



News from the SWEDENBORG FOUNDATION

Year-End Roundup

It was an exciting year here at the Swedenborg Foundation! Our online reach continues to expand, enabling us to share Swedenborg's thought with an ever-widening pool of seekers!

- . We had more than 31 million minutes watched on the offTheLeftEye YouTube channel this year, with more than 3.5 million views.
- . On average, our Facebook posts are seen by 137,000 people every day. Extended out to a full year, that would be 50 million views.
- . Our website, Swedenborg.com, had about 180,000 visitors, a 40 percent increase over 2015.
- . We released two new books this year: the New Century Edition translation of Swedenborg's short work *New Jerusalem*, and *Ten Commandments*, a compilation of Swedenborg's writings on the inner meaning of the Ten Commandments.

Thanks to all of our members, donors, and other supporters who helped to make 2016 a fantastic year! We're looking forward to sharing even more with you next year. •

IN THIS ISSUE

- . Year-End Roundup
- . NCE Minute: Looking for Spring in Swedenborg
- . *Swedenborg and Life* Recap: How to Respect Spiritual Boundaries in Relationships
- . From Our Blog: Spiritual Consequences of the Presidential Election



IN MEMORY: CAROL LAWSON

Carol Lawson, director emerita of the Swedenborg Foundation, passed into the spiritual world on November 17 at the age of ninety-four. During her tenure on the board of the Swedenborg Foundation, she became founding editor of the quarterly journal *Chrysalis* (1984–1995), which became the annual anthology *Chrysalis Reader* (1995–2013). Her multitude of contributions to the organization, too numerous to list here, left a lasting impact on all of us. •

NCE Minute: Looking for Spring in Swedenborg

As winter in the Northern Hemisphere proceeds, it seems appropriate to look for spring wherever we can find it. Even thinking about it on a cold winter's day can make the reality seem closer. It was certainly a topic that Swedenborg often had on his mind, whether he was living in the harsh climate of Sweden or in the milder lands of Britain and the Continent.

We know this because he refers to the seasons hundreds of times in his theological works. For him, they were rich symbols that could be applied in a large number of contexts. In *Secrets of Heaven* alone, the correspondences with the seasons include the stages of the church on earth (§1837), the elements of the inner self (§1557:2), and the states of love and faith in the spiritual world (§9213:1). He particularly likes to contrast spring and winter, as in the following passage:

When faith is separated from goodwill, it is like the light in winter. When faith is united to goodwill, it is like the light in spring. The light in winter, which is a light separated from heat, is united to coldness; therefore it completely strips trees of their leaves, kills grass, makes ground as hard as rock, and freezes water. Light in spring, which is a light united to heat, causes trees to grow, first producing leaves, then flowers, and finally fruit; it also unlocks and softens the ground so that it produces grass, plants, flowers, and shrubs; and it melts ice, so that water flows from its sources again. (*True Christianity* §385)

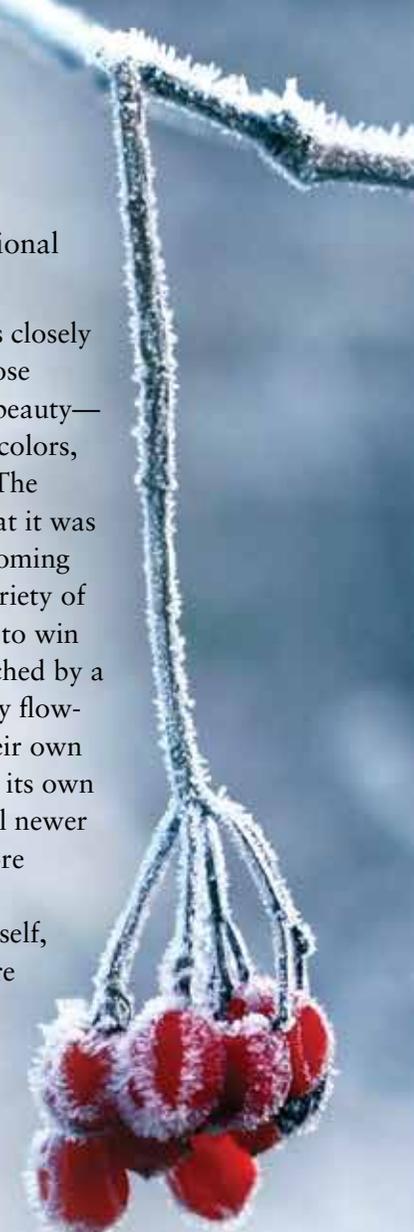
The detail in which he indulges here brings to mind the descriptions of nature found in the Roman poet Ovid, whose works Swedenborg greatly loved and whose influence can be seen at every stage of his writing life. Swedenborg himself wrote a great deal of poetry in his younger years, and when his interests turned to theology in the mid-1740s, his first thought was to present his evolving insights in a work of poetic prose. This book, *Worship and Love of God*, soon seemed to him an inadequate medium to convey his burgeoning spiritual experiences, and he abandoned it, leaving behind two printed volumes and a few page proofs of a third. But it could be argued that, however dissatisfied he may have been with it, *Worship and Love of God* contains some of Swedenborg's most colorful prose—and

