

GEORGE DOLE and  
ROBERT KIRVEN



## A Scientist Explores Spirit

A BIOGRAPHY OF EMANUEL SWEDENBORG  
WITH KEY CONCEPTS OF HIS THEOLOGY



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George F. Dole and Robert H. Kirven

SWEDENBORG FOUNDATION  
*West Chester, Pennsylvania*

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## Contents

Illustrations	vii
<i>Swedenborg's Life and Works</i>	
A Scientist Explores Spirit	3
Ferment at Uppsala	5
Old Swedberg	9
Independent Studies Abroad	13
In Service to Charles XII	19
Swedenborg: Assessor and Statesman	23
Swedenborg: Author and Publisher	27
Scientific Works	31
More Studies Abroad	33
The Turning Point	39
Spiritual Experiences	43
Theological Writings	47
Apocalypse and Theology	51
Controversies	55
Real Religion	59
Final Journey	63
The Dilemma Resolved	65

<i>Key Concepts in Swedenborg's Theology</i>	67
God	70
Our Humanity	71
Love	72
Human Process	73
Revelation	73
Correspondence	74
Universality	75
Immortality	76
<i>Maximus Homo</i>	76
Incarnation	77
A Radical Claim	78
A Vision	78
Emanuel Swedenborg: Life Chronology	81
Notes	93
Bibliography	97
Index	103

## Illustrations

Page 2. Emanuel Swedenborg. Notes and sketch of his aircraft. Ink on paper, 1730. Tekniska Museet, Stockholm.

Page 4. Uppsala University logo.

Page 11. Unknown Artist. Swedenborg's childhood Stockholm residence.

Page 14. Cindy Lippincott. Map of Swedenborg's first trip to the Continent.

Page 26. Hoisting Machine. Engraving from Swedenborg's *Daedalus Hyperboreus*. Published by E. Swedenborg and Christopher Polhem. Stockholm, 1716. Courtesy of the Swedenborg Scientific Association.

Page 30. Johann-Martin Bernigeroth. Emanuel Swedenborg. Engraving, 1734.

Page 45. Unknown artist. Swedenborg's summerhouse. Pen and ink, 20th century.





SWEDENBORG'S LIFE AND WORKS





## A Scientist Explores Spirit

ON MARCH 25, 1744, Emanuel Swedenborg recorded a dream from the previous night in his diary:

[I] stood behind a machine that was set in motion by a wheel; the spokes entangled me more and more and carried me up so that it was impossible to escape; wakened.<sup>1</sup>

He was fifty-six years old at the time, and in his waking hours he was in fact deeply enmeshed in detailed research and writing on the subject of human anatomy in an effort to identify the seat of the soul. Undeniably a brilliant and successful man, he was engaged in an immense and complex task, but the dream suggests that he was beginning to feel trapped by his own intellectual prowess. Events would soon reveal that he was on the verge of a profound and far-reaching change that would indeed “carry him up” into adventures in levels of knowledge and understanding he could not foresee even by contemplating his remarkable dreams. Since his student days at Uppsala University, he had been entranced by the mechanistic view of the universe offered by Descartes and Newton—so entranced that his writings revealed little trace of the intensely personal religion of his childhood. Now he

was beginning to recognize that loss and to wrestle with its implications. The question he faced can be simply stated: to maintain the religious faith he treasured, did he have to give up the scientific intellect he also treasured?

In this respect, he was a particularly intense embodiment of his culture. He had grown up at a time when religion's dominance in the world of thought was beginning to be challenged by science. The struggle was borne in on him by prominent players in the changes that marked the era. The dream may well reflect his years as assistant to Christopher Polhem, then Sweden's greatest engineer; his close association with John Flamsteed, one of England's greatest astronomers; and his visits with many of the best known researchers and mathematicians in England and on the Continent. But the two strongest influences during the first third of his life were arguably his father, Jesper Swedberg, and his school, Uppsala University.



## UPPSALA UNIVERSITET

*Uppsala University Motto: Gratiae veritas naturae (Truth through mercy and nature). Established: 1477. During Emanuel's childhood, his father, Jesper Swedberg, was dean of the Cathedral and professor of theology at Uppsala University.*

## Ferment at Uppsala

TO APPRECIATE THE CULTURAL influence and political climate of Sweden when Swedenborg was a youth, we need to understand that at the time of his birth in 1688, the Swedish empire included all the major ports ringing the Baltic Sea—parts of modern Finland, Latvia, Poland, Denmark, and Germany. During Swedenborg's young adulthood, Charles XII would first extend these boundaries by hundreds of miles, and then lose all he had gained and more, plunging the country into crisis and bringing about a decisive rejection of absolute monarchy.

The wave of intellectual excitement that became known as the Enlightenment was spreading to Sweden from Germany and England. For a quarter century before Emanuel's birth, the academic and religious communities of Uppsala had been involved in a heated argument: one side wanted to allow "Cartesianism"—the freedom of inquiry championed by the philosopher Descartes, who had visited Sweden shortly before his death there in 1650, while the other strove to maintain the old ways of teaching only what was approved by the church. In 1689, before Emanuel was two, Charles XI decreed that while the church tradition should continue to be the supreme authority for the theology faculty, all

other departments of the university should be permitted complete freedom of inquiry. Excitement ran high.

While Emanuel was at Uppsala, Hebrew was introduced to the curriculum, and students were suddenly exposed to the vast world of rabbinical scholarship. It was taught by Johan Kemper, a converted Jew and Kabbalist, who shared with many Jews and Christians a sense that the millennium was at hand; in fact he had turned to Jesus as the Messiah after having been disappointed in a contemporary Jewish claimant to the title. Elsewhere in the middle of the seventeenth century, Oliver Cromwell and the British parliament had encouraged the immigration of Jews into England for the explicit purpose of meeting one of the preconditions for the coming of the Messiah—helping the Jews to scatter to all the ends of the earth!

In that intellectual climate, scientific inquiry was high adventure. A younger contemporary, Carl Linnaeus, would do definitive botanical work in the first comprehensive classification of plants. In the same atmosphere, one of the most eminent professors, Olof Rudbeck, could (1) teach mechanics in order to modernize the mining industry and (2) write a massive work tracing the Swedes back through the Goths to the inhabitants of Atlantis, proving their superiority to all other nations and their manifest right to rule the Continent.

Rudbeck, professor of medicine and botany at Uppsala and an early champion of Cartesianism, was a friend of the Swedberg family. In a great fire that raged through Uppsala in 1702, he is credited with directing students who saved most of the books in the university library and many of Jesper Swedberg's books as well. It

was presumably his son and namesake who instilled a deep interest in botany and anatomy in two of his most famous students—Swedberg and Linnaeus—and also guided them to a fascination with what today would be called comparative religions, including the religious symbols of antiquity and Lappish shamanism. From Rudbeck also may have come the passion for grand, overarching systems that both men followed so productively.

The royal decree of April 17, 1689, was obeyed in practice at Uppsala, but continued to be the subject of vigorous theoretical debate. In these arguments between Cartesianism and “Aristotelianism” (a popular code word for Lutheran conservatism), one of the most articulate Cartesians was the university librarian, Erik Benzelius. Jesper Swedberg was an equally passionate spokesman for the Aristotelian view. Emanuel’s older sister, Anna, married Erik Benzelius in 1703, and when Jesper left Uppsala that summer to take up his duties as Bishop of Skara, Emanuel lived with Erik and Anna for his remaining years at the university. At school and at home, he formed such a close relationship with Benzelius that he loved and revered him “as a father.”<sup>2</sup> For much of his life, he continued to wrestle with the tension between the scientific approach to life espoused by his second father and the obedience to faith championed by his birth father.

The Enlightenment had not filtered down far enough to challenge what we would now see as widespread popular superstition. Angelic and demonic presences were facts of life, confirmed by tales of miraculous happenings. In the household of Emanuel’s childhood, and in his father’s sermons, these were taken as wholly consonant with a Christian faith, indeed as essential to it.



Imagine an intense intellect plunged into the midst of this ferment: nothing is more important than the Christian faith and the Bible that reveals it; nothing is more exciting than the empirical investigation of the physical world. In such a context, sudden shifts of focus are natural. The unexpected is to be expected.

The mature Swedenborg would amply fulfill this expectation, but we have no record of big surprises during Emanuel's student days. He entered the university at eleven—not especially remarkable at the time, particularly for gifted students with important family connections. His father and his prospective brother-in-law were ideally placed: he also had ancestral ties to the same great mining corporation that supported a number of boys from his part of the country. He was surely as much a part of Sweden's industrial, economic, and intellectual establishment as any of his classmates. Also, he had advantages like pre-admission tutoring from an older cousin, Johan Moraeus. Trained as a pharmacist and soon to study medicine in Paris, Moraeus provided exemplary guidance for young Emanuel's interest in science.

## Old Swedberg

JESPER SWEDBERG WAS THIRTY-FOUR and a chaplain to the court of King Charles XI when Emanuel was born; he died, a doctor of theology and the bishop of Skara, when Emanuel was forty-seven. Jesper and his older brother Peter were the first generation of the family to bear a family name instead of a traditional Swedish patronym: Jesper's father, a wealthy mine owner, was Daniel Isaacsson, his father was Isaac Nilsson, and his was Nils Ottesson, and so on. When Daniel Isaacsson chose a family name for his sons, he called them "Swedberg," perhaps because the family farm and homestead near the Great Copper Mountain mine at Falun was called Sveden (*Svedens Gard*, or "burned farm," cleared by fire from the surrounding forest).

Emanuel was born in Stockholm on January 29, 1688, the third of nine children of Jesper and Sara (Behm) Swedberg. He was the second son, but his older brother, Albert, died when Emanuel was eight, leaving him the eldest surviving male of his generation. Two of his sisters—Anna, two years older, and Hedwig, two years younger—remained especially close to him, each providing a home for him at different periods of his life. A younger brother,

Daniel, died when Emanuel was only three; and the next brother, Eliezer, died when Emanuel was twenty-eight. A sister Katharina and brother Jesper both lived for seventy-seven years but died before Swedenborg. Emanuel was survived by only his youngest sister, Margaretha. The birth dates of all the Swedberg children were recorded according to the Julian calendar, which was used in Sweden until 1740. If the Gregorian calendar, in use throughout the world today, were retrojected to that time, the dates would be 11 days later: Emanuel's birthday would be February 9.

Emanuel's baptism took place in the small Jakobs Kyrka in Stockholm on February 2, 1688, the same day that Princess Ulrika Eleonora, a future queen of Sweden, also received the church's baptism.

Jesper served as a court chaplain in Stockholm during the first four years of Emanuel's life. The chancel of the Royal Chapel offered a magnificent pulpit for an impassioned preacher, and Jesper Swedberg used it so well that Charles XI once warned him he had many enemies—to which Jesper replied, "A servant of the Lord is not good for much, if he has no enemies."<sup>3</sup>

The future bishop apparently had no fear of making enemies. He took strong, unpopular stands on a host of issues, ranging from opposition to elaborate hairstyles for women, to writing and publishing a hymnal that his fellow clergy refused to adopt. He taught his children that spirits in the room observed every word and action. He particularly stressed the conviction (generally called "Pietism") that living a Christian life is more important than the more orthodox Lutheran virtue of doctrinal faith—"brain faith," according to Jesper. He is said to have read at the



*Swedenborg's childhood Stockholm residence.*

dinner table every night from Johann Arndt's *True Christianity*, a large work often called "the bible of Pietism."

When Emanuel was four years old, Charles XI appointed Jesper to the faculty of the University of Uppsala as professor of theology. That had become a sensitive position, since disputes continued to rage between the theological faculty and all the others. Unable to challenge Charles's decree, Aristotelians and Cartesians continued trying to convince each other regarding the appropriate principle for supreme academic authority.

Two years later, Jesper was given the additional post of rector of Uppsala Cathedral. The frequent academic and theological discussions in his home led Emanuel in later years to recall this as a time when he "was constantly engaged in thoughts on God, salvation, and the spiritual sufferings of men."<sup>4</sup>

He also remembered that, from age twelve (as a university student), he started to "delight in conversing with clergymen about faith,"<sup>5</sup> and experimented with hypoventilation or minimal breathing, which he would later observe as characteristic of his states of intense concentration.<sup>6</sup>

In 1696, Emanuel's eighth year, both his mother and older brother died from a fever. About a year later, Jesper married again, this time to Sara Bergia, daughter of another wealthy miner. It was less than six years after his second marriage that he moved to Brunsbo, leaving Emanuel in Uppsala with Anna and Erik. Although Emanuel lived with his stepmother for little more than five years before she moved to Brunsbo, he appears to have become her favorite among her six stepchildren.

During the thirty-three years that Jesper lived in Brunsbo, Emanuel visited his father often. On one of these visits, he installed a speaking tube to the kitchen, said to have been used for ordering coffee. Other times, he is said to have helped his father plant three or four of the great old trees that still stand around the house. Although the two may have disagreed over Emanuel's career choice,<sup>7</sup> there are many signs like this of the son's affection for his father. The affection may have been reciprocated, but we know more about Jesper's eloquence in the pulpit than about his demonstrations of personal affection.

Jesper did return to Uppsala from Brunsbo to hear Emanuel's dissertation defense in 1709. In those days, the defense was regarded as so much more important than the dissertation itself that some students hired faculty members to do the writing. Emanuel, however, wrote his own—*Selected Sentences from L. Annaeus Seneca and Publius Syrus the Mime, with notes*. If we need any evidence that he did not receive a twentieth-century education, this will surely do: mastery of classical secular literature was taken to be a good foundation for a career in the natural sciences.

## Independent Studies Abroad

SWEDEN IN 1709 OFFERED no opportunities for advanced engineering studies. Charles XII had succeeded Charles XI in 1697, and was engaged in his Russian campaign—the disastrous attempt that diminished the empire and severely depleted the treasury. The country was under attack from Denmark, and France was trying to blockade England, severely curtailing contacts with foreign countries. A series of crop failures brought the country close to famine, and bubonic plague was beginning to spread across Sweden. Neither the comfortable manse at Brunsbo nor Sweden itself offered opportunity or enticement to the young graduate. So the next summer, at age twenty-two, he sailed for England.

It proved to be a risky decision, seriously threatening Emanuel's life four times during the journey: once in a fog at sea, when his ship came so near a sand bank that "all [aboard] considered themselves lost";<sup>8</sup> again when it was boarded by French privateers who thought the ship was British, while the passengers feared the attackers were Norwegian; yet again when, mistaken for a French privateer, the ship was fired on broadside by an English warship; and once more—most seriously—in London.



*A map outlining Swedenborg's first trip to the Continent. An indefatigable traveler, Swedenborg, despite the rigors of eighteenth-century travel, made eleven trips beyond Sweden to the Continent and Great Britain.*

This last danger arose when the ship lay quarantined in the London harbor because of the plague in Sweden, and the impetuous youth accepted an invitation from Swedish friends in London to jump ship and land in spite of the quarantine. Arrested and threatened with hanging, he escaped death only by excellent recommendations, the intervention of friends, and great good luck.

