

## News from the SWEDENBORG FOUNDATION

### OffTheLeftEye Breaks Viewership Records

Just one month into the launch of a new format for our weekly webcast [Swedenborg & Life](#), the [offTheLeftEye YouTube channel](#) smashed its previous viewership records. We had our best month ever in April with 4.73 million minutes watched, up 27% over our previous best month, January 2018.

In May, we reached another huge milestone: 100 million total minutes watched since the channel launch in 2010. That's more than 190 years of watch time, most of it accumulated in the past three to four years.

The new format for [Swedenborg & Life](#) alternates between prerecorded episodes and live shows, and so far the most popular episodes have been our two afterlife-themed ones: "[Do Ghosts Exist?](#)" and "[The Purpose of Death.](#)" But we've

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### DONATIONS MATCHED 5:1 ON PATREON

Thanks to a generous grant, viewers and fans of the video programming on our [offTheLeftEye YouTube](#) channel can now join us at [patreon.com/offthelefteye](#) and have their pledged support matched 5:1 there! This means if you pledge just \$5 a month, we'll get \$25 a month until the grant is exhausted. It's an unbelievable offer, stretching your dollars and allowing us to maximize our resources and increase our reach on the world's largest video-sharing network. •

# Swedenborg Foundation Launches Planned Giving Society

In recognition of the wonderful commitments that we've received from our community of supporters, the Swedenborg Foundation is launching a new planned giving society.

The 1749 Legacy Society—named after the year in which Emanuel Swedenborg began publishing his theological master work *Secrets of Heaven*—will recognize donors who have included the Foundation in their planned giving. Honorees are not only those who have named us as a beneficiary of their will, trust, or IRA, but also those who have taken advantage of options like transferring ownership of appreciated stocks, naming us as a beneficiary of a life insurance plan, and more.

Becoming a member of the society is as easy as telling us that we're a part of your future estate plans, so if you've already taken that step, please let us know! The society will have its first induction ceremony this fall, with new members added each year as new donors lend their support.

Leaving a planned gift to the Foundation helps to support our work far into the future, and it is a lasting statement of personal values. It can also have financial benefits for the giver, such as avoid-

ing tax penalties on certain types of income. To learn more about planned giving options of all types, contact our Director of Development Tim

Bilger at 610-297-2107 or [tbilger@swedenborg.com](mailto:tbilger@swedenborg.com).



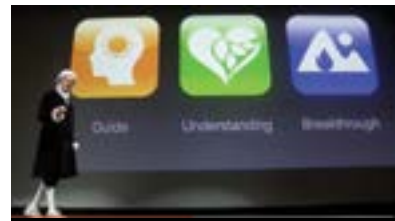
# Annual Meeting Takes Audience to the Movies

The Foundation’s annual meeting, held April 27, 2018 at Glencairn Museum in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, featured highlights from the past year and gave audience members a front row seat for the broadcast of an episode of our weekly webcast *Swedenborg & Life*.

The episode, titled “[How God Reaches Us,](#)” highlighted the different works that Swedenborg published in 1758—all of which were shorter and more focused books based on specific topics from his magnum opus *Secrets of Heaven*. Thinking about those short works of 1758 as marketing pieces led the *Swedenborg & Life* team to imagine how each would work as a movie trailer. You can see the results on our offTheLeftEye YouTube channel ([youtube.com/offthelefteye](https://youtube.com/offthelefteye)) by searching for the episode title, or to see the individual trailers search for one of the book titles: *Heaven and Hell*, *Last Judgment*, *New Jerusalem*, *White Horse*, or *Other Planets*.

At our annual business meeting, held just before the live broadcast, members heard about the ways in which our core programs—our online content, headlined by the [offTheLeftEye YouTube channel](#), and our New Century Edition translation series—have been feeding into our mission of spreading awareness of Swedenborg’s teachings to an ever-increasing audience. You can watch the meeting on the [Swedenborg Foundation YouTube channel](#) ([youtube.com/swedenborgfoundation](https://youtube.com/swedenborgfoundation)), or get more detailed

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information in our annual report by going to [www.swedenborg.com](http://www.swedenborg.com) and clicking on the “Featured Content” menu, then [“Newsletters, Catalogs, and Annual Reports.”](#)

## SF WELCOMES OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

After seven years of service as board president, Richard Hatheway stepped down at the board meeting in April. Vice-President Larry Conant will take his place as president, while board member Christopher Lynch will now become vice-president.

