



News from the SWEDENBORG FOUNDATION

Swedenborg Foundation Video Featured on Dr. Oz

“You Are the Lungs,” our video about the way that individual people form part of a greater whole in heaven, was featured on the February 3 episode of *The Dr. Oz Show*.

Hosted by Dr. Mehmet Oz, the daytime talk show airs on the Fox network and features a variety of tips on living a healthier lifestyle. Throughout the month of February, the show’s “Faithful Fridays” highlighted some aspect of the connection between faith and health.

“You Are the Lungs” appeared at the end of the episode, when Dr. Oz introduced it as a video with a positive message from a church in his wife’s hometown (Dr. Oz’s wife Lisa is from the Swedenborgian community of Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania).

The four-and-a-half-minute video was made for our offTheLeftEye YouTube channel in 2013 and

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YOUR SUPPORT MATTERS!

If you like what we’re doing and want to help bring Swedenborg’s spiritual inspiration to a wider audience, you can support us by making a tax-deductible donation or becoming a member. For more information, go to www.swedenborg.com, or contact Brian Mann, membership and development coordinator, at 610-430-3222, ext. 109, e-mail bmann@swedenborg.com. •

Come to Our Annual Meeting

The Swedenborg Foundation's annual meeting will be held on Friday, April 28, 2017, at Pendleton Hall on the campus of Bryn Athyn College, Bryn Athyn, PA.

- 6:30 p.m.: Business Meeting
- 7:30 p.m.: "Swedenborg and the Arts International Conference: A Hundred Years Overdue" with Dr. Jane Williams-Hogan. What was Swedenborg's influence on the arts, and why are the arts such an important outlet for his vision?
- 8:30 p.m.: Reception

We hope that you'll come out, meet our board and staff, and enjoy the evening! Both the business meeting and the talk are open to anyone who would like to attend. •

Dr. Oz continued from page 1

has been the featured video on the channel's home page ever since. Since it was first created, the video has racked up 380,000 views, and some viewers have commented that they subscribed to the channel on the basis of that video alone.

You can watch "You Are the Lungs," episodes of our weekly webcast *Swedenborg and Life*, or any of our many other videos at www.youtube.com/offthellefteye. •

THE HEAVEN AND HELL FACEBOOK PAGE HITS 400,000

As of mid-February, more than 400,000 people are now following our Heaven and Hell Facebook page.

Originally launched in 2011 as a way to share Swedenborg's teachings on the afterlife, the page features daily inspirational quotes from Swedenborg and other thinkers. Through advertising to boost the viewership of our posts, we're able to reach an even broader audience: On average, our posts are seen by more than half a million people per week, and a very popular recent post was seen by 1.6 million people within the space of a few days.

If you want to see what we're doing for yourself, you can find us at facebook.com/heavenandhellswedenborg. •

Thank You!

Thanks so much to everyone who donated to the Foundation during our 2016 year-end appeal. We are truly grateful for your support!

Some donations were received either in memory of or in honor of particular individuals, and those individuals are listed below. Please note that the names are listed here exactly as they were given to us and may be a shortened or alternative name.

Paresh Acharya	Robert W. Gauzens	Herta Oldenburg
Philip M. Alden, Sr.	Annika & Connor	Edith Goddard Pangaro
Sten Alfelt	Goggins	Marjorie Pardue
Patrick C. Arnoux	Rev. Olle Hjern	John C. Perry
Gwenda Acton Barnitz	Joyce Margaret King	Patrick Pidgeon
Thomas A. Begay, Jr.	Richard Kopa	Princezelohim
Kelli Black	Gerald P. Lapp	Yvonne Regalado
Shareen Blair	Linda Mari Larsson	Kenneth Renn
Virginia Branston	Phyllis Larzelere	Chester J. Robertson, Jr.
Freda Brause	Carol Lawson	Haydee Rosario
Thomas Budkey, Jr.	Howard Leach	Evelyn J. Rosenberg
Anita Callahan	Daniel Leenders	Mama Ruth
Anthony Chapa	Jerry Emerson Loomis	Treva Savage
Roscoe Lovette Coffin	Ernestine & Elmer	Lydia Augusta Cutler
Stephanie J. Crampton	Mangold	Schrader
David Crow	Katrina May	John Richard Seekamp
Dorothy Randall Cutler	Richard Douglas	Rowland Tibbetts
Grant R. Doering	McClain	Naomi Joy Wilcher
Marg & Norman Dyck	Gordon Morey	Nadia Williams
L. H. Edmiston	Winford Murphy	Callie Wright
Bruce Elder	Melinda Nemitz	Thomas E. Zajac
Nicholas & Frances	Arnold & Hazel	Justin D. Zube
Esposito	Neumann	

Thank you!

