The Canopy Project

IN A NUTSHELL:
The goal of the Swedenborg Foundation’s Canopy Project is to bring Emanuel Swedenborg’s thought onto the world stage by providing—on a variety of platforms—inspiring, thought-provoking spiritual content either directly from or clearly based on his works, together with links and pathways to make those works available and accessible.

The “Canopy Project” is not a separate project that sits beside other Swedenborg Foundation efforts; it is a realignment of everything we are doing, and therefore these funds might be used to boost any of the activities described on the following pages.

WE ARE SEEKING A TOTAL OF $2 MILLION OVER FIVE YEARS, OR $400,000 PER YEAR.
What we’ve done:

Two years ago, the Swedenborg Foundation launched an experiment in raising awareness of Swedenborg’s thought by focusing on producing original, inspirational content for social media outlets such as YouTube and Facebook.

Our most successful venture to date has been our weekly live YouTube series *Swedenborg and Life*. The show uses long quotations from Swedenborg’s writings as the basis of a broad, open-minded, rational conversation around a number of existential, theological, ethical, and metaphysical topics. Experts from fields as diverse as biology, philosophy, physics, and computer science are brought in as guests to bring added dimensions to the show.

The show’s audience is not only growing but increasingly engaged: Currently we have between 20,000 and 30,000 people per week watching our videos, and since the beginning of 2015 the number of minutes has been growing by an average of 20 percent every month. In April 2015 visitors spent a total of 926,664 minutes watching our YouTube videos.

However, the show is only one of our initiatives. We also reach out via Facebook (where we have over 294,000 “page
likes,” or people who follow our posts) and other social media platforms to provide daily inspiration in the form of short quotes from Swedenborg. Our website offers all of Swedenborg’s theological writings for free download—any time, to anyone in the world.

The foundation of all of these activities is the New Century Edition of the Works of Emanuel Swedenborg, an ongoing project to translate all of Swedenborg’s writings into modern, accessible English while putting his thought in the context of modern scholarship. Without this rich source material to draw from, the real power of Swedenborg’s thought would be lost in outdated, difficult-to-read translations.

**Where we’re headed:**

In the short term, additional funds would allow us to focus on expanding the reach and quality of programming on *Swedenborg and Life*, expanding our research and production team, exploring new filming venues, and recruiting more prominent guests.

Funds would also help support an accelerated pace of publication for the
New Century Edition so that we can complete the series and provide a full set of new translations for Swedenborg’s theological works.

To the extent that we can raise funds beyond what’s needed for those two initiatives, we would look to expand our online offerings in other ways, including developing new Swedenborg-related content for our website (for example, pages or even mini-sites in other languages, online study courses, and articles that help people explore his thought more deeply).

Over the long term, we hope to expand into new media and new ventures, using funds to explore online opportunities that may not even exist yet.

**WHY IS IT CALLED the Canopy Project?**

YouTube—as with many other social media networks—functions somewhat like a mature forest. Very large, very successful channels draw the majority of the attention, views, and subscribers. Their popularity has a self-reinforcing effect—YouTube’s algorithms favor successful channels, giving them leverage as “suggested videos” and placing them higher in
search results, which leads them to more popularity and even better positioning within YouTube.

These very successful channels can be compared to the trees that make up the canopy of a forest; as the biggest “trees,” they get the most light and rainwater. The Swedenborg Foundation aims to become part of that canopy. The light we are seeking is public awareness; the raindrops we are seeking are individuals with an appetite for Swedenborg’s teachings; the canopy is the place where our online media meet blue sky—where we put unique messages into the field of ideas; the roots are Swe-
WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING:

“So glad I stumbled on your videos. Never heard of Swedenborg even though I feel I have searched high and low for spiritual answers. Many things resonate with me. The biggest thing that hit me is I can get his books FOR FREE to be able to inspect his teachings. I do plan on buying his books when I can afford it. Not a single entity on earth gives away this type of valuable information. This was a huge white flag for me.”

“I requested to be added to the [Swedenborg Foundation] mailing list because I have a real thirst for Swedenborg’s teachings…. I have been watching the youtube videos from the Swedenborg Foundation and Off the Left Eye for some time now and have really found Swedenborg’s teachings to be the glue that holds the puzzle of faith together for me. Powerful stuff. I’m actually a Pastor in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). I have
been (cautiously) introducing Swedenborg’s teachings in my sermons and classes…. It went over surprisingly well. I hope to devote my life to teaching and preaching Swedenborg’s revolutionary understanding of Christianity…. This would be an asset for this region, as we are hundreds of miles from the nearest Swedenborgian community. There is a real need for his teaching here, swamped as we are by fundamentalism and literalism. …I am grateful for the great work of the Swedenborg Foundation.”

“This is funny, smart, warm, wise, and presented with a great deal of truly excellent editing and graphics. I fell down a rabbit hole of your work here and am enjoying them all so much. I was recently widowed at far too young an age and have gone from atheist to … well, far more spiritual.”

“Just 4 months before my 30th birthday, my husband was killed right in front of me … as you can imagine, my life has never been the same. Coincidentally, my sister told me (a week ago) about a book she finished
about near-death experiences. I went to YouTube and, while watching videos about near-death experiences, I came across your WONDERFUL videos. I have listened to what people have said about NDEs (about the afterlife) and I’ve watched at least a dozen Swedenborg and Life videos over the last week. Oh what a joy it has been….I can’t wait to keep watching your show, week by week, and hear about Swedenborg’s writings!”

For more information:

Swedenborg Foundation
Jonathan Rose
New Century Edition Series Editor
jsrose@digitalwave.com
267-502-4992

Morgan Beard
Operations Manager
mbeard@swedenborg.com
610-430-3222, ext. 12

www.youtube.com/user/offTheLeftEye
www.facebook.com/HeavenAndHellSwedenborg
www.swedenborg.com
Swedenborg Foundation
320 NORTH CHURCH ST.
WEST CHESTER, PA