In addition, the annual meeting saw the election of a new slate of directors: Larry Conant and Stuart Shotwell are continuing their board service into new four-year terms, while incoming board members Kevin Baxter and Colin Amato are replacing outgoing directors Pete Toot and Fitzhugh Lewis Shaw. We thank all board members, and particularly the officers, for their hard work and dedicated service throughout the years! •

## New in Audio and E-Books

We’re pleased to announce new works available in audio or e-book editions!

- The New Century Edition translation of [True Christianity, vol. 2](#), is now available in an audio edition via our bookstore or the audiobook streaming service Audible.com. Translated by Jonathan S. Rose and expertly read by Gordon Meyer, now you can listen to the full work on audio.
- [Charity: The Practice of Neighborliness](#), recently reprinted with a new cover, is now available as an e-book for the first time. This work incorporates two incomplete manuscripts left unpublished by Swedenborg that center on his concept of charity, or loving kindness toward others.
- [Window to Eternity](#) by Bruce Henderson, a guide to Swedenborg’s vision of the afterlife, is also now available as an e-book for the first time.

These books and many more are available in our online bookstore at [www.swedenborg.com](http://www.swedenborg.com) and from fine retailers everywhere! •

also had success in remarketing popular episodes from the past year, including [“Why Did Jesus Come to Earth as a Baby?”](#), [“Rediscovering Forgiveness,”](#) and [“Regeneration: How Radical Love is Born.”](#)

The launch of the new show format coincided with the opening of our new studio, an expanded space with upgraded equipment that was made possible through the contributions of some very generous donors. We’re looking forward to combining all of those factors to keep improving the show over the coming months.

New episodes of [Swedenborg & Life](#) are posted on Monday nights at 8 p.m. Eastern time, or you can go to [youtube.com/offthelefteye](https://youtube.com/offthelefteye) any time to watch any one of hundreds of videos on Swedenborg-related topics! •

## MEET US IN CALIFORNIA!

Foundation representatives will be traveling to San Jose, California, in late June and early July, and we would love to see you there!

On June 30, we will be having a reception in Redwood City (just south of San Francisco) to meet local Foundation supporters and fans of our weekly webcast [Swedenborg & Life](#) producer and host Curtis Childs will be on hand to answer questions and talk about the latest news from the Foundation. The event is free, but space is limited, so we ask that attendees RSVP via our website at [www.swedenborg.com](http://www.swedenborg.com).

For those attending the [2018 Annual Convention of the Swedenborgian Churches of North America](#), you can see Curtis speak at the opening ceremony on the evening of July 1 or attend a mini-course taught by him the next day from 1:30 to 3:00 p.m. Go to the Convention website at [www.swedenborg.org](http://www.swedenborg.org) for details. •



## New Release: *The Universe & I*

While theologians should listen to the “antitheists” who tell them that the gods their minds construct are totally inadequate to account for the universe, antitheists should listen to those theologians who have been trying to tell us this for two or three millennia.

— George F. Dole, *The Universe and I*

We often think of science and spirituality as antithetical to each other, but in *The Universe & I: Where Science and Spirituality Meet*, author George F. Dole draws on a lifetime of deep thought and Swedenborgian spirituality to show how they can not only work together, but illuminate each other.

Building the science of the formation of the universe, the emergence of life, the process of evolution, and the mysteries of consciousness, Dole argues that the whole of existence is part of a pattern guided by love and designed to draw us closer together. He explores the tension between our desire for individuality and our need for community, and shows how each is equally and vitally important in our growth as a human race.

Woven throughout with Dole’s characteristic blend of humility and humor, *The Universe & I* presents a unique perspective on modern science

that is blended seamlessly with Swedenborg’s spirituality. It is now available in both paperback and e-book form in our online bookstore at [www.swedenborg.com](http://www.swedenborg.com) and from retailers everywhere. •





# Swedenborg and Life Recap: The Purpose of Death

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/offthellefteye](https://youtube.com/offthellefteye). You can also read recaps of other recent episodes at [swedenborg.com](https://swedenborg.com).

What is death even for? From our human perspective, it seems pretty terrible. But in reality, it's an integral part of a much greater machine that's powered by love. In this episode, hosts Curtis Childs and Jonathan Rose examine what eighteenth-century philosopher Emanuel Swedenborg discovered about death and what's beyond.

From our perspective, death seems final and pointless, but a higher perspective shows that it's not just important, but it can accomplish some positive ends. Show writer [Chelsea Odhner joins to talk about an example from biology](#)—the ways the cells of our body are always dying and being reborn in order to keep the body as a whole healthy. This is an ongoing process, and similar processes occur in ecosystems like forests, where the death of animals and plants makes room for new species and new innovations. In a way, the history of evolution is all about the benefits of death. Individual plants or animals can only change so much to adapt to a changing environment. It takes new generations to develop traits critical to survival. Death allows for this diversity of life.

