

## **Flowers**

**By Rev. J. Hugh Odhner**

Lessons: Genesis 2:4-9, 15  
Matthew 6:26-33  
Arcana Coelestia 4528, 4529

*Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. (Matthew 6:28-29)*

It's springtime and flowers are appearing in fields and meadows and gardens. Like many people I enjoy flowers, especially at this time of year the golden daffodils and the delicately purple crocuses. This drew my mind to devoting a sermon to flowers. And so the text suggested itself because it mentions flowers.

Consider the lilies of the field and how they grow. We actually do not know what particular flower was being referred to. In Galilee many varieties of flowers grow wildly and abundantly in the fields. The Greek New Testament word, traditionally translated as lilies, could refer to a number of different flowers. And it may refer to flowers in general, rather than to a specific variety. But the general meaning is clear, no matter what the flower, even Solomon in all his glory, is not arrayed like one of these.

Take a look at any flower, and you may see reflected in it the beauty and majesty of God's creation. A beauty and grandeur much greater than the robes of Solomon. For flowers are representations of heavenly realities. They take their form and existence in this world from things that exist in the spiritual world. Their beauty affects us naturally because, on a deeper level, they affect us spiritually. We see the beauty of flowers naturally with our eyes, but we experience the beauty of flowers spiritually as they affect our soul and the higher regions of our spirit.

That flowers are representations of heavenly realities can be seen in the story we read of the botanist in the other life. Here was a man who while living in the world had been delighted with the study of botany.

When, in the other life, he heard that there were flowers and trees there, he had an ardent desire to see such things, and this was granted to him.

This description is touching if you can imagine his wonder and excitement at seeing a whole new world filled with the things he loved. Taken up into the paradisaal regions filled with trees and flower gardens, *"he then came into his heart's delight from affection, (and) he was allowed to wander over the fields, not only to see the plants in detail, but also to gather them and hold them close to his eye, and to examine whether it was really what it appeared to be."*

I can imagine him taking out a magnifying glass, or wearing a monocle, and studying those flowers with the greatest delight.

*"He went on to say that the flowers visible there were far more abundant than those he had seen at any time in the world and were scarcely able to be appreciated by any worldly kind of discernment, and that each one sparkled with unimaginable brightness because it was a product of the light of heaven."* (AC 4529)

Imagine, if you will, seeing flowers sparkling with brightness!

And this experience occurred just in the first or lowest heaven. We also read of some spirits *"who when in the paradisaal regions also said that these surpass every degree of happiness. They were therefore carried up into a heaven ... which sparkled with a still greater resplendence, and finally they were carried up into the heaven where there is also a perception of the blessedness of the intelligence and wisdom that exist in such things. And when they were there, they told me that what they had seen previously was as nothing compared with what they now were experiencing."* (AC 4529) From experience these spirits learned that there were higher heavens in which the beauty, happiness and blessedness, far exceeded what they had experienced in the first heaven, even to such a degree, *"that they began to fall into a holy swoon."*

Let us take another look at a description of the gardens, trees and flowers that appear in heaven. We read in Heaven and Hell:

*To show what the things are that appear to the angels in accordance with correspondences, I would here mention this one instance only for the sake of illustration. By those who are intelligent, gardens and paradises full of trees and flowers of every kind are seen. The trees there are planted in most beautiful order, entwined in cross-beam formation with arched entrances and encircling walks. All is of such beauty as to exceed description. Those walk there who are in intelligence, gathering flowers and weaving garlands with which they adorn little children. There are also trees and flowers there of kinds that are never seen and cannot exist in the world. On the trees there are also fruits that are in accordance with the good of love in which are the intelligent. Such things are seen by them because a garden or park, and fruit trees and flowers correspond to intelligence and wisdom. (HH 176)*

*The delights of life of those who have lived in the world in heavenly love are changed into such corresponding things as are in the heavens, which come into existence from the Sun of heaven and its light, that light presenting to view such things as have what is Divine inwardly concealed in them. The things that appear in that light affect the interiors of the minds of the angels, and at the same time the exteriors pertaining to their bodies; and as the Divine light, which is Divine Truth going forth from the Lord, flows into their minds opened by heavenly love, it presents outwardly such things as correspond to the delights of their love.*

(HH 489)

The trees, gardens and flowers that appear in heaven correspond to the affections for truth and good that exist within the angels there. They are representations of the states of good and truth as they exist in the minds of the people there. If you were to see a garden in heaven with its plants and flowers, you would see a representation of the minds of those associated with that garden.

