

WISDOM ABOUT ANIMALS AND BIRDS

by Rev. Donald L. Rose

To king Solomon the queen of Sheba exclaimed, "Happy are your servants, who stand continually before you and hear your wisdom." People from all over the earth came to hear him. One focus of his wisdom was animals and birds (1 Kings 4:33).

"Ask the beasts, and they will teach you; and the birds of the air, and they will tell you." Theologian Emanuel Swedenborg comments on these lyrical words in the book of Job. They mean that we should observe and study these creatures. We will find good reason to acknowledge the God who created them. And we can make conclusions relating to our own lives.

In the Gospels our Lord invites contemplation of the fowls of the air. "Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?"

In the book *Angelic Wisdom Regarding Divine Love and Wisdom* Swedenborg explores the instincts of birds and animals. He says that that the individual who pays attention to nature can confirm belief in a wise God. "For example when he observes birds of the air and sees that each species knows its own food and where to find it; that each recognizes by sound and appearance its own kind, and which among other species are its friends and which its enemies . . . They skillfully build nests, lay their eggs there, know how long to incubate them, and at the end of that time hatch out their young, tenderly love them, shelter them under their wings, share their food with them and feed them."

The cause must be a spiritual one, says Swedenborg. "Can anything natural have as an end a useful purpose, and dispose useful endeavors into patterns and forms? No one can do this but one who is wise; and no one can so order and form the universe but God, who has infinite wisdom. Who else, or what else, can foresee and provide all these things?"

"Those wonders and more are visible proofs that it is the Lord acting from Himself through the spiritual word who produces all the phenomena which occur in nature."

One great wonder relating to animals and birds is their incredible ability to navigate long journeys and to find their way home. What they can do is amazing enough. Just how they do it stretches our comprehension. Although there are fascinating clues, it is a wonder that continues to elude us.

Is there a message of wisdom here? Something comparable to what Solomon might say?

When you depart this life, how are you going to find your friends? How are you going to find your dwelling place, your home? Jesus said, "I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14). Thomas understandably asked, "How can we know the way?"

“Even the sparrow has found a home” (Psalm 84:3). We are of more value than sparrows. Our Heavenly Father provides that birds and animals can find their way. It is the part of wisdom to find assurance as we study God’s creatures that He will guide us and bring us safely to our eternal home.

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