London in 1710 was a world center of learning and culture, vastly larger and more cosmopolitan than any city young Swedberg had seen, offering countless opportunities for new experience and learning. This was the era of Queen Anne, the Augustan age of art and literature. The city had been rebuilt after the great fire of 1666, and St. Paul's Cathedral had just been completed. In science, London was the hub of the Newtonian revolution, a magnet for adventurous minds.

Free at last to continue his education and faced with a marvelous menu of possibilities, Emanuel proved omnivorous. By taking lodgings with craftsmen, he simultaneously lived more cheaply than in conventional rooms and learned the crafts of his hosts—watchmaking, cabinet making, brass-instrument making, and engraving. At the same time, he purchased books and equipment unavailable in Sweden to teach himself chemistry by performing the experiments developed by seventeenth-century natural philosopher Robert Boyle. He also served as a purchasing agent for his university, helping to bring its library and equipment up to date. He read Isaac Newton daily, and he sought out the company of other young scientists and mathematicians in London's coffee houses.

From London, he moved on to Greenwich and made the acquaintance of the master of the observatory there, John Flamsteed. This happened to be the period in which Flamsteed was



absorbed in the thousands of precise telescopic observations that would produce the first detailed tables of the positions of the moon. Emanuel's interest and ability led to his becoming Flamsteed's assistant, making nighttime observations and recording data. Here he began working on a method of determining longitude at sea by means of the moon and also conceived a dream he would cherish for years—of establishing an astronomical observatory in Sweden.

More than a year after his arrival in England, a second allowance of money from home enabled him to move to Oxford, where he met with the other great astronomer of the time, Sir Edmund Halley. Halley discouraged him in his longitude-finding method based on Flamsteed's tables, perhaps reflecting a professional jealousy that appears to have existed between Halley and Flamsteed.

While at Oxford, he visited the Bodleian Library and met its librarian, Dr. John Hudson, who had been corresponding with Erik Benzelius. He shifted his focus from science for while and devoted himself to the English poets, even writing some Latin poetry himself. His interests lay more with science than with literature, however, and soon led him on to the Continent.

In the Dutch city of Leiden, Emanuel studied science and scientific equipment at the university, taking special note of the magnificent observatory there. He visited the pioneering microscopist Anton van Leeuwenhoek, whose observations he often would cite later in his physiological writings. He found lodging with a lens grinder, who taught him the techniques of that trade in exchange for assistance in the laboratory. With that skill, plus the brass-instrument making he had learned in London, he made for himself (or had made under his personal direction) a microscope

modeled after an instrument he had seen in van Leeuwenhoek's laboratory—except that van Leeuwenhoek's was 20-power, and Swedberg's 42-power. The microscope was a much-prized treasure: earlier, in London, he had written to Benzelius that he had looked at one for sale, which "I would have bought . . . if the price had not been so much higher than I could venture to pay."<sup>9</sup>

From Leiden, he traveled to Utrecht, where leaders were gathered for the 1712 peace congress, which eventually settled a number of small wars (including the one that Emanuel had sailed through in 1710) and brought peace to western Europe. Here we find the first clear evidence of political interests that would inform a significant part of his later life. He met with ambassadors from Sweden and other countries, such as England's Bishop John Robinson. Moving next to Paris, he met with the leading French scientists of the time and visited Versailles, admiring the beauty of the marble statues in the magnificent palace gardens.

When he headed homeward after four years, he paused for several months in Rostock (then a Swedish possession on the southern coast of the Baltic Sea; today it is a city in Germany) to gather his notes and drawings into something he could show for his travels. Although most of his studies on the trip had been in chemistry, astronomy, mathematics, and poetry, he did have a notebook filled with mechanical inventions. There were fourteen items in all, several of them devices to ease the work of Swedish laborers. Many were inventions for use in mining, reflecting the influence of his teacher Rudbeck and the mining interests of the Swedbergs, Behms, and Bergias. There were mechanical hoists to make work safer for the miners, and other engineering devices to improve the efficiency of Sweden's major industry.<sup>10</sup> Other inventions were

more theoretical—impressive examples of a contemporary fashion among inventors, such as a machine to fly in the air.<sup>11</sup>

The airplane was especially noteworthy. Its fixed wing with a true airfoil, the cockpit for a pilot, and the landing gear were all firsts in aircraft design. The young inventor had calculated accurately the wing surface necessary to support the craft, and recognized the need for invention of an adequate source of motive power. He also recognized the gap between a design based on theory and a machine that would work, warning that “when the first trials are to be made, you may have to pay for the experience and must not mind an arm or a leg.”<sup>12</sup>

In November 1714, Charles XII ended his Russian campaign by escaping from a Turkish prison and completing a heroic march of 1,250 miles in fifteen days to come to the defense of the Swedish outpost Stralsund on the south coast of the Baltic, east of Rostock. Emanuel wrote an ode in celebration of the event, *Festivus Applausus in Caroli XII . . . Adventum*, with some remarkably ingenious interpretations of his monarch’s failures in appropriately oratorical Latin. Then he set sail for home.

## In Service to Charles XII

BACK IN SWEDEN, YOUNG SWEDBERG spent his first six months living with his father and stepmother at one of the family estates: Starbo, in central Sweden west of Uppsala. He had completed university studies and a European sojourn, requisites for a well-educated Swede. Now, what could he do with his knowledge and abilities? Of his many dreams, only one came to fruition. This was Sweden's first scientific journal, which he named *Daedalus Hyperboreus* ("Northern Daedalus") after Greek mythology's father of inventors—the first human to fly. He prepared the first issue in Starbo, and after a Christmas vacation with Erik Benzelius joined Christopher Polhem and his family at Stjärnsund in January 1716.

Polhem soon became another important figure in his life. He was Emanuel's senior by twenty-seven years, and was already known as Sweden's most famous inventor, attracting visitors and students from Sweden and Europe. Emanuel had hoped to join Polhem as an apprentice on his graduation from Uppsala, but the opportunity to visit England had come first. Twenty-eight years old now, with five years' study abroad under famous teachers and a notebook full of inventions, he could join Polhem more as an assistant than as an apprentice.

The great inventor was pleased with the new journal (nearly every issue of which featured a Polhem invention), and delighted with his new assistant. He involved Emanuel in his work and soon offered him the hand of his oldest daughter Maria. Emanuel, however, preferred Maria's younger sister Emerentia and employed what he called "some intrigues" to avoid marrying Maria while keeping himself in everyone's good graces. But Emerentia refused him, desiring to marry another. Though deeply disappointed (Emerentia was brilliant and capable as well as beautiful: after her father's death, she assumed management of the forge at Stjärnsund), Emanuel continued working for Polhem.

Meanwhile, King Charles XII had commissioned Polhem to build a drydock projected as one of the greatest in Europe. The dock was to be at Karlskrona on the southern tip of the Swedish peninsula. On his way there, Polhem visited the king at Lund, where Charles had set up a temporary headquarters in preparation for an attack on Norway, and introduced his assistant, Swedberg. Emanuel had held a low opinion of Charles, but took an immediate personal liking to him when they actually met. The king had abundant charm and a lively and inquiring mind, and the two had many long conversations about science and mathematics. Although Charles took little interest in *A New Method of Finding the Longitudes of Places, on Land, or at Sea by Lunar Observations*, which Emanuel was working on at this time and published in 1718, he admired Swedberg's *Daedalus Hyperboreus*, and a textbook in geometry written by Polhem, which Swedberg had published.

At Polhem's request, the king rewarded Swedberg with an appointment to a government position. Emanuel chose a post as

special assessor (unpaid member) on Sweden's Board of Mines. Though this irregular appointment would not be translated into a salaried job for many years, the post was a natural one. The Swedberg family owned shares in the Falun Mine, one of Sweden's largest sources of copper. The Stora Kopparberg (Great Copper Mountain Mining Company), operator of the Falun Mine, is in fact one of the oldest corporations in the world. Long established even in the early 1700s, the corporation provided the fortunes of many of the families that formed the economic, social, and political backbone of the country. Emanuel's mother, Sara Behm Swedberg, was the daughter of Albrecht Behm, another wealthy mine owner—with an interest in Stora Kopparberg and other mines—and a member of the Board of Mines. Emanuel's stepmother, Sara Bergia, owned shares in the Stora Kopparberg as well.

Charles also engaged Polhem and Swedberg to build a canal linking Stockholm with the North Sea, thus avoiding the strait that was vulnerable to control by Denmark. The project was complicated by steep grades over rugged mountains. Eventually completed only in this century, the Göta Canal now passes within sight of an abandoned portion known as "Polhem's Sluice," which Emanuel was helping with in the summer of 1718. That summer found him occupied as well with work on the Karlskrona drydock and Sweden's first saltworks. During this period, he also devised a method by which, under his supervision, Charles's navy moved some ships fifteen miles overland to defeat the Norwegian navy defending the Norwegian stronghold of Fredrikshald.

Charles XII was laying siege to Fredrikshald in November 1718. Swedberg again had used what he called "intrigues," this time

to avoid serving in the campaign;<sup>13</sup> and he appears—for that or another reason—to have fallen somewhat out of favor with the monarch. On November 30, however, Charles's favor suddenly became irrelevant, for a bullet to the royal head abruptly ended his reign. Historians have never been sure whether the shot came from a Norwegian soldier or a Swedish assassin; but Sweden was thrown into mourning—and a search for a new ruler.

## Swedenborg: Assessor and Statesman

ON MARCH 17, 1719, the Swedish crown was bestowed on Ulrika Eleonora, younger sister of Charles XII—the princess baptized on the same day as Emanuel Swedberg. She gained the throne despite the claim of another candidate, her nephew Charles Frederick of Holstein-Gottorp, partly because she happened to be in the country at the time and partly because her husband Frederick was in the trenches when Charles died and could immediately proclaim her queen. Frederick also arrested Charles's prime minister (Baron Görtz, widely hated and later beheaded for his brutal extortion of taxes to finance Charles's campaigns). Perhaps most significantly, Ulrika was willing to renounce the absolute rule enjoyed by Charles, and agreed to govern jointly with the Council of the Realm. The following year, she would relinquish the throne to her husband (with the same constitutional limitations).

In May 1719, in a move which strengthened her position in the parliamentary House of Clergy and increased the number of her supporters in the House of Nobles, she ennobled the families of Sweden's bishops. Emanuel's name was changed from Swedberg to Swedenborg, and his life changed in other ways as well.



As the eldest male in his generation of the family, he was entitled to a seat in the Riddarhuset (House of Nobles), one of four houses of the Riksdag (Parliament), which governed the country jointly with the queen. The new nobleman took his seat immediately and remained an active and diligent member. Except when his travels for study and publication took him out of the country, Emanuel attended Riddarhuset sessions regularly for the rest of his life. Although he spoke seldom, if ever, in the House (apparently he considered himself a poor speaker because of a speech impediment), he wrote a number of papers that were published for distribution to the nobles. Many of these papers have been preserved. For the 1722–1723 Riksdag, for instance, he published five pamphlets. They dealt with currency reform, balance of trade, priorities in mining noble and base metals, developing iron production, and establishing rolling mills. His last major contribution, an extensive 1771 paper on Swedish currency written only months before his death, reprinted his 1722 currency-reform paper and added an equal amount of new text. Swedenborg's fifty-three years of service in the Riddarhuset (1719 to 1772) coincided almost exactly with Sweden's Age of Freedom, the interim between the absolute monarchy of Charles XII and the reestablishment of absolute royalty by Gustav III in a coup on August 19, 1772, six months after Swedenborg's death.

Lars Benzelstierna (born Lars Benzelius in 1680 and ennobled at the same time as Swedenborg) was the brother of Emanuel's brother-in-law, Erik Benzelius, and was manager of smelters on the estate of Swedenborg's mother, Sara Behm—the ironworks at Axmar, Starbo, and Skinnskatteberg. Benzelstierna married Swedenborg's

younger sister, Hedwig. Lars and Emanuel worked in the same office for many years, and for some of those years, Hedwig and Lars provided a home for Emanuel at Starbo, their home on Lake Barken in Dalarna.

While at Starbo in March 1720, Swedenborg learned that his stepmother, Sara Bergia, had died of pneumonia at Brunsbo on March 3. Jesper was married for the third and last time some eighteen months later to Christina Arrhusia, daughter of the dean of Falun.

Sara Bergia's will left seven heirs and five other claimants. Lars and Emanuel each received one-seventh of Sara Bergia's estate and one-fifth of half of Sara Behm's—the other half going to their aunt, Brita Behm. Emanuel and Lars bought out the other shareholders and held joint custody of Starbo, which Lars continued to manage.

The third portion of the Behm inheritance, Axmar, included the ironworks, vast forests to supply wood for the charcoal used in smelting, and a long stretch of coastline with its own harbor. The Axmar Ironworks was operated alternately by agents of Brita Behm and agents of the minor shareholders, and disputes between these agents led to a series of lawsuits by Brita against the others. Swedenborg led the negotiations with his aunt Brita, and suspected Benzelstierna of instigating the suits. When the whole affair was settled, Swedenborg was left with an adequate income for life.

After much bureaucratic maneuvering, during which Benzelstierna and two other men received salaried posts ahead of Swedenborg, Swedenborg eventually gained a permanent, salaried seat on the Board of Mines in 1724. He was to serve full-time as an active member for twenty-three years, until he retired from the board in



## Swedenborg: Author and Publisher

AFTER FIVE YEARS AT HOME, then, Swedenborg traveled again on the Continent, now pursuing studies which led to the publication of *Principles of Chemistry*. He passed through Copenhagen, open to Swedes after several years because a peace treaty was about to be signed, sailing from there to Hamburg. Continuing through the now-familiar cities of Leiden and The Hague, he visited sites where he could admire the architecture of Europe or observe the commercial and industrial methods of the different countries, such as the smelting plants in Aachen, Germany (also known as Aix-la-Chapelle). He particularly sought out mining and smelting centers, like those in Liège, Belgium, where he could enlarge his expertise in what had become his principal career interest—increasing his value to the Board of Mines.

He not only studied European methods which might be useful for the kinds of mining and smelting then practiced in Sweden, but also concentrated on industries that might be started up at home—rolling mills near Cologne, and a stamping mill at Altenberg. Since all of Sweden's metals had to be exported for finishing, European mills garnered large revenues that Swedenborg wished to keep in Sweden.

Swedenborg's plans included extensive publication, so on this trip he also took a special interest in printing. In Leipzig, Germany, he found one of the Continent's premier presses, Friedrich Hekel, to which he would return on his next trip with a manuscript in hand ready for printing.

Returning to Stockholm, Swedenborg took up his life as a nobleman, bureaucrat, and author. He worked daily at the Board of Mines, except when traveling to inspect mines or smelters—often in company with Lars Benzelstierna. Whenever the Riksdag met, he sat in the Riddarhuset writing detailed papers for the nobles and other houses of the Riksdag. Three preserved papers are *The Balance of Trade; Modest Thoughts on the Inflation and Deflation of Swedish Money*; and, for the Board of Mines, *Noble and Base Metals*. Deeply involved in his government work and his scientific manuscripts, he declined nomination to a full professorship at Uppsala—a position that became available when his old astronomy teacher, Nils Celsius, retired.

