What Heaven and Hell Really Feel Like

One of the greatest influences on August Strindberg was the Christian mystic Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772). Though he lived two hundred years earlier, Swedenborg was much like playwright August Strindberg in that he was a Swedish man of many interests and talents. He was a scientist, theologian, philosopher, and a Christian mystic. He is arguably best known for his book *Heaven and Hell* -- a book about the afterlife. Swedenborg claimed this book was written based on revelations given to him by God.

The book outlines the reality of heaven, hell, and the world of spirits, and tells in great detail exactly what the soul will experience. Swedenborg discusses not only where the spirit goes, but also the physical details of the world the spirits dwell in.

- On directions in Heaven: Swedenborg describes how North, South, East, and West are aligned differently in the spirit world, because the quarters of the world are aligned by the Lord, who is the sun of heaven. On earth, “it is from the south that all the quarters are determined. But in heaven that is called the east where the Lord is seen as sun.”

- On time and space in Heaven: "Angels have no notion or idea of time and space; and this so completely that they do not even know at all what time and space are."
On light and heat in Heaven: "The heat of heaven, like the light of heaven, is everywhere different… It is more intense and more pure in the Lord's celestial kingdom, because the angels there receive more of Divine good; and it is less intense and pure in His spiritual kingdom, because the angels there receive more of Divine truth."

_Heaven and Hell_ has been translated into many languages but was originally written in Latin and for many years was only available to well-educated men. Among the men influenced by this book were not only August Strindberg, but also William Blake, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry James, Fyodor Dostoevsky, and DT Suzuki. It has been suggested that this book also influenced Joseph Smith in the development of the Mormon philosophy of the afterlife. Though August Strindberg used many of the ideas as well as the structure of _Heaven and Hell_ in _The Ghost Sonata_, it is debatable whether he is proving, disproving, or suggesting a correspondence between the Christian theories of life after death and those theories of other religions. While Swedenborg’s book may not have been widely accepted, it has continued to be very influential.