YOUR SUPPORT MATTERS

The Swedenborg and the Arts International Conference

Registration is now open for the Swedenborg and the Arts International Conference! This unprecedented scholarly conference is dedicated to examining the substantial influence of Emanuel Swedenborg's writings on literature, painting, architecture, music, and other forms of art. The Swedenborg Foundation is proud to be co-sponsoring the event, which will take place on the campus of Bryn Athyn College in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, June 6–9, 2017.

The core of the conference is nine sessions featuring more than twenty-five scholars presenting on topics ranging from William Blake to William James; encompassing literature, music, architecture, and painting in both Europe and America; spanning the global connections between East and West; and delving into mystical and spiritualist traditions. While Swedenborg is best known for his influence on art in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, artists inspired by Swedenborg's thought are still painting, writing, and designing today. Some of them will also be at the conference to discuss what they are currently working on and what they hope to do in the future.



In addition to the session presenters, the conference will feature three keynote speakers: Massimo Introvigne of the Center for Studies on New Religions (CESNUR) in Turin, Italy, an international network of scholars who identify new religious movements; Linda Dalrymple Henderson, professor of twentieth-century European and American art at the University of Texas Austin; and Wouter Hanegraaff, professor of the history of Hermetic philosophy at the University of Amsterdam in the Netherlands.

To register or find the latest information, visit the official conference website at www.brynathyn.edu/swedenborgconference. •

Image: William Blake. "Illustrations to Gray's Poems. Page 5. Object 109."

Swedenborg and Life Recap: Does My Life Matter?

By Josh Cole, Swedenborg.com Contributor

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

Why are we here? What are we here for? Do our lives even matter? Well, of course they do! Whether you know it or not, your life is essential—in both mundane and momentous ways.

WHAT ARE WE?

To know how much we matter, we have to define what “we” are in the first place.

Heaven is organized like a human body, and every human spirit that comes to heaven forms a tiny piece of it (see, as



just one of many passages on the subject, *Divine Providence* §65). Why is heaven organized like a human body? Because it’s a reflection of the source of all life: God. We are all born to be part of that larger whole—to be part of God. We each embody different elements of God’s feelings and intentions.

According to Swedenborg, your life is constantly shaping you to become the part of God you were always meant to be. Curtis uses a tiny, mysterious object as a visual aid. Why is it that size? Why that shape? All is revealed



when the piece is put into place: it’s part of an electrical circuit, a missing link that allows the whole system to function. Like our lives, its purpose isn’t obvious until you see where it’s supposed to go (see *Last Judgment* §12:1–2 for more on this idea).



THE SPIRITUAL VALUE OF GROCERIES

Each moment in life, however small, is important. Swedenborg tells us that all of our actions and decisions, even the seemingly insignificant ones, can either grow or hinder our

sense of goodwill, or love for others. The more we do good, the easier it becomes to do good again—and the same is true for evil.

Swedenborg divides goodwill into four categories:

- Daily work and interactions, like finishing a report on time or shopping for groceries
- Acts of kindness, like helping people and encouraging them
- Obligations, like paying bills
- Recreations, like playing video games

There are always opportunities to grow and for work to be done in every life, even when it's not obvious. Our own emotions can lead the way:

Taking pity [is] a rush of love for one's neighbor, received from the Lord. When we look with loving eyes on someone in misery . . . compassion rises in us, and because it comes from the Lord, it is an alert. What is more, when people with perception feel compassion, they know they are being advised by the Lord to help. (*Secrets of Heaven* §6737)



OUR HIDDEN CONTRIBUTION

There's another reason why our lives matter, and it has to do with our relationship to the spiritual world. Swedenborg writes that there are spirits around us at all times, and even without realizing it, we exist in the same spiritual space as either angels or evil spirits. Our positive thoughts and feelings not only connect us to heaven, but they help to nourish and empower angels.

For it is the ideas comprising [our] thought[s] that serve as the objects which angels need for spiritual thoughts . . . (*Secrets of Heaven* §2953)

We are each unique, and we matter; without us, there's a piece of heaven that would be missing its light. •

VIEWER COMMENTS

“I wish I had the words to tell you how deeply these videos are helping me to feel OK with myself and my life. It means so much to me that kindness really is an important quality to cultivate. Thank you so much! Great job with this video.”