In 1724, he helped to establish a Museum of Technology in Stockholm and a Museum of Mining in Falun. Many of the early exhibits were models of inventions by his former mentor, Christopher Polhem, and some of those models—still on display—were built by Swedenborg. In 1725, he became a mentor himself, taking under his wing Erik Benzelius, Jr. (son of his brother-in-law, Erik Benzelius) whom he instructed in physics and mathematics.

During these years he courted a young woman of seventeen, Kristina Maria Steuch, daughter of the bishop of Karlstadt and descended from another bishop and three archbishops. “Stina Maja,” as she was called, is known to have had at least three suitors at the

time—Swedenborg; a Magister Arnell, preferred by her father; and Chamberlain Cedercreutz, whom she preferred. When she married Cedercreutz, Swedenborg's family pointed out another eligible and pretty prospect for marriage, but he does not appear to have courted her, or anyone else.

He did have a close friend in Elisabet Stierncrona. She was the wife of Count Gustav Fredrik Gyllenborg, who had been a friend of Swedenborg's for almost thirty years. A colleague of Emanuel in the Riddarhuset, he had advanced from being King Frederick's chamberlain to having become one of the most powerful politicians in Sweden as well as a fellow assessor on the Board of Mines. His benevolence brought him into financial troubles later, and he died in 1759 owing a substantial sum of money to Swedenborg. Elisabet had married Gyllenborg in 1729, when she was fifteen and Swedenborg was forty-one. The couple remained his close friends throughout the count's life, often visiting him in the home he later purchased on the street called Hornsgatan. Swedenborg's friendship with Elisabet continued until her death in 1769.

In 1728, his sister Hedwig died, and he moved into an apartment at 7 Stora Nygatan. He hired a servant and settled into the life of a bachelor. His nephew and pupil, Erik Benzelius, Jr., lived with him for part of this time and began to follow his uncle's footsteps by studying metallurgy. Erik was eventually to join his uncles Emanuel and Lars on the Board of Mines.



*Engraving of Emanuel Swedenborg by Johann-Martin Bernigeroth, 1734. Swedenborg sat for this portrait, which was used as the frontispiece of Basic Principles of Nature.*

## Scientific Works

AFTER ELEVEN YEARS IN STOCKHOLM, during which he established himself in the Riksdag and the Board of Mines, Swedenborg completed the manuscript for his biggest work so far and traveled again in May 1733 to Germany to see it through the press. This, his third foreign trip, was the only one on which he sailed directly from Stockholm to Europe instead of traveling overland to a Swedish port closer to the Continent. He got from Stockholm to Berlin in a week, arriving in Berlin on June 2.

Then he spent June, July, and August in Dresden and Prague, putting finishing touches on his manuscript. The three-volume set was entitled *Philosophical and Mineralogical Works*, and the individual volumes were: *I. Basic Principles of Nature*, *II. On Iron and Steel*, and *III. On Copper and Brass*.

The first volume was devoted to an overarching cosmology, including both a nebular hypothesis of the formation of the solar system and a remarkable atomic theory, and setting these significantly in a kind of theological framework. The two mineralogical volumes established Swedenborg as one of the world's leading experts in mining and smelting, the area of his professional focus for



twenty-three years on Sweden's Board of Mines. The third volume of *Philosophical and Mineralogical Works* also included a picture of a fossil that had been excavated by Swedenborg from the side of Mount Kinnekulle almost twenty years earlier. Discovery of the fossil had led to the hypothesis published in his 1718 work *On the Height of Waters and Strong Tides in the Primeval World*, in which he claimed that the highest mountain in Sweden once had been under water. That work establishes Swedenborg as one of the first to publish a theory consistent with modern geology.

On September 3, 1733, he arrived in Leipzig and turned his manuscript over to the printer Friedrich Hekel. Seeing the new work through early proofs to final publication took several months, extending into 1734. During this visit, he sat for a portrait by an engraver, which was used as the frontispiece of the first volume.

That portrait, executed in Leipzig in the fall of 1733 for publication close to his birthday in 1734, shows Swedenborg at the end of his forty-fifth year. It is the picture of a man confident of himself and of his place as one the leading European philosophers of his time.

In July 1735, about a year after Emanuel's third return to Sweden (he was now well-known in Europe because of the favorable reviews in the German press of his *Philosophical and Mineralogical Works*), his father died. Jesper Swedberg had been bishop of Skara for thirty-three years, a doctor of theology for thirty years, and was widely admired and loved, despite having made many enemies with his outspoken preaching and ministry. The funeral was held in January 1736 near the town of Skara in the province of Västergötland, and his body was laid to rest at Varnhem Cloister.

## More Studies Abroad

WE ARE LEFT TO SPECULATE on Emanuel's feelings about his father's death, but we can see a significant shift of focus in his work. After two years at home—during which he published a small but adventurous work linking theoretical physics to human anatomy and sensation, *On Tremulation*—Swedenborg left for Europe again. This trip was for more than four years, so he contributed half his salary at the Board of Mines to be distributed among three fellow members who would assume his duties in his absence. Once again, he passed through Linköping to spend a few days with Erik and Anna Benzelius (Benzelius had been appointed bishop there), and then traveled through Copenhagen to Amsterdam.

He spent the summer of 1739 in Amsterdam, where he enjoyed the atmosphere of political freedom but disliked what he described as the prevalent attitude of greed among the people of this commercial and cosmopolitan country. He began what he planned to be a large work identifying the seat of the soul. This was a popular effort among philosophers of his day, but Swedenborg's approach was distinctive. He embarked on an intensive study of human anatomy, concentrating on the recent discoveries

from the dissection laboratories of Leeuwenhoek, Marcello Malpighi, Frederik Ruysch, Govard Bidloo, Raymond Vieussens, and Herman Boerhaave. Working with intense concentration, aided by the hypoventilation that he had used to help himself concentrate in early childhood, he felt assured that his thoughts were on the right track when he experienced what he called “a sign”: “. . . a certain cheering light and joyful flash . . . a certain mysterious radiation—I know not whence it springs—that darts through some sacred temple of the brain.”<sup>14</sup> The first records of these flashes of approval appear as diary entries during this visit to Amsterdam.

Not all of Swedenborg’s time was spent in writing and meditation. In the fall of 1739, he sent a table inlaid with marble home from Amsterdam, where he had watched the craftsman make it. His fascination with the process is recorded in a paper he wrote about it, published by the Swedish Royal Academy of Sciences in 1763.<sup>15</sup> The table is now in the *Kommerscollegium* (Board of Commerce) on Riddarholmen, which housed the Board of Mines for a short time after Swedenborg’s death.

During the same trip, he spent several months in Paris. He took rooms on the Rue de l’Observatoire, where he could renew acquaintances with some of the French astronomers he had worked with on his last visit, twenty-three years before—rooms just a short walk from Paris’s new School of Surgery and Dissection, where he sat in on a number of lectures. He had some experience with dissection instruments, and the possibility of new discoveries in this comparatively new field held a strong attraction for his inquiring mind, but that very attraction raised a caution flag for him. He decided to rely on the dissections of others for his new physiological work because

he anticipated that he might be inclined to give undue importance to anything that he happened to discover: he could be more objective using the published work from other laboratories.<sup>16</sup>

He left Paris and traveled to Italy, arriving in Torino in time to see the parades re-enacting the Passion scenes. Moving on through Milan to Venice, he visited the Plaza of St. Mark's at the time of the annual celebration of the marriage between the doge and the sea. His travel diaries show that everywhere he went, he visited all the best-known architectural wonders and centers of learning, such as the University of Padua. They also suggest that during this period he had finished at least the first draft of his *Economy of the Animal Kingdom* (also known as *Dynamics of the Soul's Domain*) surveying the body as the domain of the soul, and was looking ahead to a future work on the brain.

In Rome, he visited the Colosseum and all the other famous historical sites, as well as the great art galleries and the Vatican library (where his *Philosophical and Mineralogical Works* was kept on the Index of Prohibited Books). Then, journeying back through Paris to Amsterdam, he finally finished *Economy of the Animal Kingdom* and sent it to the printer.

After the press run was completed, he took some copies with him and headed for home. He spent several days in Copenhagen, studying in the libraries and accepting invitations from people of scientific or social distinction.

At this period of his life, Swedenborg moved in the highest circles of Swedish society. He was regularly present at the Riksdag when it was in session, and frequently in attendance at the royal court. Among his friends were men such as Executive Councillor

Count Anders Johan von Höpken and House of Nobles President Count Carl Gustaf Tessin.<sup>17</sup>

On December 10, 1740, Swedenborg was accepted into the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, joining Tessin, von Höpken, and Carl Linnaeus, who had been its founding members the year before. Linnaeus, often called the father of modern botany, was married in the guest house of Swedenborg's ancestral home, Sweden, to the daughter of Johan Moraeus (Swedenborg's cousin, who had tutored him as a youth). There are other indications of mutual respect and personal acquaintance between Swedenborg and Linnaeus, but no details concerning their friendship.

On July 21, 1743, Swedenborg went on his fifth trip abroad, this time to publish the first two volumes of a massive work he had planned on the *Animal Kingdom* (also known as *The Soul's Domain*), a more detailed study of the body than *Economy of the Animal Kingdom*. He had come to the painful conclusion that this latter work had been too superficial to serve his purpose, and that a much more detailed investigation of the body would be necessary to identify the seat of the soul on purely empirical grounds. *Animal Kingdom*, for which he produced first drafts of separate volumes on the brain, the nervous system, the reproductive system, and other parts and systems of the human body, marked the high point of his physiological studies. His achievements in the field of anatomy were now substantial, including the accurate identification of areas of the brain controlling specific motor functions and the discovery of the functions of the ductless glands.

For the publication of all but his smallest works, Swedenborg had to travel to the Continent, because Sweden had no printing

facilities capable of large-scale printing jobs of the quality offered by the presses Swedenborg is known to have used in Amsterdam, Leipzig, The Hague, and London. He may also have been sensitive to the fact that church authorities regularly scrutinized manuscripts for theological errors and that his deeper speculations on the nature of the human soul might well be regarded as heretical. The press he chose for *Animal Kingdom* was in The Hague.



## The Turning Point

THE SPRING OF 1744 was marked by severe emotional conflict in Swedenborg's life. To all appearances, he was highly successful. He had a secure, high-level government post, an international reputation as a scientist, and entrée to the highest social circles; but he also had a growing sense of impending crisis. He continued to work as usual, but inwardly he moved between unaccustomed exhilaration and depressing self-criticism; his nights were filled with such strange dreams that he began recording them in a travel diary. That diary, known in English as his *Journal of Dreams*, records his dreams over some twenty-one months in 1743 and 1744. The accounts are terse and candid, usually with a brief sentence stating the meaning he attached to the dream when he woke. These dreams (including the one described at the beginning of this biography) suggest a growing awareness of involvement in a great process beyond his control. His comments on them show him struggling during that winter and into spring 1744 with a sense of religious inadequacy. Among other pressures, his father's religious heritage clamored for recognition, and he took it seriously.

While the typesetting and press work for *Animal Kingdom* were in progress, he took the manuscript of his next volume to work on



while he traveled from The Hague to nearby Dutch cities. He took rooms in Amsterdam and attended Easter Sunday services there on April 6, 1744, the next day moving on to Delft. He had experienced intense inner turmoil over the Easter weekend, but during his journey on Monday, he enjoyed a wonderful feeling of bliss.<sup>18</sup>

That night, he suddenly was seized with such trembling that he fell from his bed onto the floor. There, feeling wide awake, he experienced a Christ-vision. He found himself cradled in Jesus's arms and felt that he had been divinely commissioned to a special work. Struggling after the experience with doubts of his worthiness for such a visitation, countered by a fear of sinning if he doubted his Lord, he eventually felt gifted with a comforting certainty, and fell at last into a peaceful sleep.<sup>19</sup> Before morning, he dreamed that his father came to him and, without speaking a word, tied the ribbons of his cuffs. Waking, Swedenborg wrote down all the events of the night, concluding with this dream and noting that lace cuffs were a symbol of laity: his father tying the ribbons of them symbolized for him that his father approved of him (at last) in a life outside the clergy. The dream signaled another change in him, as well: he had come to regard his father as an equal, rather than an authority.<sup>20</sup>

This vision of the Lord left him with a strong sense of commission, but apparently without a clear sense of direction. He wrote *Worship and Love of God*, a striking, poetic blend of mythology and science, but published only part of it. Perhaps he was making use of an accepted literary device to begin to communicate his newfound and growing meaning, as yet not feeling ready to "lay it on the line." There is a posthumous, third-hand report that he said of this work that "it was certainly founded on truth, but somewhat

of egotism had introduced itself, as he had made a playful use of the Latin language, on account of his having been ridiculed for the simplicity of his Latin style in later years.”<sup>21</sup>

Another theophany, in London in spring 1745, greatly clarified his understanding of his commission. Here, as he later described it to friends, he had the first of his open and conscious experiences of the spiritual world and conversations with its inhabitants, “so that I became thoroughly convinced of their reality.” Here also, the Lord appeared “in imperial purple and majestic light, seated near his bed, while he gave [Swedenborg] his commission,” and told him, in the course of about a quarter of an hour, that his specific task was to “explain to men the spiritual meaning of Scripture.”<sup>22</sup>

In his subsequent manuscripts, these two foci—spiritual experience and biblical understanding—are clearly and separately represented. A very substantial *Bible Index* shows what we would expect of a good Lutheran who had been commissioned to explain Scripture and convinced that “the Word” was the sole source of revealed truth. The *Spiritual Diary*, a faithful record of his otherworldly experiences, testifies to the impact that these encounters were having on his thought. These manuscripts were to serve as basic resources for his later writing—the man of faith and the empiricist were beginning to work hand in hand.

After the London vision, he abandoned all his studies of mathematics and physiology, and within a year resigned at half-salary from the Board of Mines (at the time he was offered a promotion from assessor to councillor).

This ended the second phase of a life that falls roughly into thirds. From his birth until the death of Charles XII, he spent

thirty-two years as a student and an engineer. Then came twenty-four years as administrator, statesman, and scientist. After a year of transition, the remaining twenty-seven years of his life were devoted primarily to an adventurous spiritual search—revelatory spiritual experiences, Bible study, and theological writing. He remained socially accessible and active in politics, however, throughout his life.

## Spiritual Experiences

RETURNING HOME FROM LONDON in 1745, Swedenborg moved from his apartment to a house he had purchased on Hornsgatan. There, when not traveling abroad, he lived and wrote for the rest of his life. Perhaps his new sense of commission made him feel more permanently settled or perhaps he felt a need for greater privacy during his spiritual experiences, which were occurring every day and sometimes lasted for hours. In any case, he gave every sign of settling in. He planted an herb garden. He built a summer house connected to a library room where he could work in surroundings more pleasant than the dark, crowded rooms necessitated by Swedish winters. Within the summer house he had a chamber organ built that he used for meditative playing.

