

When a Child Dies

By Donnette Alfelt

Many people share the opinion that the death of a child is greater than any other loss. The pain is more intense and the questions more fervent. Yet together with the painful questions, there are often instinctive beliefs that these children live on, are cared for and are happy in another place. It is also a common perception that the time will come when we will be reunited.

It is clear that children who die continue to be a permanent part of those they leave behind. Bodies die, but love does not. Bodies die, but memories do not. Our children live on, not only in our hearts, but in a new and beautiful life.

People in most religions believe a loving God receives these innocent children in tender ways. In the New Church we find specific teachings about children in Heaven.

Every child who dies, no matter where he or she was born, within the church or outside it, of devout or irreverent parents, is accepted by the Lord after death (*Heaven and Hell* 329).

When children awake in the next life they are welcomed and embraced by angels who love little children and these children at once feel secure and loved. Their angel mothers are perfectly qualified to nurture the qualities of those in their care. They are women who tenderly loved children while they lived in the world, and now as angels take joy in caring for babies and children in the next world. They are perfectly suited for the children they care for. If those who mourn the loss could meet these angel mothers they would immediately recognize them as extensions of their own love.

Children who die are still connected to their families by love, and understand they will someday be together again. They are however, not burdened by the prospect of a long separation because in heaven time as we know it does not exist. There, inhabitants live in the present with “no thought for the morrow” freeing them to enjoy the delights and blessings of heaven without anxiety or longing.

Little children enter heaven as children but eventually mature to become beautiful adult angels remaining forever in the prime of life. As they grow they are educated and guided in ways that best develop their talents and special qualities until they become full angels of heaven.

It is a comfort to know we do not need to grieve the unrealized potential of children who die since every person’s true potential is realized in a much more perfect and satisfying degree in the life to come. It is also true that nothing is wasted. The experiences of life on earth, however brief, are foundations for continued life in Heaven—the good and loving experiences are seeds for future blessings. The difficulties and sufferings can contribute to future growth. The Lord does not allow anything that cannot in some way be turned to good.

Children in the next life are educated in wonderful ways, and also enjoy the delights of play and pleasure of the beautiful world they live in as they are guided in ways that develop their unique qualities. As these children mature they are brought from outward innocence called the innocence of infancy to inner innocence that is the innocence of wisdom. This innocence is a willingness to be led by the Lord. They then become angels who apply their wisdom and follow their loves in useful activities.

When ready, they are led to their marriage partner. When they meet, the young man and the young woman immediately recognize that they belong to each other. They are then united and continue together as husband and wife in the delights and useful activities of heavenly life.

The workings of the Lord's providence begin at birth and continue to eternity. He is caring for our loved ones in the next world and continues to care for us in this world as we prepare for the time when we will enter the real world that is eternal.

The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting (Psalm 103).