Something similar exists with us in this world. If you were to plant a garden, the plants in that garden represent and correspond to things in your mind. Whether you plant flowers or vegetables or trees, what you choose to plant comes from your affections. They represent something of your affections, and even though you may not know the correspondence of what you are planting, rest assured that the spirits around you perceive the correspondences, and communicate these to you through thoughts and feelings, especially feelings. It is the same with wildflowers.

So as we go out, take a look at the flowers around you. Notice the thoughts and feelings you have when contemplating those flowers. Those thoughts and feelings represent the spiritual things within you as they correspond to the things of the spirit within you. **Amen.**

**Prayer:** Blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. (*Revelation 7:12*)

## **Scripture Readings**

### **Lesson I**

#### **Genesis 2:4-9, 15 (NKJV)**

<sup>4</sup> This *is* the history of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens,

<sup>5</sup> before any plant of the field was in the earth and before any herb of the field had grown. For the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the earth, and *there was* no man to till the ground;

<sup>6</sup> but a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground.

<sup>7</sup> And the LORD God formed man *of* the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

<sup>8</sup> The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed.

<sup>9</sup> And out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life *was* also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

<sup>15</sup> Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it.

### **Lesson II**

#### **Matthew 6:26-33 (NKJV)**

<sup>26</sup> 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?

<sup>27</sup> Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?

<sup>28</sup> So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they

grow: they neither toil nor spin;

<sup>29</sup> and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

<sup>30</sup> Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, *will He* not much more *clothe* you, O you of little faith?

<sup>31</sup> Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'

<sup>32</sup> For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.

<sup>33</sup> But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

### **Lesson III**

#### **Arcana Coelestia 4528, 4529**

**AC 4528.** The eye, or rather its sight, corresponds especially to those communities in the other life which are in paradises ... where gardens are vividly presented to view, with trees and flowers of so many kinds and types that those on the whole earth are comparatively few. Within every object there is something of intelligence and wisdom that shines forth from it, so that you may say that the people in the gardens are at the same time in paradises of intelligence and wisdom, and it is these which inwardly affect them, and thus gladden not only their sight, but also at the same time their understanding.

[2] These paradises are in the first heaven....

[3] This heaven is distinguished into many heavens.... There is the heaven of paradisaal gardens just described. There is a heaven where there are atmospheres of various colors, and where the whole air flashes as it were with gold, silver, pearls, precious stones, flowers in least forms, and innumerable other things. There is a rainbow heaven, where are the most beautiful rainbows, great and small, variegated with the most splendid colors. All these come forth by means of light from the Lord which contains within it intelligence and wisdom, so that in every object there is something of the intelligence of truth and of the wisdom of good, which is thus shown representatively.

**A4529.** A certain person who had been famous and celebrated in the learned world for his skill in the science of botany, after death heard in the other life, to his great surprise, that there also flowers and trees are presented to view; and as botany had been the delight of his life he was fired with a desire to see whether

such was the case. He was therefore taken up into the paradisaal regions, where he saw most beautiful plantations of trees and most charming flower gardens of immense extent. And as he then came into his heart's delight from affection, he was allowed to wander over the fields, not only to see the plants in detail, but also to gather them and hold them close to his eye, and to examine whether it was really what it appeared to be.

[2] He spoke to me from there and said that he had never believed anything such as this, and that if people in the world were to hear of such things they would regard them as absurdities. He went on to say that the flowers visible there were far more abundant than those he had seen at any time in the world and were scarcely able to be appreciated by any worldly kind of discernment, and that each one sparkled with unimaginable brightness because it was a product of the light of heaven. He was not as yet able to perceive that that sparkling had a spiritual origin, namely that in every one there existed some measure of intelligence and wisdom - the attributes of truth and good - as the source of their sparkling. He said in addition that people on earth would never believe this because few believe in the existence of any heaven or hell; and those who do believe may know merely that there is joy in heaven, few among these believing that things exist there such as the eye has never seen, the ear has never heard, and the mind has never been able to contemplate. Such unbelief exists in spite of their knowing from the Word that amazing scenes were seen by the Prophets....

[3] But these things are comparatively of little importance. Those who are in true intelligence and wisdom, which are the source of these things, are in such a state of happiness that the things which have been related are to them of slight importance. Some spirits who when in the paradisaal regions also said that these surpass every degree of happiness. They were therefore carried up into a heaven ... which sparkled with a still greater splendence, and finally they were carried up into the heaven where there is also a perception of the blessedness of the intelligence and wisdom that exist in such things. And when they were there, they told me that what they had seen previously was as nothing compared with what they now were experiencing. At last they were carried up into a heaven where on account of the bliss of interior affection, they could bear it, for the bliss penetrated to the very marrows, and these being as it were dissolved away with bliss, they began to fall into a holy swoon. **AMEN**