certainly his best description of spring, albeit a fictional one, the very first spring on earth:

When the earth's spring first began, the tiny seeds closely covering its surface began to germinate. From those seeds, Earth brought forth flowers of surpassing beauty—flowers that varied with thousands of forms and colors, as if they were the peals of nature's laughter. . . . The earth that bore them all was like the offspring that it was bearing; it too was going through spring and blooming for the first time; and it did so with such great variety of beauty that every blossom vied with its neighbor to win the prize for splendor. . . . In every bit of soil touched by a different ray of the sun, a different form of beauty flowered—even the northern regions luxuriated in their own flowers. . . . As soon as any inch of turf produced its own fresh form, spring advanced a step and added still newer ones, including many never seen again, which wore inscribed on their leaves the ages of the world in sequence, along with the nature of the universe itself, depicted in various ways. Some, for example, were dotted with stars, or were distinguished from the rest by markings that showed the sky punctuated by constellations; others showed the flaming sun with its rays and portrayed its wedding with earth. Others again showed the planetary orbits in space, each distinguished by a particular color, along with their individual spheres, and a crown above them all. Each of that spring's first sacred offerings was a shining mirror of a general truth as well as a representation of the ages down to the end of the series today. (*Worship and Love of God* §19:1–2)

Now, *that* is a picture to inspire a little more patience with winter. •

Swedenborg's Worship and Love of God is scheduled to appear as an extra volume in the New Century Edition series.



Swedenborg and Life Recap: How to Respect Spiritual Boundaries in Relationships

By Josh Cole, Swedenborg.com Contributor

The following is a recap of a recent episode of our weekly webcast *Swedenborg and Life*. To watch this episode (or any other!), go to youtube.com/offthelefteye. You can also read recaps of other recent episodes at www.swedenborg.com.

In this episode, host Curtis Childs and featured guests take concepts from Swedenborg's spiritual writings and combine them with principles of modern-day psychology to come up with loving solutions to relationship problems.

THE PATTERN

Regular boundaries are clearly communicated and obvious when they're crossed. An example might be the Ten Commandments: "You shall not kill" is not only a commandment but the law of the land, and it's obvious when someone has crossed the line. Micro-boundaries, on the other hand, have to do with our interpersonal relationships, and those can be damaged almost imperceptibly. Based on his studies of Swedenborg's work and the case of one particular couple, marriage and family therapist Mark Carlson came up with a technique for working through the consequences of crossing these micro-boundaries.

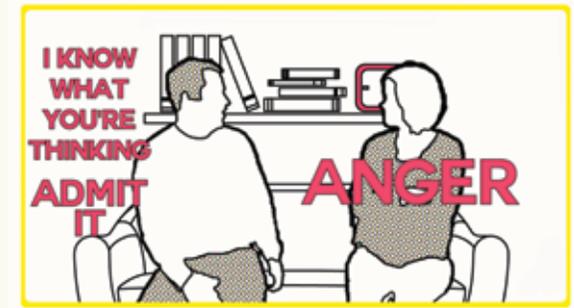
In his observations of the couple's arguments and their obvious love for each other, he realized there was a clear pattern in their interactions. It popped up anytime one partner commented on another's internal state, which, as described by Swedenborg, refers to a person's thoughts, feelings, and beliefs—all the things that relate to their spiritual self.