[This happens on a spiritual level too](#)—in some ways, our physical lives are incubators for our souls and eternal lives. This, Swedenborg tells us in *Divine Providence* §220 (and elsewhere), is why no angel or spirit in the afterlife was created as such—they were all born human so that they could grow into the spiritual beings that they would become. You could think of the body as a



rocket ship that takes us into higher planes. Like a launching rocket, once we reach a certain point, we no longer need the heavy thrusters that started our journey, and we can continue on in a lighter and more streamlined form.

And just as there are little cellular deaths that help to maintain the health of our physical body, there are little spiritual deaths along the way that help to maintain the health of our spiritual selves.



One important type of [“mini spiritual death”](#) is the shedding of our hereditary self-centeredness. We all start out as children being self-centered; that’s necessary for our survival. As we get older,

we learn facts that help us develop empathy for others. The things we learn become the seeds from which a new spiritual understanding can grow.

But first, we have to detach from our self-centeredness. How do we do that?

The only way to dig out the root of evil is by doing battle against it. The more we do battle and thereby set evils to one side, the more what is good replaces them and we look what is evil in the face from the perspective of what is good and see that the evil is hellish and hideous. Since this is how we see it then, we not only abstain from it but develop an aversion to it and eventually loathe it. ([Life](#) §§94–95)

Since what’s right for your own self-interest and what’s right for everyone can look similar, how do we know evil when we see it? Fortunately, we have some powerful spiritual learning tools available to us: [video games](#). In



an animated sequence, we see how the right “power-ups”—truth and love from God—help us to separate the self-delusion from the truth and defeat our own negative tendencies.

This process of death leading to new life is reflected by



what Jesus says in John 12:24: “Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” And that brings us just to the point where Jonathan can explain why [Jesus himself took part in the process of death](#): God came to earth as a human so that he could bring divinity to the outermost level of reality, but that divine love couldn’t manifest until he went through the transformative process of death.

Death was always meant to be transformative, but it wasn’t always so painful. [Chara Daum joins to help us](#) understand the inner meaning of the story of Adam and Eve: In the earliest days of human existence, death was a seamless, natural transition between the physical and spiritual worlds. It’s only once we separated from the Divine that it started to become painful.

But it’s all for a good purpose, we find as the episode wraps up—[we’re making heaven](#). •

## VIEWER COMMENTS

I love this episode. “Death is letting go of old agendas.” Great sentence. Death is intricately woven into the fabric of evolution. Feels great to me. — Rosemarie

I love everything about this video, from the funny & engaging intro to the intelligent discussion of death from a variety of different (yet inter-related) perspectives (biological, spiritual, etc.). I love the way you discussed death on many levels, from simple to complex (cell, organ, organism, species . . . universe . . . spiritual beings . . .) & your explanation of death as a beneficial process . . . i. e., not an end to life, but part of our evolution to a higher state, one in which we are more connected to everyone & everything. — Starlit Sky

This was a complex topic and you brought up so many interesting and useful thoughts. I liked the concrete examples of apoptosis and the ecosystems needing death to flourish because if it’s in the natural world, it has to be in the spiritual world, too. It’s reassuring!

— Nadine

This is a wonderful video. It addresses the most important questions we face as humans. And it very simply demonstrates our part and our growth into what our heavenly father hopes we will become.

— Jon

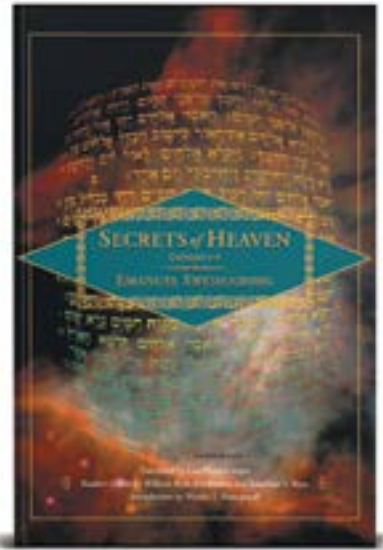
# NCE Minute: The Mystery of the Disappearing Magnum Opus

Translating and annotating the Swedenborg Foundation's [New Century Edition \(NCE\)](#) brings one into a direct and systematic encounter with Swedenborg's works. Inevitably, patterns emerge there that beg for explanations, even if one can never really go beyond speculation about their causes. Here is one such pattern that came to the fore recently—we call it “the disappearing magnum opus.”