The *Bible Index* begun then led to a commentary on the five books of Moses (Genesis–Deuteronomy), Isaiah, and fifty of the fifty-two chapters of Jeremiah, a work later called *The Word Explained*. Evidently he intended to write a commentary on the entire Bible, but after completing several codices of manuscript (nine volumes in English translation) he left the work unfinished.

There is some evidence that the extensive *Spiritual Diary*, also begun in 1745, originally was intended for publication; but

the format of the manuscript is not up to his usual standard for submission to a printer, and his notes to himself indicate that he had in mind considerable editorial work. He eventually indexed it, and drew on it quite freely for other works.

While Swedenborg's spiritual experiences and his understanding of the Bible are in fact closely related and mutually supportive, these two foci of attention remained distinguishable. We can see Swedenborg immediately after his call following two related but quite distinct tracks, and devoting a good deal of time and energy to each.

The new kind of information he was gaining from his spiritual experiences began leading him to a new conception of reality. Eventually, his new understanding would treat knowledge from spiritual and natural experience as fully compatible, encompassing not only these two tracks, but also his father's faith and Uppsala's science, in one coherent whole.

At this point, however, scripture exegesis came to the fore, as might be expected from his understanding of his commission. The years 1749–1756 saw the publication in London of the eight folio volumes of *Secrets of Heaven (Arcana Coelestia)*, a commentary on the books of Genesis and Exodus. The spiritual meaning “unfolded” in this massive work deals with three primary themes: the interaction of the divine and the human in the life of Jesus; the checkered history of the spiritual states of humanity; and to some extent issues of spiritual growth in individuals. Perhaps the clearest indication of his initial intent appears in the beginning of his printer's advertisement: “This work is intended to be such an exposition of the whole Bible, as was never attempted in any language.”

He did not ignore his spiritual experiences, though. Between chapters, he inserted a serial description of the spiritual world based on what he had seen and heard. His spiritual experiences were too intimately connected to his understanding of Scripture to be ignored. As the work progressed, he began to use this “interchapter” space for more systematic explanation of theological themes. This first work uses his three primary modes of presentation—scriptural interpretation, narration, and doctrinal exposition.

Throughout the work—as throughout all his theological works—he took pains to assure the reader that what he wrote was not the figment of imagination or devisings of his own brain. The spiritual experiences were real and coherent, and the doctrines were given him “not from any angel, but from the Lord.”<sup>23</sup> He was no mere secretary, since he saw his extensive scientific development as preparation for this commission; but the essential message he was delivering was God’s gift and not his own achievement.



*Swedenborg enjoyed working in this little summer house.*



## Theological Writings

AT THIS POINT, SWEDENBORG was faced with a decision. In dealing with Genesis, he had covered, at least in outline, the whole course of the Lord's glorification (his term for the process by which God became human and this human became the Risen Lord or Divine-Human); in dealing with Exodus he had dealt with much of the history of religion. It is hard to imagine how he could have kept on the same course much longer; the deciding factor may have been that *Secrets of Heaven* was not selling well, even at substantially subsidized prices and with publication of an English translation of the second volume. The message was not getting out.

Whatever the reason, Swedenborg completed his treatment of Exodus and stopped the work without any appropriate conclusion. He then turned to other forms of presentation. Two years after the publication of the last volume of *Secrets of Heaven*, no fewer than five separate works were written and published, drawing heavily on *Secrets of Heaven*. *White Horse* is a treatise on the nature of the Word, with copious references to *Secrets of Heaven*. *New Jerusalem* is a kind of theological glossary, with extensive references to *Secrets of Heaven* appended to each brief chapter. *Other Planets* is a description of the inhabitants of other planets, lightly edited from



*Secrets of Heaven's* interchapter material, while *Heaven and Hell* is an expanded treatment of subjects introduced in the same way. *Last Judgment*, though drawing on themes introduced in *Secrets of Heaven*, was the only one of the five volumes that was primarily new material.

Three works also rest heavily on Swedenborg's spiritual experiences. Material that was secondary in *Secrets of Heaven* now takes center stage for a while. The former two works (*White Horse* and *New Jerusalem*) show a clear theological orientation. Material that was scattered through the exegesis of Genesis and Exodus is now gathered together in topical arrangement (the same concern for topical rather than scriptural ordering is of course represented in Swedenborg's two indices to *Secrets of Heaven*). The three modes of presentation have emerged in separate works.

These five works are far smaller, and their substance is far more accessible than *Secrets of Heaven*. *Heaven and Hell*, written to "dispel disbelief" in our spiritual natures and our immortality, has proved to be the most popular of Swedenborg's works, and both *Other Planets* and *Last Judgment* appealed in subject and title to contemporary interests. It is difficult not to believe that the commercial failure of *Secrets of Heaven* was a factor in this change of approach. Swedenborg did, after all, want his works to be read.

*Last Judgment* also had a unique motive for publication—the opportunity to report its actual occurrence! The work dealt, indeed, with the Last Judgment foretold in the book of Revelation, but described it as a historical event that Swedenborg had witnessed in his spiritual experiences during the year 1757. He saw it as the end of the Christian church as a living institution, paving

the way for the Lord's Second Coming prophesied in the Gospels, and the establishment of a new church in the world. In this view, the scriptural descriptions should not be taken as literal prophecies of the destruction of the physical world, but as symbolic descriptions of the end of a thought-world. Some two centuries before it became intellectually fashionable, Swedenborg announced the beginning of the post-Christian era!

To publish these five works, Swedenborg left for England on his seventh trip abroad in the summer of 1758. On the way home in July 1759, he landed at Göteborg on Sweden's west coast, some three hundred miles from Stockholm. An event there attracted the attention of all Sweden and much of Europe.

On the night of July 19 he was entertained at dinner in the home of William Castel, a prominent Göteborg merchant. During the meal he became very agitated, leaving the table several times. He told the dinner guests that a great fire was raging in Stockholm at that very moment, and each time he returned to the table he described the progress of the blaze, eventually relating with great relief how the fire had been stopped close to his house without damaging it. Within a few days, a ship from Stockholm brought news of the fire, exactly coinciding with Swedenborg's description. Word of his clairvoyance began circulating throughout the country.

Queen Louisa Ulrika heard the story, and she talked to him about it in a private audience. She asked him if he could contact her brother, the recently deceased Prince Augustus Wilhelm of Prussia, and Swedenborg agreed to try. A few days later, he came to the court, requesting another private audience. After he spoke a few words to her, the queen appeared shocked, and exclaimed,

“This no mortal could have told me!”<sup>24</sup> The stories of the Stockholm fire, the queen’s secret, and another concerning a lost receipt reached the Continent, and were described in 1763 by Immanuel Kant in a letter to a patroness, Charlotte von Knobloch. In response to her inquiry, Kant had done some research into Swedenborg’s character, and gave an essentially favorable report, which was widely circulated.

## Apocalypse and Theology

AS SOON AS THE five smaller works were off the press, Swedenborg turned back to Scripture. Abandoning any thought of writing a commentary on the entire Bible, he turned from Genesis and Exodus to the last book, Revelation, also known as the Apocalypse, and began writing *Apocalypse Explained* (also known as *Revelation Explained*). He got about halfway through the nineteenth chapter out of twenty-two and then laid it aside. It is a major work, comprising six substantial volumes in English translation; and various opinions have been advanced as to his reasons for dropping it.<sup>25</sup>

The main reason can perhaps be seen in the nature of the work itself. Through much of it, Swedenborg stuck quite close to his exegetical program, though more discursively than in *Secrets of Heaven*. Early in his treatment of Revelation 15, however, he began to attend to another task. Whereas in *Secrets of Heaven* he had inserted material between chapters, he now appended material to each numbered paragraph. This “secondary” material, which he called “continuations,” gradually grew in scope, and the exegetical material became more and more cursory. The scriptural focus was being replaced, this time not by an experiential focus, but by one on topical or systematic theology.

The result is awkward. Suppose you are involved in reading two books concurrently. It is one thing to read a chapter of one and then a chapter of the other, along the model of *Secrets of Heaven*. It is quite another thing to read a paragraph of one and then a paragraph of the other. Consecutive reading toward the close of *Apocalypse Explained* becomes increasingly difficult for the same reason. Perhaps we need look no further for Swedenborg's reason for laying the work aside.

By this time, Swedenborg was known not only for his philosophical and mining publications and his telepathic powers, but also for his theological writings. Count Gustaf Bonde, a senator and past president of the Board of Mines, now chancellor of the University of Uppsala, had discovered the preceding January that Swedenborg was the author of *Secrets of Heaven*, which had been published anonymously. Count Tessin, a friend of Count Bonde and Swedenborg, held dinner meetings of a circle of Stockholm artists and literati at his beautiful seacoast home, Svindersvik. In 1760, he invited Swedenborg to join the group, giving him an opportunity for discovering firsthand how he was being understood.

In the fall of 1760, devastating critiques of *Secrets of Heaven* and *White Horse* were published in Germany by a leading biblical scholar, Professor Johann Ernesti, who mistook Swedenborg's spiritual interpretations of the Bible for the allegorical method that was incompatible with orthodox literalism.<sup>26</sup> In the same year, another prominent theological scholar and writer, Friederich Christoph Oetinger, who had written favorably about Swedenborg's theological works, found himself under attack, and formulated an extended defense of Swedenborg—*Swedenborg and Others Compared*—that attracted wide attention.

It is estimated that Swedenborg stopped working on *Apocalypse Explained* in 1759. In 1763, he published no less than six books—the *Four Doctrines* (*The Lord, Sacred Scripture, Life, and Faith*), *A Continuation on the Last Judgment*, and *Divine Love and Wisdom*; and in 1764 he published *Divine Providence*. Much of this material is clearly foreshadowed in the “continuations” in *Apocalypse Explained*.

Now, however, there is a new dimension to the shift of focus. Swedenborg’s preface to the first of these 1763 works, *The Lord*, lists five “little works” already published, and nine more that he is to publish “by command of the Lord.” Swedenborg was reasonably obedient to this command, publishing seven of the nine works listed, and in fact covering all the topics involved. It is worth particular note that in four of them (often published in one volume, *Four Doctrines*) he is as concerned to present their biblical foundations as to explain them systematically, making a case for his teachings in terms that held particular authority for his fellow Lutherans. In sharp contrast to this, there is very little biblical material in *Divine Love and Wisdom* or *Divine Providence*. The biblical emphasis and the polemical tone of parts of *Four Doctrines* may have been in response to criticisms like those of Ernesti; but in any case, he seems deliberately to be keeping his agendas separate.

At this point, we can gain a clearer view of the process. If we put the nature of *Apocalypse Explained* together with the command to write recorded in *The Lord*, then the “continuations” can be seen as a kind of premonition of the command. They are evidence that Swedenborg was beginning to pick up a message concerning the specific direction his work should take, a direction different from the biblical one that was foremost in his consciousness.

Swedenborg apparently felt free to follow the listing of books he had been commanded to write in principle rather than in complete detail. It is also worth special note that in listing the works published “some years ago,” Swedenborg did not mention *Secrets of Heaven*—a rather substantial omission, since at that time it represented about two-thirds of his published theology. There could scarcely be a clearer indication that he regarded the 1763–64 works as being in the same “special category” as the five works published in 1758, quite distinct from his “explicit” task of scripture exegesis.

When *Divine Providence* was published in 1764, then, Swedenborg evidently felt both free and commissioned to return to the book of Revelation. The freedom is witnessed by his very single-minded and efficient exegesis. The commission may have been the quite explicit one he recorded in *Marriage Love*. At the close of an account of a spiritual experience (undated), he says, “Then I heard a voice from heaven, ‘Go into your room, close the door, and get down to the work you started on Revelation. Carry it to completion within two years.’”<sup>27</sup> A new work under a slightly revised title, *Apocalypse Revealed* (also known as *Revelation Unveiled*), was in fact published in 1766, two years after the publication of *Divine Providence*.

## Controversies

THE CRITICISM THAT MOST damaged Swedenborg's reputation was published in 1766 in Germany by Immanuel Kant under the title *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer*. In the years since Kant's 1763 letter to Fraülein von Knobloch, he had purchased and read *Secrets of Heaven* and now condemned it as "eight quarto volumes full of nonsense." Kant appears to have been deliberately ambiguous in this and many of his other critical comments. On the one hand, he called the work "nonsense," but on the other hand said that none of its data was *sense datum*! Claiming that only a madman would write things which could not be proved, Kant savagely criticizes the work with witty if occasionally crude ridicule, but includes a curious comment:

It's my bad luck that the testimony I have stumbled on . . . so uncommonly resembles my own brain child . . . However sarcastic the comparisons may turn out, I intend no joke. I want to make it as clear as I can that either there is more intelligence and truth in Swedenborg's works than a first glance will reveal, or else it is only an accident that he coincides with my system.<sup>28</sup>



Kant apparently had this “resemblance” in mind when he explained the violence of his attack in a letter to a friend, saying that he thought it better “to ridicule than to be ridiculed.” Shortly thereafter he began work on his own *Critique of Pure Reason* (finally published in 1781), setting forth ground rules for philosophy on an entirely different basis from Swedenborg’s. Self-serving as it was, his attack on Swedenborg proved so effective that for generations it was impossible for any German scholar to speak favorably of Swedenborg and be taken seriously.<sup>29</sup>

There is no indication that Swedenborg was aware of this criticism as he turned to another subject which had been on his mind for years—the spiritual dimensions of marriage. This had been given brief but distinctive treatment in the first of his published theological works, *Secrets of Heaven*, and there is a chapter on “Marriages in Heaven” in *Heaven and Hell*. In his short work *Life* he had mentioned his intent to write on the subject; and in the book he was now to publish, he spoke of a command from heaven to “write” what he had learned about marriage. On April 9, 1766, he received a letter from a friend and supporter, Dr. Gabriel Beyer of the Göteborg Consistory, expressing a wish for such a book.<sup>30</sup>

Swedenborg apparently had made one or more starts on the project, and now brought it to completion. In several respects, the resulting work broke with his established patterns. It was the first of his theological works to bear his name on its title page, even though the secret had been out for at least eight years, during which seven works had been published. When defending it against confiscation as a heretical book, he himself described it as “not a theological work, but mostly a book of morals”;<sup>31</sup> and no other work keeps such an insistent focus, in its expository sections, on

human behavior and circumstances. No other work has such a high proportion of narrative to exposition. Swedenborg chose the title “Delights of Wisdom” in preference to the “Angelic Wisdom” or “Doctrine of . . .” that appear in other titles. Further, the device of opening with an extended description of spiritual events, especially one of high whimsy, is quite without precedent in his other works.

*Marriage Love* was published in 1768. Swedenborg was then eighty years old. His age itself must have militated against undertaking another major exegetical task, and circumstances began to press him in another direction. Since the time around 1760 when his authorship of his theological works had become known, criticism of their theology began to be addressed more directly to him, and there were the beginnings of formal criticism from some quarters in the Lutheran hierarchy. Now his few followers were meeting opposition from the established church that would culminate in the dispute which began in Göteborg that fall.

