

A BRIEF EXPERIENCE OF HEAVEN
A Book Noted by the Rev. Donald L. Rose

90 Minutes in Heaven by Rev. Don Piper, Revell Books, 2004

This was written by a Baptist minister, Rev. Don Piper, who was involved in a devastating car accident after which he was presumed dead. The book was at first sold only in religious book stores, but after a couple of years it got national attention and sold in the hundreds of thousands.

Relatively few of the book's two hundred pages are about the experience of heaven. More pages are devoted to the car accident and the way the author has managed in his mangled body. Having "died" in the crash, he says he awoke but saw no tunnel nor a journey into the light (p.22). He saw many happy people waiting to welcome him, and he never felt so loved (p.23). He comments that things were exceedingly "real", and we will mention that later. Everything glowed with intense brightness (p.27,28). Each of our senses is immeasurably increased (p.28). (Compare this to what is said in *Arcana Coelestia* 4622.)

Wonderful music is the subject of the second chapter of the book, and I hope to devote a later article to that subject. From page 37 onwards we are back in this world with a bruised body and 34 surgeries. There are a dozen chapters on Piper's life and his encouragement to other people.

It is especially interesting to find that the author had been skeptical about stories of near-death experiences! "Despite my skepticism—even today—of many of their testimonies, I have never questioned my own death" (p.200). "I know I went to heaven" (p.201). "I know heaven is real. I have been there and come back" (p.202).

How intriguing for us is the following quotation from page 202. "It comes down to this: Until some mere mortal is dead for a lengthy period and subsequently returns to life with irrefutable evidence of an afterlife, near-death experiences will continue to

be a matter of faith, or at the very least, conjecture.” Ponder that.

Although he still has many questions, Piper is at peace in the conviction that he is where God wants him to be. God has given him a hint of what eternity in heaven will be like. In God's time he will return to heaven, and prayerfully, he will see us there too (p.205).

Mr. Piper hopes to write another book on the theme that “heaven is real.” The Writings do emphasize this theme. In heaven things are “so real that those there hold them to be real, and things in this world relatively not real.” That is from *Arcana Coelestia* paragraph 1116 which is also affirmed in paragraph 1628. We read in paragraph 1630 that some visited angel homes and said upon their return that “things were real; and that in the life of the body they had never believed this.” In paragraph 3485 we read that they who are in the other life have sometimes said, “that the things they see there are real things, and the things which man sees are in comparison not real.”

As I mentioned, I intend to do an article about music in heaven. I hope that this short report stimulates thought on how people are affected by the reports of near-death experiences.

In a way a near-death experience may be compared to a miracle. Our belief is not to be compelled by miracles or conversations with the dead. We read in *Divine Providence* that “conversations with the dead would have the same effect as miracles, namely man would be persuaded and forced into a state of worship for a short time” (*Divine Providence* 134).

Little miracles do occur, as do experiences of the afterlife. How do wise people respond to them? “When they hear anything about a miracle they give thought to it only as an argument of no great weight that confirms their faith; for they think from the Word, thus from the Lord, and not from the miracle” (*Divine Providence* 133).