When Swedenborg turned to writing theological works, he began with an extremely ambitious project: to explain the inner meaning of the Bible. He produced a kind of first draft, *The Old Testament Explained*, in 1,951 manuscript pages. Dissatisfied with it, he set it aside and started afresh. The work that resulted from this second attempt, [Secrets of Heaven](#) (*Arcana Coelestia* is the familiar Latin title), fills 4,562 quarto pages in eight volumes. As the longest and arguably the most all-encompassing of Swedenborg's works, it is without doubt his magnum opus.

After bringing the *Secrets of Heaven* project to a close in 1756, he seems to have rethought his approach. In 1758, instead of publishing another huge work, he issued five far smaller books. Taken all together, they add up to the size of just one of the original Latin volumes of *Secrets of Heaven*. Though their brevity evinces a new strategy, these works of 1758 are still chock-full of *Secrets of Heaven*, to which they refer (on average) dozens of times on every page. Thus it has been said that the five works of 1758 seem designed to be points of entry into *Secrets of Heaven*. Like heralds sent ahead to announce the arrival of approaching royalty, they never cease turning and pointing back to the larger work.

After issuing [the works of 1758](#), Swedenborg plunged into a giant exegesis of the book of Revelation. He never published it, however. It survives only in two manuscripts, one a rough draft and the other a copy in a clear



hand for the printer; these carry the title *Apocalypsis Explicata* (Revelation Explained). Again, as he had in the publications of 1758, Swedenborg began referring readers to *Secrets of Heaven* as he wrote. At some point as he proceeded, he seems to have realized that his audience might be unaware of the source of these references, which were clearly important to him; so he returned to the beginning of the manuscript and, writing sideways in the margin, inserted this somewhat redundant statement: “In the following exposition, many passages are cited from *Secrets of Heaven*; let be it known, therefore, that they are from that work.”

In keeping with this scrupulous announcement, references to *Secrets of Heaven* crop up frequently in the first part of the book. But they begin to fade out as *Revelation Explained* unfolds. Halfway through, they are about a tenth as frequent as in the beginning, and they diminish to virtually none as the manuscript approaches its close. The change of plan is as mysterious as it is unmistakable.

The mystery deepens when we look at the next work Swedenborg published, which was not issued until 1763. His initial publication of that year, *The Lord*, contains a preface listing previous books he has published and books that are soon to appear. Yet the preface makes no mention of *Secrets of Heaven*. The first works listed in its summary are the five books pub-

lished in 1758. It is as if Swedenborg’s theological publishing career began in 1758—and as if *Secrets of Heaven* simply does not exist.\*

In short, Swedenborg’s goal in 1758 seems to have been to mention *Secrets of Heaven* as often as possible, but by 1763 one might well think he had never written the book, judging from his relative silence concerning it.

The shift in strategy seems to have taken place sometime during the eighteen months or so in which he was writing *Revelation Explained*. He may have heard that *Secrets of*

\* Swedenborg does give a dozen references to *Secrets of Heaven* in a footnote in *The Lord* §64, but their scantiness is almost pathetic in contrast to the thousands upon thousands of references to be found in the works of 1758.



*Heaven* had not sold well (and we do know that his bookseller initially found the book hard to “move”). Or he may have learned that between late sales and his own free distribution (we know he gave away many copies), the stock was depleted. In either of those cases, he might well have felt less urgency in directing people to it. But he may also have decided that the world simply was not ready for *Secrets of Heaven*.

It would be incorrect to say that he never referred to his first theological publication again. He had invested almost a decade of his life in it, and he must have looked beyond petty matters such as current sales and stock-on-shelf and seen that it would remain the magnum opus of his entire career. He mentions it again some twenty times in *Revelation Unveiled* (1766) and ten in *True Christianity* (1771), so it was not forgotten.

But never again after the works of 1758—*Heaven and Hell*, *New Jerusalem*, *Last Judgment*, *White Horse*, and *Other Planets*—did Swedenborg point to *Secrets of Heaven* so fully and repeatedly.

“The disappearing magnum opus” is likely to remain one of those intriguing, fascinating, and ultimately baffling patterns that one sees on the surface of the theological works, spreading like a ripple with an uncertain cause. •



To read more about such patterns in Swedenborg's theological works, see “Swedenborg's Modes of Presentation, 1749–1771” by George F. Dole, and “Swedenborg's Manuscripts,” by Frank S. Rose. Both are published in the NCE companion volume, *Emanuel Swedenborg: Essays for the New Century Edition on His Life, Work, and Impact*, which was published in paperback as *Scribe of Heaven*.