Arriving in Göteborg in 1769, after his tenth European trip, he found that two influential leaders in that city—Bishop Erik Lamberg and Dean Olof Ekebom—were heading a campaign to have his books declared heretical. They succeeded in confiscating one box of *Marriage Love*, and raised charges of heresy against two of his friends and supporters seriously enough to threaten their jobs. The two friends were the Dr. Beyer already mentioned and Dr. Johan Rosen, professor of eloquence and poetry at the University of Lund. Each found himself under severe pressure to renounce Swedenborg’s teachings; but because of their own eloquent defense and support from various well-connected supporters of Swedenborg, neither was actually forced from his position.



## Real Religion

IT MAY COME AS NO surprise, then, that we find Swedenborg suddenly occupied with the study of standard Christian doctrine. His working manuscripts now deal with such topics as “Justification and Good Works,” “A Conversation with Calvin,” and “Remission of Sins.” In 1769 he directly addressed the relationship of the new theology to the old in *Survey* (also known as *A Brief Exposition of the Doctrine of the New Church*). In sharp contrast, *Soul-Body Interaction*, published in the same year, is exclusively “philosophical,” dealing with none of the issues raised at the heresy trial. This may represent another instance of his deliberately keeping his agendas—or perhaps more precisely, his audiences—separate.

It is, in a way, a short step from *Survey* to his last published work, *True Christianity*. Effectively, it responds to the hostile critique of his theology by orthodox Lutherans. Swedenborg had hitherto been concerned more to present the new theology than to defend it. He had followed the course of Scripture, he had shared his spiritual experiences, and he had dealt with specific and timely topics. He now seems convinced that he needs to address the growing opposition from orthodox Lutheranism even more directly than he had in *Secrets of Heaven* and *Four Doctrines*.

To do so, he needed to rely on authorities whom the Lutheran church regarded as valid. He compiled a notebook that was later published as *Scripture Confirmations* and documented his text with frequent quotations from the Epistles. That is noteworthy, because he had previously regarded them as non-canonical and cited them only sparingly. He also made significant and affirmative use of the traditional creeds.

Further, the work is organized around Lutheran theological constructs, following the pattern of traditional Lutheran systematic theologies more than the structure of his own thought. For example, Swedenborg's theology would not have prompted separate chapters on the three persons of the Trinity or a chapter on imputation, and presumably would have prompted chapters on heaven and hell, providence, and marriage. In short, the work seems best understood not as a final summary of his theology but as a demonstration that his theology was "truly Christian" and a proposal for the rethinking of Lutheran theology. In a way, it tries to bridge the gap between the universalizing metaphysical concepts of *Divine Love and Wisdom* and traditional Christian beliefs, which are often interpreted with a severe parochialism. Swedenborg demonstrates that the encounter with the transcendent requires a complete rethinking of orthodox concepts, not necessarily contradicting them verbally, but seeing radically new meaning in familiar words.

The attacks on Swedenborg's work and reputation through his friends eventually became so troublesome that he appealed to King Adolf Frederick, husband of the same Queen Louisa Ulrika who had been impressed by Swedenborg's clairvoyance. Swedenborg complained that Beyer and Rosen—and, indeed, his own

works—had “become, to a certain extent, martyrs, at least so far as regards the cruel persecutions by the bishop and the dean of that town . . . [through] sheer invectives, which do not contain a particle of truth.”<sup>32</sup> After one decree of condemnation, the Royal Council recommended clement treatment of the offenders, and after further appeal, the case was dropped with no official verdict.

Before the legal wheels had finished grinding, however, Swedenborg had finished the first draft of *True Christianity*, and immediately thereafter experienced perhaps the most dramatic spiritual experience of his life. Transported into spiritual realms, he tells us, he found himself a witness to a gathering of the twelve apostles who had followed the Lord on earth. He heard the Lord himself announce the establishment of a new religious era, and saw the apostles sent to bear news of it to the whole spiritual world. He witnessed this on June 19, 1770, a date he regarded as marking the beginning of new spiritual possibilities for the human race.



## Final Journey

IN JULY 1770, SWEDENBORG sailed from Sweden for the eleventh time, stopping in Copenhagen to visit with a longtime friend, General Tuxen, and proceeding to Amsterdam with his manuscript of *True Christianity* for publication.

The following August, now eighty-three years old, he returned to London. He had several good friends there: an Anglican priest, the Rev. Thomas Hartley, rector of Winwick; a physician, Dr. Husband Messiter; and a Quaker businessman, William Cookworthy. Hartley had heard of the accusations of heresy in Sweden, and had offered asylum should Swedenborg need it (although in fact, he had been in no personal danger).

Swedenborg took lodgings with a London wigmaker, Richard Shearsmith, and continued his meditations and his work on *Coronis*, an appendix to *True Christianity* that was later published in *Posthumous Theological Works*. He kept at his manuscripts, working at all hours of the day and night, and often was heard speaking aloud—apparently to the spirits who appeared in his visions. Shortly before Christmas 1771, he suffered a stroke, but within a month he had partially recovered his speech and resumed his writing.



Shearsmith's maid (who subsequently became Mrs. Shearsmith) described Swedenborg as a pleasant tenant, friendly to her. She tells how he predicted the day and time of his death, saying that "he was pleased . . . as if he were going to have a holiday."<sup>33</sup> She also reports that on Sunday, March 29, 1772, she was sitting at his bedside when he asked the time. When she told him it was five o'clock, he replied that that was good. He thanked her and blessed her, "and about ten minutes after, he heaved a gentle sigh, and expired in the most tranquil manner."<sup>34</sup>

In the latter part of his life, Swedenborg had maintained more active contact with the angels of his spiritual experiences than with the congregations and sermons of his father's church; but about a fortnight before his death, he had requested and received Holy Communion in his room from the Reverend Arvid Ferelius, pastor of the Swedish Church in London. Ferelius also conducted Swedenborg's funeral in the Swedish Church on Princes Square at four o'clock on Sunday, April 5, 1772. The service was well attended, filling the small church. The body was laid to rest under the altar. In Sweden, a eulogy was read in the Riddarhuset by Samuel Sandels, Councillor of Mines.

In 1908, when London's Swedish Church was threatened with demolition, the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences arranged to have Swedenborg's casket brought home to Sweden lying in state on the deck of the Swedish warship *Fylgia*. The ship sailed from England on April 7. On May 18, the body was laid to rest in Uppsala Cathedral, burial place of King Gustav Vasa and other Swedish monarchs. Swedenborg's sarcophagus is in a side chapel next to the tomb of Carl Linnaeus.

## The Dilemma Resolved

TO SUMMARIZE SWEDENBORG'S career as a theological writer, we begin with an individual profoundly committed both to a Lutheran view of the exclusive centrality of Scripture and to the spirit of open, empirical inquiry with its insistence that truth was everywhere to be found by the honestly inquiring mind. We find the tension between these commitments driving him to one discovery after another, each new step disclosing a further prospect. We find him encountering meaning in quite unexpected forms, particularly in direct, intense, and enlightening spiritual experience. We find a distinct tension at this level, issuing in uncertainty as to the best means of fulfilling his mission. As his two commitments blend into one, this uncertainty is resolved by a kind of alternation between exegetical, experiential, and topical presentation; and in this alternation we can see the interactive effects of his divine mandates, his own conscious judgment, his deeper sense of urgency, and his circumstances.

Three years before his death, Swedenborg responded to a request by his English friend, the Reverend Thomas Hartley, giving some biographical details of his life. After listing many of his honors, professional positions, and connections, he wrote:

But all that I have thus far related, I consider of little importance; for it is far exceeded by the circumstance, that I have been called to a holy office by the Lord Himself, who most graciously appeared to me, . . . opened my sight into the spiritual world, and enabled me to converse with spirits and angels, in which state I have continued up to the present day.<sup>35</sup>

Certainly that “circumstance” dominated the final third of his life more completely than any other influence. Nevertheless, the learning, the attitudes, and the methods of working developed over the course of the author’s first fifty-six years affected his understanding and his way of communicating his divine revelation; and acquaintance with those characteristics contributes to our understanding of his theological works.

The interplay between his early life and his later revelation can be seen with particular poignancy in a passage from *True Christianity* (paragraph 508). Describing a temple seen in heaven during one of his spiritual experiences, he wrote: “I saw written over the gate: ‘Now it is permitted’; and this meant that permission now is granted to enter with discernment into the mysteries of faith.” The searcher had reached his goal. The struggle between competing claims of faith and scientific discernment, which had engaged him for seventy years—his father and his church on one side, his “second father” and his university on the other—finally had come to resolution. Led by divine revelation, the engineer–legislator–administrator–scientist–theologian at last had found a place where science and religion were one.

KEY CONCEPTS IN SWEDENBORG'S  
THEOLOGY





IN PARAGRAPH 172 OF HIS last published work, *True Christianity*, Swedenborg wrote, “Anyone who reads the Athanasian Creed with open eyes can see that nothing less than a trinity of gods was understood by the participants in the Council of Nicea, who brought forth that creed like a stillborn infant.” Yet beginning at paragraph 55 of an earlier work, *The Lord*, he had written “that the import of the Athanasian faith is in accord with the truth, if only we understand the ‘trinity of persons’ to mean the trinity of person that exists in the Lord.” This contrast between scorn for Nicean “tritheism” and acceptance of a truth behind the formulation may serve to suggest the subtlety of the difference between Swedenborg’s theology and traditional Christian theology; and the contrast may also serve to introduce two of his key concepts as underlying the others.

In regard to the subtlety, Swedenborg was well aware of the limitations of language. If his expositions sometimes seem to proceed at a snail’s pace by reason of repetitiveness, this may be ascribed to a sense of need to carry his context with him. It bears witness also to his strong sense of the relatedness of all his concepts, to his love of detail, and to his insistence on looking at everything from all sides. Theology could not be reduced to a tidy system of dry, precisely defined terms. It had to be explored and loved and lived.

Two broad key concepts may help define the subtlety. The first is the concept of *distinguishable oneness*. For example, while the form and the substance of an object can usefully be distinguished from each other, they cannot be separated from each other in actuality. In precisely similar fashion, Swedenborg held that love, wisdom, and action can usefully be distinguished from each other, but cannot be separated from each other in actuality. This principle he extended to all of reality, insisting that nothing exists in isolation, and particularly that the Divine is essentially one in the special sense that it is wholly present everywhere and always, in an infinite number of distinguishable forms.<sup>36</sup>

The second underlying key concept that may help define the subtlety is that of the *reality of spirit*. For Swedenborg, there is nothing vague or amorphous about spirit. It is substantial, crisp, clear, and potent. Angels are in human form, with marvelously acute senses, experiencing themselves and their environment as solid. By comparison, the physical world is cloudy, ambiguous, and sluggish.<sup>37</sup>

With these basic concepts in mind, then—distinguishable oneness and the reality of spirit—we may look at some more specific concepts.

### God

God is the absolute “distinguishable One,” both within and transcending all space and all time, by nature incapable of being less than wholly present. The fundamental nature of the universe is therefore coherent at all times and in all places: the same fundamental laws apply everywhere, as indeed science assumes, either intuitively or of necessity.<sup>38</sup>

To help us grasp the nature of that infinite oneness, we may distinguish the primary features of infinite love, wisdom, and power—love being ineffective without wisdom, wisdom inert without love, and power the wholly natural result of their oneness. God is one in the essential sense that there is no conflict within the Divine: love does not bid one course of action, with wisdom counseling another. This is a qualitative monotheism, not simply a numerical one.<sup>39</sup>

Love is intrinsically personal, and God is therefore the essential and only person, the definition of the human person. There is no other source of life, which is in its essence love. We have been created not “out of nothing,” but quite literally “out of love,” since love is by nature self-giving and self-expressive. We are in that sense differentiated from the Divine but never separated (again “distinguishably one”); we are recipients of being rather than beings. We differ from each other not in the presence of the Divine within us, but in our acceptance of or receptivity to the Divine.<sup>40</sup>

### *Our Humanity*

Most of the time, however, we do not experience ourselves primarily as receptors of the Divine. We feel self-contained and self-sustaining. This appearance is God’s intentional gift of freedom and rationality, which are designed to enable us to accept the Divine willingly and which therefore are capable of being used to reject it.<sup>41</sup>

The physical world is the arena in which we choose to accept or to reject. Its ambiguity is essential to this purpose, enabling us to convince ourselves that we are self-sustaining in fact, to focus on our distinguishability to the exclusion of our oneness. If we so choose, we voluntarily forfeit the unitive power of love and wisdom



and thereby set ourselves against the fundamental nature of reality itself.<sup>42</sup> This rejection manifests itself in isolation and hostility, both internal and external. That is, we develop a delight in conflict with others, and our own loves and thoughts are in conflict with each other. Our satisfaction comes only at the expense of others, which is inherently unworkable.<sup>43</sup>

### *Love*

Swedenborg sees love as the fundamental energy and substance of all human beings, with wisdom as its means.<sup>44</sup> Ultimately, we will believe what we want (“love”) to believe and understand what we want to understand. Our purposes, rather than our knowledge, determine our character—we are our love.<sup>45</sup>

Swedenborg distinguishes a hierarchy of loves: love of God as the Lord, love of others, love of the world, and love of self. All are necessary, and when they are in this order of priority, all are good. Love of self (or of the world) becomes harmful only when it dominates the higher loves rather than serving them. In practical terms, this means that Swedenborgian theology provides no warrant for asceticism or “renunciation of the world,” but rather calls us to care for our own well-being, and values all moments of genuine joy, whether physical or spiritual.<sup>46</sup>

This affirmative stance is particularly clear in his treatment of marriage. He sees marriage as offering an opportunity for the most complete uniting of love and wisdom, so that the fully married couple is “distinguishably one” with no hint of domination by either one or the other.<sup>47</sup> As the two become more and more one, each becomes more perfectly defined—the husband more a man, the wife more a woman.