It is our spirit that thinks and intends. (*Divine Providence* §101)

SPIRITUAL INFLAMMATION

So what did Mark discover? Simply, making assumptions about someone else's internal state always brings up anger, or *zelotypia*. This term is used in modern psychology to refer to abnormal zeal or jealousy, but Swedenborg also uses the term in his writings to refer to a passionate sense of

protectiveness. Latin consultant Chara Daum explains that although the word *zelotypia* is often translated as *jealousy*, the root meaning is actually more like *an expression of ardent love*.



Anger does not exist in heaven, among the angels. Instead they have zeal. Anger differs from zeal in that anger contains evil, while zeal contains good. People who are angry intend evil to the target of their anger, but people who are zealous intend good to the target of their zeal. People with zeal, then, can instantly turn kindhearted, and in what they actually do they can be good to others; but people with anger cannot. Although zeal looks the same as anger on the outside, it is completely different inside. (*Secrets of Heaven* §4164)

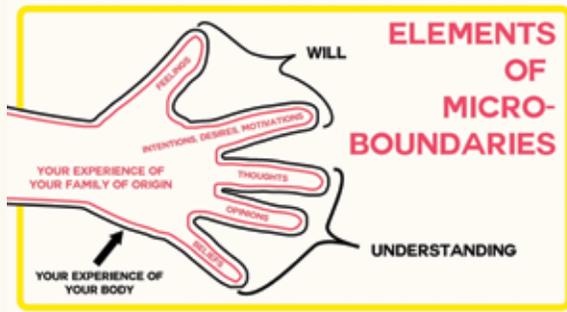
As Mark explains, zealous anger comes from a desire to protect yourself: "Anger is what comes up for you when you need to spit out something that's toxic to you, and it is toxic to you when another person deigns to think and speak as if they know what's going on inside of you."

Swedenborg also has a lot to say about this topic, especially the importance of not judging others.

But as for inward qualities, regarding the life of faith and the like, they are not to be judged. Only the Lord knows them. A thousand can appear alike outwardly, in fact speak alike, and yet be wholly unlike as to those qualities. The motives of everyone as to those qualities can never be known. To judge about them on the basis of deeds, is to be deceived. (*Spiritual Experiences* §4426)

Nobody can know or judge what is going on in the heart and mind of somebody else. We can condemn their actions if they do something wrong, but that's different from assuming we know what they are truly like inside. That's where boundaries become incredibly important.

Mark uses the hand to symbolize seven key micro-boundaries that should not be crossed: feelings, intentions/desires/motivations, thoughts, opinions, beliefs, your experience of your family of origin, and your experience of your body. In Swedenborgian terminology, feelings, intentions, desires, and motivations relate to the part of the mind called the will; thoughts, opinions, and beliefs relate to the part of the mind called the understanding.



He began to observe what happened when a micro-boundary was crossed:

When [a couple] first comes to my office and I see it happening, when I see the boundary crossed,

even if I don't see anger in the eyes—but I often do see anger in the eyes of the partner whose boundaries have just been crossed—I ask that person, “What are you feeling right now?” And invariably, they say, “Angry.” And then I ask, “Do you know why?” And invariably, they do not know.

He also observed that sometimes we project our own state of mind onto the other person. This means we could be missing the other person entirely and instead just seeing ourselves. “I would venture to guess that 90 percent of all the judgments that we make about other people are judgments we've made about ourselves and we're just putting out there on other people.”

INTIMACY/AUTONOMY DYNAMICS

Any relationship has a conflict between our love for freedom and our need for intimacy. Swedenborg writes about this often in the context of our relationship with God. On the path to spiritual growth, God gives us the freedom to choose whether to do right or wrong, but his goal is for us to always be more closely united with him so that we can experience heaven inside ourselves.

It follows that the goal is for us to have a clearer sense of our identity and yet to be more clearly aware that we belong to the Lord . . .
(*Divine Providence* §45)

Both intimacy and freedom are necessary in a relationship, whether it's spiritual or interpersonal. But as we grow closer to someone else, our free will becomes threatened. Mark observes that one of the functions of zealous anger is self-protection—keeping people from trying to occupy the same spiritual space or control us.