—Divine Friend

“How did you know I don't want to live any more and I do not think I have been useful in this world at all? How did you know I needed to hear this? And why did you come to me at this time? Amazing right? I wish I would have been able to believe I am useful to something or someone.”

—Angela

“Having just lost my father, these questions are paramount.”

—Terry

“I only recently came across Swedenborg's ideas through the writings of Emerson, but if it wasn't for Curtis's thoughtful explanations, humor, and the talent that he brings to the production of these numerous videos . . . I don't think I would have given Swedenborg as much time and thought as I have. This YouTube channel matters!”

—Pete

“I was recently told about Swedenborg and was pointed to the Swedenborg Foundation for more. The timing had a very Divine Providence feel to it because I had been listening to Dr. Jordan Peterson speak of hope and despair on the Joe Rogan Experience podcast. His take on it was very enlightening and is very similar to Swedenborg's idea of heaven and hell. I was living in hell before I was led to his work and the work you share here. Thank you.”

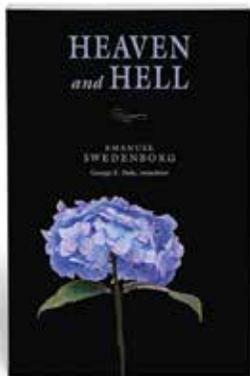
—Andrew

NCE Minute: Why Does Swedenborg Bury His Lead?

by Jonathan S. Rose, *New Century Edition Series Editor*

A good newspaper story is built “upside down,” with the leading fact foremost rather than at the conclusion. When an editor faults a reporter with “burying the lead,” the editor means that a reader will have to get halfway through an article before learning the most important part of the story.

Swedenborg was not a journalist, and even his shortest works were far longer than a newspaper article. Nevertheless, in some of his books the key thoughts seem to be placed so far from the beginning that he could be justly said to have “buried the lead.” Two striking instances of this occur in works he published in 1758, *Heaven and Hell* and *Last Judgment*.



One of the key points of *Heaven and Hell*—in many ways, the foundation of the whole work—is that every angel in heaven and every devil in hell was once a human being living in the physical world. There is no separately created race of eternally existent angels, or of their fallen counterpart, the devils. Swedenborg’s picture stands in stark contrast to most Christian teaching up to that time. In fact, it’s hard to find an explicit parallel in any other Christian writer. So where in *Heaven and Hell* does he make this point? Although angels have figured in

the work from the beginning, it is not until halfway through the book (specifically, in sections 311–317 out of the 603 total) that Swedenborg presents his startling new perspective on their nature.

Similarly, one of the key points of *Last Judgment* is that the Last Judgment has already happened as of the time Swedenborg was writing. This is surely a fulcrum of the work, and it too goes diametrically against much Christian thinking to his day. Yet although he discusses the Last Judgment as a concept from the beginning of the book, this particular point about it is not explicitly made until sections 45–52 out of 74 total.

Why would Swedenborg present key ideas in this way? Either the placement is deliberate, and he hopes to draw readers into his presentation before shocking them with these radical new ideas, or it is inadvertent, the

result of a belated recollection that his readers are missing some facts they need. The latter seems likely, if only because it reflects the way Swedenborg himself seems to have come to understand the spiritual world he was continuously encountering. No one gave him a guidebook or sat him down and presented him with the big picture; he seems to have gathered his knowledge piecemeal and to have been made responsible for assembling it into a coherent whole.

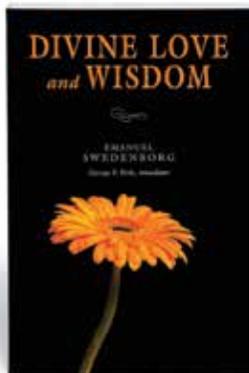
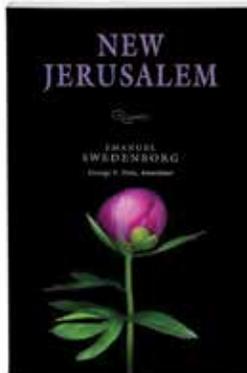
This speculation is perhaps confirmed by a later indication that he realized that he ought to get the leading facts out front. An instance can be seen in *New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Teachings*, which was written immediately after *Last Judgment*. Here he seems to have realized almost as the book was going to press that he had not adequately explained several key concepts, including what the New Jerusalem is, so he added a “pre-prologue” for that purpose

The trend continues in his later works. The title of the very first chapter of *Life*, published in 1763, contains a stunning claim about the focus of religion (“Religion is all about how we live”), and the first chapter title of *Divine Love and Wisdom*, published in the same year, begins with an equally arresting and foundational definition of love (“Love is our life”). *True Christianity*, published in 1771, inserts before chapter 1 a fresh creed for the New Jerusalem.