## *Human Process*

From birth, we have moments of spontaneous empathy, but the more dominant mode of our sensitivity seems to be self-sensitivity. This entails a radically distorted view of reality, giving each individual the impression of being the only one with live feelings and thoughts. Our egocentricity has an Achilles's heel that is specifically vulnerable to rationality because the thought that one is the only such being is rationally absurd.<sup>48</sup>

A further consequence of this is that our feeling and our thought—our “love” and our “wisdom”—unlike God's, are often in conflict. Sometimes, for example, we can see mentally what is good even when we do not feel it, and we have the freedom to follow that sight rather than the feelings. To the extent that we do so, we gradually become conscious of our latent “other-sensitivity.” In one of Swedenborg's images, we open the way for the Lord's presence within us to flow through into our consciousness. This results in increasing “oneness” within us as well as with others.<sup>49</sup>

It must be stressed that this process of growth requires an active life in the world. The primary agent of change is constructive activity; and the disciplines of private study, self-examination, or meditation are effective only as they focus on such activity. Again, this is consistent with Swedenborg's emphasis on wholeness: the individual is not fulfilled by neglecting an entire level of being.<sup>50</sup>

## *Revelation*

It is axiomatic for Swedenborg that we cannot lift ourselves by our own bootstraps. If it seems that we can, it is because God is constantly providing us with the resources for change. In Sweden-

borg's thought, rationality is a primary agent in this change, revelation is a primary form of divine aid, and the Bible is the central revelation. He finds the Bible to be essentially a parable, a literal story embodying a spiritual one. This conviction is so strong that he regards the heart of his mission as the disclosing of the spiritual meaning of Scripture.<sup>51</sup>

He came to see the Bible not as a compendium of theological propositions or proof-texts, but as a coherent story. The process of growth noted under "Human Process" involves a lifelong task, which proceeds in an orderly fashion from more physical interests to more spiritual ones. The underlying order of that process is reflected in the biblical story under the primary image of the establishment of the kingdom of God. The literal story moves from an initial vague promise through many vicissitudes to the successful founding of an earthly empire. When this proves inadequate, the Incarnation translates the hope into one of a spiritual kingdom, the "kingdom of heaven," which is at last prophetically realized in the descent of the Holy City.<sup>52</sup>

In precisely analogous fashion, we can progress from our first vague childhood "dreams of glory" through experience to the establishment of self-identity; can realize the inadequacy of that outward appearance; and can become conscious participants in the vibrant world of spiritual love, wisdom, and activity.<sup>53</sup>

### *Correspondence*

In the process of spiritual realization, the ambiguities of the world and of the Bible become increasingly resolved. The central concept in that resolution is the concept of "correspondence" or "responsiveness."<sup>54</sup> The Divine, as the source of all, works most directly through

the spiritual realm into the physical; and while the divine nature is progressively obscured by the growing unresponsiveness of these successive realms, it is never obliterated.<sup>55</sup>

Swedenborg therefore sees the physical world as the result of spiritual causes, a result that reflects those causes, albeit dimly at times. The growth of deeper consciousness brings an understanding of this relationship. Laws of nature are seen as reflections of spiritual laws; physical entities and events are seen as results and therefore images of spiritual ones. The effort toward establishing an earthly kingdom is an appropriate prelude to the establishment of a heavenly one because the underlying principles are the same in each case. The instances are “distinguishable” in level, one being internal to the other, and “one” in principle.<sup>56</sup>

### *Universality*

To refer for a moment to the first paragraph of these “Key Concepts,” there is one respect in which the difference between Swedenborgian theology and traditional Christian theology emerges with no subtlety whatever. That is, Swedenborg insists that the Lord is *effectively* present in all religions, with the result that “the good individuals” of all religions are saved. He speaks far more affirmatively, in fact, about non-Christians than about Christians. For him, a God who did not provide at least the means of salvation to everyone must be unloving, unwise, or ineffective.<sup>57</sup>

Yet there is no hesitation in his insistence that the Incarnation of God in the person of Jesus was the turning point of all history, and that genuine Christianity is therefore the most perfect of all religions. Perhaps the most straightforward way to explain this apparent paradox is to state that in Christianity we see most clearly

the God who is active everywhere. It is a distortion of that religion itself to claim that salvation is for Christians alone.<sup>58</sup>

### *Immortality*

Seeing spirit as substantial and structured, Swedenborg sees people as essentially spiritual beings whose bodies are primarily means of usefulness in a physical environment. For him, it is in fact preoccupation with the physical that blinds us to the reality of spirit. So on the one hand, progress toward oneness entails growing spiritual awareness, and on the other, death results primarily in a shift in the level of consciousness.<sup>59</sup>

The choice after death is not necessarily instantaneous. Swedenborg describes a “World of Spirits” between heaven and hell,<sup>60</sup> where the newly deceased gradually lose their ability to dissemble, and resolve any remaining indecisions. The only “judgment” we experience is our own—our free choice to care for each other, which is heaven, or to care only for ourselves, which is hell.<sup>61</sup>

### **Maximus Homo**

Because the trinity of love, wisdom, and power is characteristic of the Divine, it is characteristic of all reality; and because that trinity is intensely personal, the human form is pervasive. Swedenborg sees it as the form of the individual almost as a matter of course. Further, any group of people united by mutual love and understanding will act as a collective individual, and will therefore have a functional human form (distinguishable from “human shape”). He even refers to heaven in its entirety as the *Maximus Homo*, the Greatest Person or Universal Human, and goes into some detail about the spiritual functions corresponding to the various members and organs of

the human body. The collective person needs to perceive and act, to ingest and incorporate, just as the individual does, and therefore needs the “organs” that perform these functions.<sup>62</sup>

### *Incarnation*

As noted, Swedenborg regards the Incarnation as the central event of human history. In his view, the human race declined from a primal state of innocence, becoming progressively more materialistic, until the only way it could be reached was through the physical presence of deity. In the Christ, Swedenborg sees God as assuming our own fallen nature and transforming it by the process of conflict between the divine best and the human worst within him. This experience precisely parallels our own inner conflicts, and his life is therefore the model for our own.<sup>63</sup>

The virgin birth, in this understanding, is essential for two reasons. First, there must be a physical parent to transmit the fallen nature: for Swedenborg, an *immaculate conception*, conception by a sinless mother, would have been quite pointless and ineffective. Second, there needed to be within that fallen nature an *infinite* capacity for the acceptance of the Divine. Without the first, Jesus’s life would have been irrelevant to ours; without the second, it would have failed in its purpose.<sup>64</sup>

Jesus is then seen as having grown as we do, knowing doubt, selfishness, and all the distortions of humanity we can experience in ourselves. His life is the perfect exemplar of the process of transformation that is our own hope, and that, as already noted, is represented in the biblical story. He was in a very special sense “the Word made flesh” and the fulfillment of Scripture. The passion on the cross was not a sacrificial appeasement but a final trial,

a final self-giving. By refusing to use miraculous means to override our rejection of him, Jesus took the last step into perfect, loving wholeness; and because that wholeness was complete, the resurrection included even his physical body.<sup>65</sup>

### *A Radical Claim*

A central point of difference between Swedenborg's theology and traditional Christian thought, supported but hardly foretold by the concepts of his system, is his announcement that biblical prophecies of a Last Judgment and a Second Coming of the Lord had been fulfilled in his lifetime. He claims knowledge of these events on the authority of his having witnessed the judgment in the spiritual world, and interprets traditional concepts in their light. With the Last Judgment in 1757, as he sees it, the era symbolized by the "old" Christian church came to an end. The Second Coming—the return of the Lord after his resurrection and glorification described in the Gospels—ushers in a new Christianity and the establishment in 1770 of a new church in the spiritual world. Swedenborg stated at one point that the church in the outward world would go on much as before, at least for a while, and he neither tried to found a new organization nor speculated on the form one might take. He expected instead that a new freedom of thought in spiritual matters would counter the dogmatism of traditional Christianity.<sup>66</sup>

### *A Vision*

Swedenborg's theology is not just "brain faith," but a kind of program for the healing of individuals and of human society. It calls for the fullest development of the individual emotionally, intellectually,

and behaviorally. It values open and profound love, clear and free thinking, and faithful activity. It relates these qualities directly to the nature of reality, thereby avoiding any system of arbitrary rewards and punishments. Above all, it points toward an individual and collective oneness in which differences are not divisive but consistently enrich the whole, and sees the source of this “distinguishable oneness” as the wisdom and love of the one creator.<sup>67</sup>





## Emanuel Swedenborg Life Chronology

by Robert H. Kirven and William R. Woofenden,  
*Proximus inter Aliis\**

BORN EMANUEL SWEDBERG, January 29, 1688, in Stockholm, the third of nine children, to:

Jesper Swedberg (born 28 August 1653)  
ordained 12 February 1682, chaplain of horse guards  
chaplain of court, 1685  
dean and pastor of Wingaker, Sodermanland, 1692  
dean of Uppsala Cathedral, 1694  
superintendent of Swedish churches in America, London, and  
Portugal, 1696  
bishop of Skara, 1702 (lived at Brunsbo)  
doctor of theology, 1705  
died 7 July 1735, at Brunsbo  
and Sara Behm (4 January 1666–17 June 1696)  
Albrecht 1684–1696  
Anna, 1686–1766  
Emanuel, 1688–1772  
Hedwig, 1690–1728  
Daniel, 1691–1691  
Eliezer 1691–1716

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\* Marguerite Beck Block began compiling this chronology, passing the work on to Virginia Branstons, who turned it over to Robin Larsen. The present compiler received it from her and has profited from suggestions by his colleagues and students, especially and finally, Dr. William R. Woofenden.

- Katharina, 1693–1770  
 Jesper, 1694–1771  
 Margareta, 1695–[?]
- 2 February 1688—Emanuel baptized at Jacob's Church, Stockholm
- 1692—Jesper becomes professor of theology at Uppsala University;  
 Emanuel moves with the rest of his family to the town of Uppsala.  
 Jesper becomes rector of the university cathedral in 1694.
- 1692—beginning of Swedenborg's (later memory of) being constantly  
 engrossed with "thoughts of God, salvation, and the spiritual  
 sufferings of men"
- 1696—Johan Moraeus, Emanuel's cousin, appointed as his tutor
- 17 June 1696—Sara Behm dies
- 1697—Charles XI dies, Charles XII (age 15) succeeds ("Lion of the  
 North")
- 30 November 1697—Jesper marries Sara Bergia
- 15 June 1699—Emanuel matriculates at Uppsala; joins Westmanland  
 Dalecarlian Nation (fraternity); studies philosophy
- 1700—beginning of Swedenborg's (later memory of) "delight in  
 conversing with clergymen about faith" and first experiments with  
 hypoventilation
- November 1700—Charles XII invades Ukraine
- 17 May 1702—fire at Uppsala; Professor Rudbeck saves library
- Spring 1703—Jesper and Sara Bergia move to Brunsbo, his home while  
 bishop of Skara
- 18 July 1703—Erik Benzelius, librarian and later professor of theology at  
 Uppsala, marries Anna Swedberg
- 1726—Benzelius becomes bishop of Göteborg
- 1731—Benzelius becomes bishop of Linköping
- Swedenborg lives with Erik and Anna (as well as Hedwig and two  
 brothers) for six years
- June 1709—Swedenborg graduates from Uppsala
- 1709–1710—Swedenborg assembles fossil bones of whale
- May 1710—Swedenborg's first trip abroad
- 3 August 1710—London  
 visited by cousins Andreas and Gustav Hesselius

reads Newton, Nicolas Malebranche, and Platonist philosopher  
     John Norris  
 performs Robert Boyle's experiments  
 studies with astronomer John Flamsteed  
 April 1711—computes tables for latitude of Uppsala, and solar and  
     lunar eclipses from 1712 to 1721  
 16 January 1712—to Oxford  
     studies with Sir Edmund Halley  
     studies poets and playwrights such as John Dryden, Edmund  
         Spenser, John Milton, William Shakespeare, and Ben Jonson  
     writes poetry  
 early 1713—to Utrecht and Leiden in the Netherlands  
     meets Swedish Ambassador Count Carl Gyllenborg  
     meets Swedish Ambassador diplomat and mathematician Baron  
         Palmquist  
     meets Swedish British Ambassador John Robinson  
 May 1713—Paris and Versailles  
 May 1714—Hamburg  
 August 1714—Rostock: finishes drawings of fourteen inventions—  
     a submarine, a new kind of siphon, a weight lifter, a design for a  
     sluice, a massive water pump, a drawbridge, an air pump  
     (condenser-exhauster), air gun, a universal musical instrument, a  
     technique for drawing in perspective, a water clock, a mechanical  
     carriage, a flying carriage, and cords and springs  
 November 1714—Charles XII returns from Turkey; Swedenborg  
     writes *Festivus Applausus*  
 July 1715—home to Brunsbo, Sweden  
 Christmas 1715—spends holiday with Benzelius at Starbo  
 January 1716—publishes first of six issues of *Daedalus Hyperboreaicus*  
     (first Swedish scientific journal)  
     1st issue: ear trumpets and tubes  
     2nd: hoisting machine, coinage, solar eclipse  
     3rd: weights and measures, air pumps, air measurements  
     4th: flying machine (controllable glider)  
     5th: analytical geometry

- 6th: on tremulation (see 1719)
- January 1716—first visit to Polhem in Stjärnsund
- June 1716—Eliezer Swedberg dies (Swedenborg's younger brother)
- September 1716—Christopher Polhem authorized to build dry dock at Karlskrona; Swedenborg arrives in December
- December 1716—Swedenborg meets Charles XII at Lund; appointed extraordinary assessor, Board of Mines, by Charles XII; gets second appointment but not paid or accepted by board
- January 1717—joins Polhem in Karlskrona
- April 1717—takes seat on Board of Mines; not allowed to sign documents
- June 1717—writes proposal for instituting an observatory
- 1718—Swedenborg works on Göta Canal, inland waterway, saltworks; moves ships overland to siege of Frederikshald
- 21 January 1718—declines opportunity to succeed Professor Pehr Elfvius (mathematics) on Uppsala faculty
- July 1718—Swedenborg courts Emerentia Polhem; Swedenborg was eventually rejected
- November 1718—Swedenborg avoids fighting in campaign against Frederikshald
- 30 November 1718—Charles XII killed before Frederikshald; Ulrika Eleonora (1688–1741), younger sister of Charles XII and wife of Frederick, Crown Prince of Hesse-Cassel (1676–1751), claims throne of Sweden
- 1719—Swedenborg publishes *Motion and Position of Earth and Planets*
- 1719—Swedenborg publishes *On the Height of the Water and Strong Tides in the Primeval World*
- 1719—Swedenborg publishes *On Tremulation*
- 17 March 1719—Ulrika Eleonora crowned; renounced absolute monarchy before being ratified as queen by Cabinet and Diet; displaced claim to throne of her nephew, Charles Frederick, son of Charles XI's first daughter, Hedwig Sophia
- May 1719—Ulrika Eleonora ennobles Swedberg family; name changed to Swedenborg; Swedenborg seated in House of Nobles
- Summer 1719—Swedenborg works on blast furnaces and airtight stoves
- 3 March 1720—Sara Bergia dies

- 24 March 1720—Ulrika Eleonora's husband Frederick acknowledged by Diet as king of Sweden
- 21 May 1721—Sara Bergia's estate Starbo divided: one-fifth split between Swedenborg and Lars Benzelstierna; four-fifths to Emanuel Swedenborg's aunt, Brita Behm.
- May 1721—Swedenborg's second European trip  
Leaves Starbo—travels to Amsterdam, Leiden, Aachen, Liege
- 1721—publishes *Principles of Chemistry*
- 1722—Swedenborg travels to Cologne, Leipzig. *Principles of Chemistry* favorably reviewed in *Acta Eruditorum*
- July 1722—Swedenborg returns to Sweden; meets King Frederick and Queen Ulrika Eleonora at Medevi
- July 1722—Swedenborg returns to Stockholm
- November 1722—Swedenborg publishes *Modest Thoughts on the Inflation and Deflation of Swedish Money*, a pamphlet against debasement of currency; presented to Riksdag
- 1723—Consistory of Uppsala University invites Swedenborg to apply for professorship, to succeed Nils Celsius; Swedenborg declines
- February 1723—Swedenborg presents memoranda *The Balance of Trade* to Riksdag Committee on Commerce and *Noble and Base Metals* to Committee on Mines
- March 1723—Board of Mines seats Swedenborg as special member (*assessor extra ordinem*)
- July 1723—Board of Mines grants Swedenborg a salary of 800 dalers. Begins regular employment at the Board of Mines.
- 1724—lawsuit with aunt Brita Behm over Axmar mines
- 1724—Swedenborg seeks to restore Polhem's models, stored at the College of Mines, for a Museum of Technology at Stockholm and a Museum of Mining at Falun
- May 1724—Swedenborg visits with Jesper Swedenborg and Andreas Hesselius, returned from America; visits with Erik and Anna Benzelius; attends meeting of Uppsala Literary Society
- 15 July 1724—Swedenborg appointed full assessor at the Board of Mines, with a salary of 1,200 dalers