OK, we just said a lot about the fact that we can't truly know someone else's inner self. But what if someone crosses a micro-boundary by making a statement about our inner self—and what they're saying is right? Mark points out that we'll often react even more negatively if someone guesses

our internal state correctly, because that can feel like an attempt to control our thoughts or feelings. Swedenborg explains:

What is inside us resists compulsion from the outside so definitely that it turns the other way. This is because our inner nature wants to be in freedom and loves its freedom. As I have already explained . . . freedom is a matter of our love or our life; so when something free feels that it is being controlled, it withdraws into itself, so to speak, and turns in the opposite direction. It looks at the compulsion as an enemy. The love that is the substance of our life is irritated, which makes us think that we are not in control of ourselves and that we are therefore not living our own life. (*Divine Providence* §136:3)

The power struggle over who has the right to name an internal state shifts any conversation away from its topic. It's so important that we maintain control over our internal states; any threat to that control earns a visceral reaction.



So how can we be sensitive to spiritual boundaries? The best way to stop someone from judging your internal state or judging someone else's is to speak about it openly with each other—and respect what the other person says. •

VIEWER COMMENTS

“I see anger management as a vital part of finding charity, sanity, and happiness. No one should have the power to upset me, but this takes much time to perfect. The concept of micro-boundaries is a great tool to understand how to stay calm in times of stress, turmoil, or people willfully pushing my buttons.” —Thomas

“This will change my life, truly. Thank you so much.” —Nick

“I think this is the best, most practical *Swedenborg and Life* episode to date. Awesome!” —Treasured Locks

“All action comes out of love. You want to know why someone is doing something? Look to the love behind it.” —Rienk

From Our Blog: Spiritual Consequences of the Presidential Election

By Jenny Caughman

People have long said that if you want to avoid problematic discussions, don't talk about politics and religion. These are deeply personal convictions around which people typically have a very low tolerance for disagreement. In the midst of what has been described as one of the ugliest, lowest political rivalries in US history, this may in fact be changing. The 2016 presidential election showed us that while people still hold fast to their convictions, instead of avoiding disagreements there seems to be a greater willingness or even desire to highlight differences, often in a judgmental, derogatory tone. This has resulted in a very negatively charged atmosphere. I have found that adopting a spiritual understanding of our current political climate has led me to a better, more positive perspective regarding the election. In addition, I have been forced to look at the ramifications of this election on my spiritual formation.

THE RELATION OF OUR INNER AND OUTER SELVES

Swedenborg explains that we have two parts of ourselves, our inner self and our outer self. We might typically think of this in terms of the inner referring to our thoughts and feelings and the outer referring to our body and our words and actions. And while this is true, Swedenborg adds that this is the most surface understanding and thus is somewhat limited. In the course of trying to better understand ourselves, our purpose here on earth, and how we can live more loving and peaceful lives, it is important to take this inner/outer concept to a deeper level:

It is recognized in the world that we have an earthly self and a spiritual self, or an outer and an inner self. It is not recognized that the earthly self becomes spiritual by the opening of a higher level within, and that this opening is accomplished by a spiritual life, a life in accord with divine precepts, and that unless we live by these precepts, we remain centered on the physical world. (*Divine Love and Wisdom* §248)

Throughout our lives, we are faced with choices that are grounded in what is most important to us. We protect and care for our earthly selves—be that our physical wellbeing, our reputations, our pride, etc.—but we can

also act in a way that is based on a love of God, choosing to strive to care for others, which is an expression of our spiritual selves. If we are motivated strictly out of love for our earthly selves, we close off to our spiritual selves and to God's influence. In the process, we open ourselves up for misery, for this can be a hellish existence. This movement toward love of self is, I believe, what we are predominantly seeing in the political arena right now, and it is dragging most of us along. We are in the midst of a political climate that is unabashedly mean-spirited and self-serving, one that has lost sight of the bigger picture: the importance of morality, integrity, and civic duty—of the greater good.