If this trend is real, then we can put it down to an increase in Swedenborg’s ability to put leading ideas where they will seize readers’ attention and orient them to a new way of seeing the universe. Overall, it seems to

reflect the constantly increasing clarity of his spiritual knowledge and his constantly growing skill in organizing it for presentation to humanity. •

For more on how Swedenborg was constantly rethinking how to reach his audience, see the article “Swedenborg’s Modes of Presentation,” by George F. Dole, in the New Century Edition essay volume (published in hardcover as *Essays for the New Century Edition* and in paperback as *Scribe of Heaven*—and also available for free on the Swedenborg Foundation website).



Rogue One: The Spiritual Lessons

By Colin Amato

The Star Wars saga is one of the most celebrated film series in cinematic history. Beginning with the original film, *A New Hope*, and moving into the most recent films, *The Force Awakens* and *Rogue One*, we enter a living mythology that contains deeper lessons right beneath its manifest content. Though the entire Star Wars series is ripe for symbolic interpretation, *Rogue One* occupies a unique place in the full saga in that it can be approached as a standalone story (the action occurs outside the regular “episodes,” supplying background to *A New Hope* and concentrating on new characters both in the Empire and among the Rebel Alliance).

DIRECTOR KRENNIC

From the very start of *Rogue One*, Orson Krennic, director of the Advanced Weapons Research Division, embraces the mission and ideology of the Empire. He believes that the Empire’s goal is to bring order and peace to the galaxy by creating the Death Star, a space station with the capacity to destroy entire planets. The selfish conquering and domination of others is what fuels the spirit of the Empire. Krennic is always willing to use others, even former friends, in his pursuit of personal power and gain.

Krennic’s behavior can be explored as a spiritual example of what Swedenborg would describe as a hellish life. Hell, for Swedenborg, is a state of mind and spirit that begins while a person is alive on earth. Chief characteristics of the populace of hell feature a denial of the Divine (or a supreme good) and a selfish, ego-driven life. The “ruling loves” of such spirits fasten on dominating others and controlling resources. Any sense of community is superficial, because only for their own personal gain do such spirits work with others. As a member of the Empire, Krennic symbolizes this spiritual mindset spectacularly.

The source that powers the Death Star offers another symbolic parallel between *Rogue One* and Swedenborgian theology. The material used to power this superweapon is kyber crystals. These crystals are attuned to the Force—the Divine energy that powers and sustains the galaxy and manifests itself in both positive and negative ways.

Swedenborg’s primary thesis in *Divine Love and Wisdom* is that nothing but love and wisdom—which make up the force that rules and controls

known reality—comes from the Divine. This energy from the Divine does not create evil, but it does flow into hell, where love and wisdom have been perverted into selfishness and ignorance. Similarly, the Death Star is powered by a perversion of the kyber crystals, the energy and purpose of which have been corrupted to a level of destructiveness that can lay waste to entire planets.

THE CREW OF *ROGUE ONE*

The Rebel Alliance (a heroic resistance movement striving to restore the democratic Republic) and the crew of the vessel *Rogue One* offer a sharp contrast to Krennic and the Empire. The mission of the crew is to steal the schematics for the Death Star in order to destroy the evil space station. For the crew to succeed in their mission, they need to work together as a community. The same holds true for the Rebel Alliance. The struggle to stay together in the face of atrocities committed by the Empire is a foremost theme in the film.

Swedenborg's theological view on the nature of heaven and how one might lead a heavenly life is well illustrated by the behavior of the rebels. While each of them struggles individually in the civil war gripping the galaxy, they come together as a crew to work toward their common goal. This is true of heavenly communities both in this life and in the next, according to Swedenborg. In heaven, the community as a whole finds profound bonding in caring about the supreme good of living in usefulness for others.

The spiritual lessons taught in *Rogue One* speak to those of us seeking to be on the path of regeneration. We cannot hope to lead a life of positive spirituality and regeneration on our own. We need a community that supports us on this path and in which we can support others. It may be an old story, yet it is ever new: in the face of overwhelming temptations toward living a negative lifestyle, the Divine is with us, always. As the character Chirrut repeats throughout the film, “I am one with the Force, and the Force is with me.” •

Colin Amato, MS, is a marriage and family therapist intern and also a Swedenborgian seminarian at Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, California.

SWEDENBORG FOUNDATION

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

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