- 1725—Swedenborg takes nephew Erik Benzelius under his wing; instructs in physics and mathematics
- 1726—Swedenborg courts Kristina Maria Steuch—refused
- 1728—Hedwig dies  
Swedenborg moves to apartment at Stora Nygatan for five years
- 1729—completes a draft of *Philosophical and Mineralogical Works*
- 18 March 1729—J. Unge (brother-in-law) urges Swedenborg to seek hand of Sebastian Tham's youngest daughter
- 17 December 1729—St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences invites Swedenborg to become a member
- 1733—Brother-in-law Erik Benzelius becomes bishop of Linköping
- May 1733—Swedenborg's third European trip
- 25 May—Stralsund
  - 27 May—Greifswalde
  - 28 May—Neu Brandenburg
  - 30 May—Old Strelitz
  - 2 June—Berlin
  - 7 June—Dresden
  - 23 July—Prague
  - 30 July—Carlsbad
  - 25 August—Dresden
  - 3 September—Leipzig
- 1733—comments on Wolff's *Cosmology*
- 1734—publishes *Philosophical and Mineralogical Works* (I. *Basic Principles of Nature*; II. *On Iron and Steel*; III. *On Copper and Brass*).  
Favorably reviewed in *Acta Eruditorum*
- Late June or early July—returns to Sweden
- 3 July 1734—attends Board of Mines
- 1735—publishes *On the Infinite*
- July 1735—Bishop Swedberg dies
- 29 January 1736—Bishop Swedberg's funeral in Västergötland
- July 1736—Swedenborg's fourth European trip
- 10 July 1736—departs for Copenhagen, Amsterdam, Belgium, Rotterdam
  - 3 September—Paris

- Studies with Danish anatomist Jacob B. Winslow
- Visits Luxembourg Gardens, Notre Dame, and Saint Chapelle
- Lives in Rue de l'Observatoire
- Writes *The Cerebrum*
- Visits Burgundy, Turin, and Mt. Cenis
- 12 March 1738—leaves Paris for Italy
- 7 April 1738—leaves for Milan, Verona, Venice, Padua, and Florence
- 25 September 1738—arrives in Rome
- 15 February 1739—leaves for Genoa and Paris
- May 1739—returns to Amsterdam
- In Amsterdam, meditates and sees “flashes of light”
- Fall 1739—sends inlaid marble table home to Sweden
- 27 December 1739—finishes *Economy of the Animal Kingdom*
- September 1740—The Hague
- October 1740—to Denmark
- Practices shallow breathing; experiences mysterious radiation
- October 1740—returns to Stockholm
- 10 December 1740—Swedenborg accepted into Academy of Sciences  
with Anders von Hopken, Carl Linnaeus, Jonas Alstromer, and  
Count Gustaf Tessin
- 1740–1741—publishes *Economy of the Animal Kingdom*
- 1741—writes *The Fibre*
- 9 October 1741—moves into “Rantmasterehuset,” n. 64 Slussen (second  
floor over coffee house)
- 1742—writes *Rational Psychology* and *Heiroglyphic Key*
- 1743—Bishop Erik Benzelius dies
- 26 March 1743—buys house in south Stockholm (Hornsgatan); sells  
shares in Starbo and Dalecarlian Ironworks to Count Gyllenborg
- June 1743—takes leave from Board of Mines to write *Animal Kingdom*
- July 1743—Adolf Friedrick (m. Louisa Ulrika) elected successor to  
Swedish throne (1710–1771)
- Swedenborg's fifth European trip
- 21 July 1743—departs for Ystad, Pomerania, Hamburg, Bremen,  
Amsterdam, Leiden, and The Hague
- Records inner conflicts and dreams in *Journal of Dreams*



- 1744—The Hague: publishes *Animal Kingdom*, vols. I and II  
 6 April 1744—in Delft, experiences a vision of Christ  
 May 1744—London: lodges with Moravians  
 21 September 1744—first addressed by a spirit  
 October 1744—last entry in *Journal of Dreams* (except for one in May 1745)  
 1745—publishes Vol. III of *Animal Kingdom*  
 1745—composes *Bible Index*  
 1745—publishes Parts I and II of *Worship and Love of God*  
 April 1745, London—second vision of Christ (recorded in *Spiritual Diary*, December 12, 1747, no. 397)  
 Around 19 July 1745—leaves London; arrives in Stockholm a month later; moves into home in Hornsgatan; when not traveling abroad, lives and writes there for next twenty years  
 1746–1747—writes *The Word Explained*  
 1765—begins writing *Spiritual Diary*  
 Spring 1747—Swedenborg offered post of Councillor of Mines  
 2 June 1747—applies for retirement from Board of Mines  
 17 July 1747—has his last meeting with Board of Mines  
 June 1747—Swedenborg's sixth European trip  
 24 July 1747—leaves for Holland  
 21 March 1748—experiences a death-like state while in Holland  
 September 1748—England; then to France for winter  
 December 1748–June 1756—writes *Arcana Coelestia (Secrets of Heaven)*  
 1749—Joachim Wretman, Swedish merchant, becomes Swedenborg's agent  
 Summer 1749—printer John Lewis in London sells *Secrets of Heaven*, vol. I  
 Fall 1749—Aachen for rest  
 15 October 1749—Stephen Penny applauds *Secrets of Heaven*  
 Spring 1750—returns to Sweden, stays in Södermalm near Lake Malar and Baltic Sea; begins gardening  
 1751—King Frederick dies; Adolf Frederick succeeds  
 1751—Countess Elisabet Stierncrona Gyllenborg gives Swedenborg her manuscript (later, Swedenborg is said to have referred to her as his wife in spiritual world. She died in 1769.)

- 1751—Swedenborg encounters in spiritual world (among others): Dr. Govan Norberg; Adam Leyel; Johan Bergenstierna; Johan Moraeus; Hans Bjorck; Charles XII; Anders Swab; Archbishop Jacob Benzelius; Bishop Rhydelius; Senator Sven Lagerberg; William Penn; Queen Christina (1626–1689), queen of Sweden, 1632–1654, abdicated and converted to Catholicism; Saint Genevieve; Mary; and Sara Behm
- 31 August 1751—Polhem dies
- 1755—Lars Benzelstierna dies
- July 1756—ten conspirators to overthrow government executed; Queen Louisa Ulrika forms Court Party, replacing Count Carl Gustaf Tessin with Count von Höpken as president of Council
- Fall 1756—crop failure, famine, and prohibition
- September 1757—war declared between Sweden and Prussia (ends May 1762)
- Spring or Summer 1758—Swedenborg’s seventh European trip
- 1758—London—Swedenborg writes and publishes *Other Planets, Heaven and Hell, Last Judgment, New Jerusalem, White Horse*
- 5 January 1759—Count Gustaf Bonde discovers Swedenborg is author of *Heaven and Hell* (Bonde is previous president of Board of Mines, senator, and chancellor of the University of Uppsala)
- June 1759—Swedenborg leaves England for home
- 19 July 1759—Swedenborg has vision of Stockholm fire, while in Göteborg at home of William Castel
- 1760—Daniel Tilas, minerologist, writes about Swedenborg’s conversations with spirits
- 1760—Swedenborg attends Tessin’s Saturday philosophy parties at Svindersvik
- 1760—writes tract entitled *Athanasian Creed*
- 1760—Prelate Friedrich Christoph Oetinger, German scholar and writer, defends Swedenborg and himself against Consistory at Wurtemberg
- 1760—Ludwig IX wants to know how to converse with spirits
- 5 March 1760—Tessin visits Swedenborg
- August 1760—Dr. Johann Ernesti, professor of theology at Leipzig, criticizes Swedenborg’s theological writings
- November 1760—controversy with Anders Nordencrantz, councillor of commerce, over foreign exchange

- 1761—Dr. Johan Rosen (professor) and Dr. Gabriel Andersson Beyer (teacher) favorably impressed with Swedenborg (later defend him)
- February 1761—Count von Höpken forced to resign as prime minister; political party “Caps” control government
- 1763—publishes *On Inlaying Tables*
- Spring 1763—Swedenborg’s eighth European trip
- Travels to Amsterdam
- 1763—publishes *Four Doctrines*
- 1764—publishes *Divine Love and Wisdom*
- 1764—publishes *Divine Providence*
- 1765—Swedenborg’s ninth European trip
- 1766—publishes *Apocalypse Revealed (Revelation Unveiled)*
- Spring 1766—London; presents *Method of Finding Longitude by the Moon* to Royal Society of Sciences
- September 1766—returns to Stockholm
- 1766—Nicholas Collin (student of astronomy) meets Swedenborg; later becomes pastor of Swedish congregation in Pennsylvania and close friend of Benjamin Franklin
- May 1768—Swedenborg’s tenth European trip
- 27 May 1768—to Göteborg and Holland. Publishes *Marriage Love*
- November 1768—meets Johann Christian Cuno, who makes thorough study of Swedenborg’s teachings
- Winter 1768–1769—in Sweden, beginning of opposition to Swedenborg. Controversy breaks out in the Göteborg Consistory over Swedenborg’s teachings, pitting Bishop Erik Lamberg and Dean Olaf A. Ekebom against Drs. Beyer and Rosen; Dean Ekebom finds the doctrines abhorrent and heretical and takes steps to prevent spread of Swedenborg’s teachings, condemning them and accusing him of Socinianism
- April 1769—to Paris
- July 1769—to London
- Two future prominent Swedenborgians, William Cookworthy (druggist) and Rev. Thomas Hartley, visit Swedenborg in London
- Fall 1769—in Stockholm, Beyer and Rosen defend Swedenborg, telling Consistory to study his works before condemning them

- Fall 1769—Swedenborg returns to Sweden
- 1769—Bishop Petrus Filenius argues against releasing fifty confiscated copies of *Marriage Love*
- 1769—attempt to consign Swedenborg to asylum; friend in senate advises him to leave Sweden for safety; he declines
- 1769—publishes *Survey (A Brief Exposition of the Doctrines of the New Church)* and *Soul-Body Interaction*
- 2 January 1770—Royal Council asks Consistory to report Swedenborg’s errors to the king
- April 1770—Royal Council can find nothing wrong with the doctrines and no longer wishes to publicize Swedenborgianism with controversy
- Augustus and Claes Alstromer (brothers) in Department of Justice defend Beyer and Swedenborg
- 26 April 1770—Royal Council decrees “totally condemn, reject, and forbid” the theological doctrines in Swedenborg’s writings. Beyer and Rosen are condemned, advised to repent, and forbidden to teach theology. Confiscation of books ordered
- 25 May 1770—Swedenborg appeals to the king
- 19 June 1770— Date reported by Swedenborg as the founding of New Church in spiritual world
- July 1770—Swedenborg’s eleventh European trip
- August 1770—Amsterdam
- 1771—publishes *True Christianity*
- 1771—King Adolf Frederick dies; Gustav III succeeds
- 1771—Swedenborg publishes second pamphlet on currency, repeating and expanding his 1722 work
- September 1771—to England
- 7 December 1771—in Stockholm, Royal Council says there is much that is true in Swedenborg’s writings and orders Beyer and Rosen to be treated mildly
- Beyer/Rosen case goes to Gotha Court of Appeals
- Beyer/Rosen case goes to Uppsala University (case dropped in 1773)
- December 1771—Swedenborg has stroke in England; partially recovers
- 1772—Swedenborg reaffirms his teachings; accepts communion from Rev. Arvid Ferelius

Sunday, 29 March 1772, 5 p.m.—Swedenborg dies (Drs. Hampe and Messiter attending physicians)

Sunday, 5 April 1772, 4 p.m.—Rev. Arvid Ferelius conducts funeral services

19 August 1772—Gustav III re-establishes absolute monarchy

7 October 1772—Councillor of Mines Samuel Sandels delivers Swedenborg eulogy in Great Hall of House of Nobles

1773—Rev. John Clowes of Manchester, England, becomes Swedenborgian

1778—Clowes establishes New Church Society among Anglican parishoners in Whitefield, near Manchester

5 December 1783—Robert Hindmarsh gathers first group of London Swedenborgians

1786—(Sweden) Exegetic and Philanthropic Society formed by von Höpken, Charles Nordenskjold, and Charles Wadstrom to promote Swedenborg's doctrines

31 July 1787—London group worships as separated church

## Notes

PUBLICATION INFORMATION FOR all titles is included in the bibliography. As is common in Swedenborgian studies, citations of Swedenborg's works refer not to page numbers but to Swedenborg's section numbers, which are uniform in all editions.

1. Swedenborg, *Journal of Dreams*, no. 18.
2. Tafel, *Documents*, 1:208.
3. *Ibid.*, 1:107.
4. Acton, *Letters*, 2:696.
5. *Ibid.*, 2:696.
6. Swedenborg, *Spiritual Diary*, nos. 3317, 3464.
7. Consciously, at least, Jesper did not intend to lead his sons away from their natural interests and toward ministry (see Tafel, *Documents*, 1:196); but at age 56, Emanuel's dream suggests that he sensed his father's approval only after his own theophany (see note 20).
8. Tafel, *Op. cit.* 2:3.
9. *Ibid.*, 1:224.
10. Acton, *Op. cit.*, 1:56ff.
11. Models of Emanuel's airplane have been constructed for display in the Tekniska Museum in Stockholm and the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.
12. *Daedalus Hyperboreus IV*, cited in Söderberg, *Swedenborg's 1714 Airplane*.
13. Tafel, *Op. cit.*, 1:305.

14. Swedenborg, *Economy*, no. 19; Swedenborg, *Spiritual Diary*, no. 2951.
15. Tafel, *Documents*, 1:586–90.
16. Swedenborg, *Economy*, no. 18.
17. Anders Johan, Count von Höpken, was a member (1746–1761) of the Executive Council that shared power with the king of Sweden. Von Höpken later claimed to have been a friend of Swedenborg’s for forty-two years and a daily companion since 1756. The president of the House of Nobles at this time was Count Carl Gustaf Tessin, an architect who had completed the Royal Palace in Stockholm (begun by his father, Nicolas Tessin) and who subsequently became a member for twenty years of the Executive Council. Tessin and Swedenborg knew each other in government service during these years, and in 1760—after Tessin learned that Swedenborg was the author of the theological works that were causing a stir in Stockholm—the two men held long private conversations about Swedenborg’s philosophical and theological positions.
18. Swedenborg, *Journal of Dreams*, nos. 38–49.
19. *Ibid.*, nos. 49–57.
20. *Ibid.* nos. 58–59. (See also note 7)
21. Tafel, *Op. cit.*, 2:709ff.
22. This description of the event conflates two accounts of Swedenborg’s recollections preserved by his friends—one by Carl Robsahm (Tafel, *Documents*, 1:36), and the other by Gabriel Beyer (Tafel, *Documents*, 2:426). Swedenborg’s *Spiritual Diary*, no. 397, apparently refers to a nightmarish self-abnegation related to this event.
23. Swedenborg, *True Christianity*, no. 779 and elsewhere.
24. Tafel, *Op. cit.*, 2:652.
25. Among them: the Last Judgment (1757) so changed the spiritual situation that a new approach was needed; he changed his focus from the generalized universal church to his particular vision of a new church; and even that the length of the work was making it prohibitively expensive to publish!