# Bearing True Witness to the Warm Color of Mercy: A Parable of “Fake News”

*By Chelsea Odhner*

The Lord said through the prophet Isaiah, “You are my witnesses!”  
(43:10,12; 44:8)

In the age of “fake news” and the #MeToo movement, it seems as though we have reached a cultural tipping point around the importance of bearing true witness. Having access to media on a global scale, we can sometimes feel powerless in the face of all that we witness; our power, though, remains in how we bear witness. Bearing true witness is the beginning of transformation, for ourselves as individuals and for society.

## THE REAL NEWS

Why is it so valuable that the truth come out in either society or in our own heads? Because it allows us to reckon with what is genuinely aligned with love and what isn't. It can be just as painful to admit to the true circumstances of our own mental state as it is to acknowledge the grossly maligned boundaries of a relationship, but to notice is to begin to carve a way toward a state more rooted in love.

We know what the commandment not to bear false witness means on an outer level: be honest; don't lie. But if we peel back a layer from this by taking its implications into the realm of an individual mind, asking ourselves, “What kind of a witness am I to my own life?”, we realize that we each have both a false-witness mind and a true-witness mind.

I've come to learn that the “fake news” in my head—the false witness—is anything arising from selfhood.



When truths are derived from the self they have as their end in view rank and prominence over everyone in the world, and also earthly possessions and wealth above everyone. Consequently they hold within them self-love and love of the world, thus all evils in their entirety. . . . Products of the self or self-intelligence are called truths, but they are not really truths; they look like truths solely to outward appearances. (*Arcana Coelestia* [*Secrets of Heaven*] §8941:2)

What, then, is the real news? It is what comes to us from heavenly love, or in other words, what comes from God, who is divine love. For a commandment that is just telling us not to lie, it may not seem this way on the surface, but love, or what Swedenborg calls “the good of love,” is a core part of bearing true witness. In fact, you can’t have truth without it.

The Lord comes into sight through good, but not through truth devoid of good. . . . He is present in truth to the extent that it leads to good and to the extent that it emanates from good. . . . The truths of faith regarded without love are mere sounds devoid of any life; but through love, and so through being joined to the good of love, they receive life. (*Arcana Coelestia* [*Secrets of Heaven*] §§3863:14; 10153:4; 4352:2)

What does this mean for my own states? Well, it behooves me both to question those states that are out to attack me, or others, and to consciously adopt a perspective that has the warm color of mercy. Yet the grooves of a false-witness mind are ingrained. The outer, or earthly, level of our mind is built to function in appearances—which allows us to live in the natural world—but if we make spiritual judgments based solely on these appearances, we will be misled.

The earthly self makes judgments based on appearances and resulting false impressions, when in fact these run directly counter to the truth. . . . Sense impressions mean things that impinge on our physical senses and are experienced by those senses. . . . When our thinking rises above sense impressions, it enters a clearer light and eventually comes into the light of heaven. From this light we get the awareness of truth that constitutes real intelligence. . . . If sense impressions have the highest priority . . . truths are not visible to us except as if they were in a fog or in the dark of night. (*True Christianity* §§470; 402:12, 16, 18)



Thoughts based on appearances often betray the love that is alive in all things.

## WHAT IT TAKES

The false-witness perspective will always be there. We must choose daily, and moment to moment, to lift our minds to the true witness. It takes repeated effort and requires choice.

What we are trying to do is expand the place within ourselves where the Lord can live. And what we are grasping onto and holding so tightly to—namely, our old self—is the very thing that is preventing that from happening. . . . We have to become . . . a vessel [so that] the Lord can live in us and also be active through us. The Lord has given us that potential. (*Observing Spirit*, 170)

A friend once suggested making the effort into a phrase that will help reach for the true witness in any difficult moment: “What is the most loving way I could hold my circumstances?” Hear the message as if it’s coming from someone who for you encapsulates total love. Another avenue is to use the practice of *metta*, or loving-kindness meditation, which consists of the conscious cultivation of the experience of loving-presence. Either by imagining holding someone dear to you in a loving gaze or by being on the receiving end of a loving gaze from someone who embodies total, ecstatic love for you, the perspective gained from being in this love-filled state is one of true witness.

It is an act of strength and courage to live in alignment with true witness. And it is a monumental feat because it means going against the tide of the world of appearances, against the strong current of either our false witness mind on an individual level or worldly appearances in society—reputations or expectations. It is exactly what is needed to transform our world, both inner and outer. By bearing true witness, in our own minds or in society, we can trust that we are adding to the ocean of genuine truth that the Lord operates through to lead us to love and that “he does not rest until love takes the lead” (*Secrets of Heaven* §63). •

*Chelsea Rose Odhner is a writer for the Swedenborg & Life show on the [offTheLeftEye YouTube channel](#).*

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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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