FALSE (SPIRITUAL) ASSUMPTIONS

When discussing our inner and outer selves in his book *New Jerusalem*, Swedenborg describes some false beliefs that are common among people whose sole focus on their earthly selves to the detriment of their inner, spiritual selves prevents them from receiving the truths that come from heaven. Too often during this political season, I have seen evidence of this. Some of these false beliefs that are perhaps subtly shaping our political discussions include:

- . The soul is simply something that is barely alive, that is purely ethereal, and of which we can have no concept. (Our soul is that which loves. What are we seeing loved in politics right now: God and neighbor or self and power?)
- . It is only the body that feels, sees, and hears. (How much attention is being given to our higher self, that which is concerned about the wellbeing of all people?)

- . We are just like animals except that we can say what we are thinking. (The ability to rise above our base, selfish desires and be open to wisdom, which embodies love of God and neighbor, is what distinguishes us from animals. We don't seem to be seeing much of this in our political debates.)
- . Nature is all there is—it came first and is the source of everything. Spiritual reality does not exist; or if it does exist, it is just a purer aspect of and dependent upon earthly reality. (These two beliefs deny the existence of God, the value and influence of God's love, and the higher importance of caring for others. By doing so, they rationalize the exploitation of the earth and other people.)
- . It would be impossible for us to enjoy any sense of blessedness if we were deprived of the gratifications that come from loving glory, high rank, and profit. (This is what we believe when we focus on external, cultural norms. It is these norms that are creating such an unpleasant, dangerous political climate. In reality, blessedness is found in loving others.)
- . Conscience is nothing but a feeling of distress caused by physical weakness or lack of success. (Our conscience is one of the places where our inner and outer selves converge. It is to our benefit to listen to our conscience.)
- . God has no influence in the world; everything depends on our own prudence—our personal influence—and intelligence. (As all that is good and true comes from God, the way to improve the world is to work in partnership with God. The world would benefit from our opening up to receive some of God's wisdom and compassion.)

TRANSCENDING THE UGLY FRAY

Swedenborg tells us that as we grow from being self-absorbed to opening ourselves up to the inflow of divine love and wisdom, we grow spiritually:

When we do abstain from our evils by the Lord's agency, then, our love for evil and its warmth are put aside and a love for what is good, with its warmth, is brought in in its place, enabling a higher level to be opened. The Lord actually flows in from above and opens it and unites the love or spiritual warmth with wisdom or spiritual light. As a result of this union we begin to blossom spiritually like a tree in springtime. (*Divine Love and Wisdom* §246)

This moves us from being simply concerned about ourselves to caring about the good and importance of civic and moral truths and behavior. Ideally, our politicians would not be motivated by the desire for power and

reputation but instead by the opportunity to help others. But God has given us freedom, so all of us, each and every day, have a choice to either turn toward God, which is expressed in our willingness to serve the good of our neighbor, or away from God, which is expressed in the quest for power and control grounded in love of self. We seem to be primarily seeing the latter.

So now we each have choices to make. Do we join in the ugly fray, or do we strive for something better? We are seeing the dangers that come from abandoning our spiritual self, but can we avoid the temptation to do the same?

Perhaps we each can ask ourselves a few important questions:

- . Through our thoughts, attitudes, and interactions, how are we acting from a base of false beliefs and thus contributing to the atmosphere of mean-spirited ill will?
- . What can we do to instead open our hearts and minds to the knowledge and love of God in order to help move our country and our world in a wiser, more loving direction?
- . What must we do to not get swept into this ugly fray that is born out of fear and in the process not abandon our spiritual selves?

Swedenborg insists that all that is good and all that is true comes from God:

My friend, abstain from evil, and do what is good, and believe in the Lord with your whole heart and your whole soul; and the Lord will love you and give you love for what you do and faith in what you believe. Then you will do what is good because of love and you will believe because you have faith, which is confidence. And if you persevere like this, a reciprocal partnership [with the Lord] will develop and become permanent. This is salvation itself and eternal life. (*True Christianity* §484:2)

Clearly, to move in a more positive and loving direction, we must repeatedly choose to be led by God. •

Jenny Caughman, MDiv, is a Swedenborgian minister serving on the pastoral team at First United Methodist Church in Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

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As a nonprofit, independent educational organization, we use donation funds to inform and inspire the world about Swedenborg's spiritually uplifting perspectives on this life and the life hereafter.

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