26. The difference between the two is explained in detail in Chapter V of William F. Wunsch, *The World within the Bible*.
27. Swedenborg, *Marriage Love*, no. 522.
28. Kant, *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer*, 162.
29. See Robert H. Kirven, "Swedenborg and Kant" in *Swedenborg and His Influence*.
30. Sigstedt, *Swedenborg Epic*, 324. The consistories were regional courts of clergy, appointed to regulate ecclesiastical affairs.
31. Tafel, *Op. cit.*, 2:306.
32. *Ibid.*, 2:377.
33. *Ibid.*, 2:546.
34. *Ibid.*, 2:600.
35. *Ibid.*, 1:8–9.

### *Notes to Key Concepts (pp. 69–79)*

36. Swedenborg, *Divine Love and Wisdom*, nos. 14, 77–81.
37. —, *Secrets of Heaven*, nos. 6724, 7270; *Divine Love and Wisdom* 40.
38. —, *Divine Love and Wisdom*, nos. 23, 27.
39. *Ibid.*, no. 28.
40. *Ibid.*, no. 11, 4, 78.
41. —, *Marriage Love*, no. 444; *Divine Love and Wisdom*, no. 264.
42. —, *Heaven and Hell*, no. 547ff.
43. *Ibid.*, no. 550.
44. —, *Secrets of Heaven*, no. 6135(3).
45. —, *Divine Providence*, no. 195(2); *Divine Love and Wisdom*, nos. 40ff.
46. —, *Heaven and Hell* no. 528.
47. —, *Secrets of Heaven*, nos. 10168–75.
48. *Ibid.*, no. 6323.
49. *Ibid.*, no. 2694(2).
50. —, *Heaven and Hell*, no. 475.
51. —, *Secrets of Heaven*, nos. 64, 67–9, 10632(4).
52. *Ibid.*, no. 3304(3).
53. *Ibid.*, nos. 69, 92.



54. Ibid., no. 3769.
55. Ibid., no. 3223.
56. Ibid., no. 5173(2), *Heaven and Hell*, no. 406.
57. —, *Divine Providence*, no. 326(9)ff.
58. Ibid., no. 322(4)f.
59. —, *Secrets of Heaven*, no. 8939(2).
60. —, *Heaven and Hell*, no. 421ff.
61. Ibid., no. 499ff.
62. —, *Secrets of Heaven*, no. 4302(3). For a comprehensive discussion, see *Secrets of Heaven* excerpts collected in Swedenborg, *The Universal Human*.
63. Ibid., no. 3061(2).
64. Ibid., no. 2288.
65. —, *True Christianity*, no. 109.
66. —, *Last Judgment*, nos. 73–74.
67. —, *Secrets of Heaven*, no. 9613, *Last Judgment*, no. 12.

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TITLES ARE LISTED IN the short form which appears in the notes and index, followed by original title, published English title (and in some cases, an alternative translation), and place and date of first publication. English versions of works by Swedenborg are kept in print with various publication dates by the Swedenborg Foundation. Further publication details, and various translations and editions, can be found in Woofenden, *Swedenborg Explorer's Guidebook*.

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## Index

### A

Aachen, Germany, Swedenborg in, 27  
Adolf Frederick (King of Sweden), 61,  
87, 88, 91  
Amsterdam, Swedenborg in, 33-34,  
40, 90, 91  
*Animal Kingdom*, 36-37, 39, 87, 88  
Anne (Queen of England), 15  
Apocalypse (biblical book).  
See Revelation, book of.  
*Apocalypse Explained*, 51-52, 53-54  
*Apocalypse Revealed (Revelation  
Unveiled)*, 54, 90  
*Arcana Coelestia*. See *Secrets of Heaven*.  
Aristotelianism, 7, 11  
Athanasian Creed, 69  
*Athanasian Creed* (work by  
Swedenborg), 89  
Axmar, 25, 85

### B

*Balance of Trade, The*, 28, 85  
Behm, Brita, 25, 85  
Benzelius Jr., Erik, 28, 29, 86  
Benzelius Sr., Erik, 7, 12, 16, 17, 19, 24,  
33, 82, 87  
Benzelstierna, Lars, 24-25, 85, 89

Beyer, Gabriel Andersson, 56, 57, 61,  
90, 91  
*Bible Index*, 41, 43, 88  
Bible, 74  
Bidloo, Govard, 34  
Board of Mines, 84, 85, 87, 88  
Bodleian Library, 16  
Boerhaave, Herman, 34  
Bonde, Gustaf, 52, 89  
Boyle, Robert, 15  
*Brief Exposition of the Doctrine of the  
New Church, A*. See *Survey*.  
Brunsbö, 12, 82

### C

Cartesianism, 5, 6, 11  
Castel, William, 89  
Celsius, Nils, 28, 85  
*Cerebrum, The*, 87  
Charles Frederick (nephew of Ulrika  
Eleonora), 23  
Charles XI (King of Sweden), 6, 8, 10,  
11, 13, 82  
Charles XII (King of Sweden), 13, 82  
wars, 5, 18, 21;  
Swedenborg's service to, 19-22;  
death, 22, 23, 24, 84



Christ. See *Jesus Christ*.  
Clowes, John, 92  
*Continuation on the Last  
Judgment*, A, 53  
Cookworthy, William, 63, 90  
Copenhagen, Swedenborg in, 35, 63  
*Coronis*, 63  
correspondence (concept), 74-75

## D

*Daedalus Hyperborea*, 19, 83-84  
Denmark, Swedenborg in, 87  
Descartes, René, 5  
distinguishable oneness, 70, 71, 72  
*Divine Love and Wisdom*, 53, 60, 90  
*Divine Providence*, 53, 54, 90  
*Dynamics of the Soul's Domain*. See  
*Economy of the Animal Kingdom*.

## E

*Economy of the Animal Kingdom*,  
35, 36, 87  
Ekebom, Olaf A., 57, 90  
Elfvius, Pehr, 84  
Enlightenment (historical  
period), 5  
Epistles (biblical books), 60  
Ernesti, Johann, 52, 53, 89

## F

*Faith*, 53  
Falun mine, 9, 20, 25, 28  
Ferelius, Arvid, 64, 91, 92  
*Festivus Applausus*, 83  
*Fibre, The*, 87  
Filenius, Petrus, 91  
Flamsteed, John, 15-16, 83  
flying machine, 2, 18  
*Four Doctrines*, 53, 60, 90  
Frederick I (King of Sweden), 23, 29  
Fredrikshald (battle), 21-22, 84

## G

glorification, 47  
God, 69, 70-71, 77  
Göta Canal, 21, 84  
Göteborg, 49, 57  
Göteborg Consistory, 90, 91  
Gustav III (King of Sweden), 24, 91, 92  
Gyllenberg, Carl, 83  
Gyllenberg, Elisabet  
Stierncrona, 29, 88  
Gyllenberg, Gustav Frederik, 29

## H

Hague, The, Swedenborg in, 27, 37, 40  
Halley, Edmund, 16, 83  
Hamburg, Swedenborg in, 83  
Hartley, Thomas, 63, 65-66, 90  
*Heaven and Hell*, 48, 56, 89  
*Heiroglyphic Key*, 87  
Hesselius, Andreas and Gustav, 82  
Hindmarsh, Robert, 92  
hoisting machine (illustration), 28  
Holland, Swedenborg in, 88  
Holy City, 74  
Hornsgatan, Swedenborg's house on,  
29, 43, 88  
Hudson, John, 16  
human process, 73  
humanity, 71-72, 76-77

## I

immaculate conception, 77  
immortality, 76  
Incarnation, the, 75, 77-78  
inventions, Swedenborg's, 17-18, 83  
Isaacsson, Daniel, 9  
Italy, Swedenborg in, 87

## J, K

Jesus Christ, 75, 77-78  
*Journal of Dreams*, 39-40, 88

Kant, Immanuel, 50, 55-56  
Karlskrona, 20, 21, 84  
Kemper, Johan, 6

## L

Lamberg, Erik, 57, 90  
Last Judgment (event), 78  
*Last Judgment* (work by Swedenborg),  
48-49, 89  
Leeuwenhoek, Anton van, 16-17, 34  
Leiden, Swedenborg in, 16-17, 27, 83  
Leipzig, Swedenborg in, 28, 32  
Lewis, John, 88  
Liège, Swedenborg in, 27  
*Life*, 53, 56  
Linnaeus, Carl, 6, 36, 64  
London, Swedenborg in, 13-16, 41,  
63-64, 89, 92  
*Lord, The*, 53-54, 67  
Louisa Ulrika (Queen of Sweden),  
49-50, 61, 89  
love, 71, 72

## M

Malpighi, Marcello, 34  
*Marriage Love*, 54, 56-57, 90  
marriage, 72  
*Maximus Homo*, 76-77  
Messiter, Husband, 63  
*Method of Finding Longitude by  
the Moon*, 90  
mining, inventions for, 17-18  
*Modest Thoughts on the Inflation and  
Deflation of Swedish Money*, 28, 85  
Moraues, Johan, 8, 36, 82  
*Motion and Position of Earth and  
Planets*, 84

## N

nebular hypothesis, 31  
*New Jerusalem*, 47-48

Newton, Isaac, 15  
Nillsson, Isaac, 9  
*Noble and Base Metals*, 28, 85  
Nordencrantz, Anders, 89  
Nordenskjöld, Charles, 92

## O

Oetinger, Friedrich  
Christoph, 52-53, 89  
*On Inlaying Tables*, 90  
*On the Height of Waters and Strong  
Tides in the Primeval World*, 32, 84  
*On the Infinite*, 86  
*On Tremulation*, 33, 84  
*Other Planets*, 48, 89  
Ottesson, Nils, 9  
Oxford (town), 83

## P

Paris, Swedenborg in, 17, 34-35, 83, 87  
*Philosophical and Mineralogical Works*,  
31-32, 35, 86  
Pietism, 10-11  
Polhem, Christopher, 19-21, 28, 84,  
85, 89  
Polhem, Emerentia, 84  
*Posthumous Theological Works*, 63  
*Principles of Chemistry*, 27, 85

## R

*Rational Psychology*, 87  
*Revelation Explained*. See *Apocalypse  
Explained*.  
*Revelation Unveiled*. See *Apocalypse  
Revealed*.  
revelation, 73-74  
Revelation, book of, 48, 51, 54  
Riddarhuset (Swedish House of  
Nobles), 23, 24, 28, 64  
Riksdag (Swedish Parliament), 24,  
28, 35

Robinson, John, 17, 83  
 Rome, Swedenborg in, 35  
 Rosen, Johan, 57, 61, 90, 91  
 Rostock, Swedenborg in, 17  
 Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, 36, 64, 87  
 Rudbeck, Olaf, 6-7, 17, 82  
 Ruysch, Frederik, 34

**S**

*Sacred Scripture*, 53  
 Sandels, Samuel, 64, 92  
*Scripture Confirmations*, 60  
 Second Coming, 49, 78  
*Secrets of Heaven*, 44-45, 47-48, 51-52, 54, 55, 56, 60, 88  
 Shearsmith, Richard, 63-64  
 Skara, 9, 32  
*Soul's Domain, The*. See *Animal Kingdom*.  
*Soul-Body Interaction*, 59, 91  
*Spiritual Diary*, 41, 44, 88  
 St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences, 86  
 Starbo, 19, 25, 85  
 Steuch, Kristina Maria, 28-29, 86  
 Stockholm fire, 49, 89  
 Stora Kopparberg, 20  
*Survey*, 59, 91  
 Sweden (Swedenborg family residence), 9, 36  
 Swedberg, Albert, 9, 12  
 Swedberg, Anna, 7, 9, 12, 81, 82  
 Swedberg, Christina Arrhusia, 25  
 Swedberg, Daniel, 9-10  
 Swedberg, Eliezer, 10, 81, 84  
 Swedberg, Hedwig, 9, 25, 29, 81, 82, 86  
 Swedberg, Jesper (brother of Emanuel), 10  
 Swedberg, Jesper (father of Emanuel), 7, 9-12, 32, 81, 82, 86  
 Swedberg, Katharina, 10

Swedberg, Sara Behm, 9, 12, 21, 24, 81, 82  
 Swedberg, Sara Bergia, 12, 21, 25, 82, 84, 85  
 Sweden, 5, 13  
 Swedenborg, death, 92  
 Swedenborg, Emanuel,  
 anatomical studies, 33-35, 36  
 birth, 9, 81  
 on Board of Mines, 21, 25-26, 27-28, 41, 85, 88  
 childhood home (illustration), 11  
 clairvoyance, 49-50  
 courtships, 20, 28-29, 84, 86, 89  
 criticism of, 55-57, 90  
 death and burial; 64, 92  
 dissertation, 12  
 family ennobled, 23-24, 84  
 first meeting with  
 Charles XII, 20-21, 84  
 heresy trial of supporters, 57, 59-61, 63, 90, 91  
 inventions, 17-18, 83  
 overseas journeys, 13-18 (illust. 14), 27-28, 31, 33-35, 36-37, 40-42, 49, 57, 63, 82-83, 85, 86-87, 87-88, 89, 90-91, 91-92  
 phases of life, 42  
 portrait, 30  
 publishing anonymously, 56-57  
 and Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, 36, 87  
 spiritual awakening, 40-41  
 suffered stroke, 63, 91  
 Swedish Church, London, 64

**T, U**

Tessin, Carl Gustaf, 36, 52, 89  
 Tilas, Daniel, 89  
 Trinity, 69  
*True Christianity*, 59-61, 63, 66, 67, 91

- Ulrika Eleonora (Queen of Sweden),  
 10, 23, 84
- Universal Human. See *Maximus Homo*.
- universality, 75-76
- Uppsala University, 4, 6-8, 11, 28, 82, 85
- Utrecht, Netherlands, Swedenborg in,  
 17, 83
- V, W**
- Vieussens, Raymond, 34
- von Höpken, Anders Johan, 36, 92
- von Knobloch, Charlotte, 50
- Wadstrom, Charles, 92
- Westmanland Dalecarlian Nation, 82
- White Horse*, 47-48, 52, 89
- Winslow, Jacob B., 87
- wisdom, 71
- Word Explained*, The, 43, 88
- World of Spirits, 76
- Worship and Love of God*, 40-41, 88
- Wretman, Joachim, 88