. Among the birds were doves and swans. After these had disappeared from my sight I saw not far from me flocks of sheep with lambs, and of kids and she-goats; and round about these flocks I saw herds of cattle, young and old, also of camels and mules, and in a kind of grove, deer with high horns, and also unicorns.

When I had beheld these things the angel said, “Turn your face toward the east.” And I saw a garden containing fruit trees, as orange trees, lemon trees, olive trees, vines, fig-trees, pomegranates, and also shrubs bearing berries.

The angel then said, “Look now toward the south.” And I saw fields of various kinds of grain, as wheat, millet, barley, and beans, and round about them flower beds containing roses of beautifully varied colors; but toward the north I saw thick groves of chestnut trees, palms, lindens, plane trees, and other trees with rich foliage.

When I had seen these things the angel said, “All these things that you have seen are correspondences of affections of the love of the angels who are near....”

After this we talked about various matters; and at length about hell, that no such things are seen there as are seen in heaven, but only their opposites; since the affections of the love of those there, which are lusts of evil, are opposites of the affections of love in which angels of heaven are. Thus with those in hell, and in general in their deserts, there are seen birds of night, such as bats and owls; also wolves, panthers, tigers, and rats and mice; also venomous serpents of every kind, dragons and crocodiles; and (where there is any herbage) brambles, nettles, thorns, and thistles, and some poisonous plants grow: and at times these disappear, and then nothing is seen but heaps of stones, and bogs in which frogs croak. All of these things are correspondences; but as has been said, they are correspondences of the affections of the love of those in hell, which affections are lusts of evil.