

News from the SWEDENBORG FOUNDATION

New Season Launches on *Swedenborg & Life*

A brand-new season of our hit webcast *Swedenborg & Life* launched at the beginning of April, kicking off a twelve-week cycle of programming on the theme of changing your life story.

The core of the season consists of four pre-recorded episodes:

- “The Secret to Changing Your Life Story” (April 1) – If you imagine your life as a story with its own setting, plot, and characters, then how do you navigate your way to a happy ending?
- “Where Stories Are Kept in Heaven” (April 22) – If it’s heaven, there have to be libraries, right? Find out what happened when Swedenborg went to find them.
- “How to Change Your Spirit Connections” (May 13) – The people we spend our time

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A LEGACY THAT LASTS

A gift from your estate is a truly wonderful way to provide support to a cause you believe in. If you are considering honoring the Swedenborg Foundation in this way, such a gift can be even more meaningful if we are made aware of your intentions during your lifetime. Doing so allows us to share our gratitude by recognizing you in our 1749 Legacy Society!

For more information or to share your intentions, please reach out to Tim Bilger, Director of Development, at 610-297-2107 or tbilger@swedenborg.com.

with have a profound influence on how we see the world. If that's also true of our spiritual company, what can we do about it?

- “6 Spiritual Powers of the Lord’s Prayer” (May 27) – Swedenborg found reciting the Lord’s Prayer to be a very powerful experience. In this episode, the crew delves into the deeper meaning of these familiar words.

Following each prerecorded episode is a live episode that explores the same topic in more depth, with plenty of opportunity for the audience to get involved and ask questions. But in case that doesn’t sate your curiosity, following those episodes will be a third show, a panel discussion where co-hosts Curtis Childs and Jonathan Rose are joined by special guests to spend a full hour answering your questions about Swedenborg.

New episodes are released every Monday night at 8 p.m. Eastern U.S. time at youtube.com/offTheLeftEye.

NEWS FROM HEAVEN IS A HIT!

[Swedenborg & Life](#) is now only one feature on the offTheLeftEye YouTube channel’s expanding constellation of content. At the beginning of the year, we launched a new series, [News from Heaven](#) where host Curtis Childs takes a short piece of text from one of Swedenborg’s works and explores what it means and how we can apply those teachings to our life.

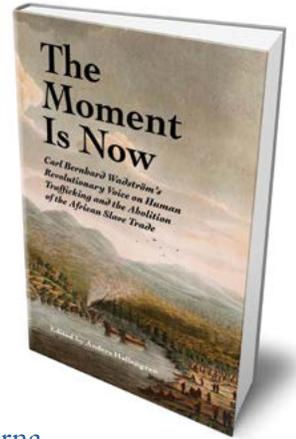
The response to this series has been amazing—the number of video comments that we receive on a weekly basis has doubled since the series launched, and those responses were so positive that we’ve now started releasing new episodes twice a week.



You can catch the latest on Thursdays at 12:30 p.m. and Saturdays at 11 a.m., both Eastern U.S. time, always on the [offTheLeftEye YouTube](#) channel. •

New in Books: *The Moment Is Now*

Carl Bernhard Wadström was a scientist whose promising career at Sweden’s prestigious Board of Mines was abruptly derailed by an unexpected journey. In 1787, the king of Sweden had commissioned Wadström to lead an expedition to West Africa to assess the possibility of establishing a Swedish colony there. But once he arrived, Wadström was so horrified by the practices he witnessed surrounding the slave trade that he would devote the rest of his life to ending slavery.



Wadström’s life and legacy were explored in [The International Carl Bernhard Wadström Conference on Human Rights and the Abolition of Slavery](#), held in London, England, in 2015. Scholars from across Europe and North America offered research on Wadström’s journey to Africa, the resulting testimony before the British Board of Trade that was instrumental in outlawing the slave trade in Great Britain, and the broader context of how Africans and the slave trade were viewed by Europeans and Americans at that time. This collected wisdom is now available in [The Moment Is Now: Carl Bernhard Wadström’s Revolutionary Voice on Human Trafficking and the Abolition of the African Slave Trade](#).

Although the focus of both the book and conference is the historical slave trade, conference organizers Anders Hallengren (who also edited the book) and Anders Mortensen take care to remind us that the issue of slavery is not just one of the past: human trafficking is a crime that still affects millions of people across the globe, in virtually every country, and it flourishes in part because its dynamics are poorly understood. This book carries the hope that knowledge of the past will carry forward and help change the present.

The Moment Is Now will be available in early June through our online bookstore at swedenborg.com/bookstore and through fine retailers everywhere. •

The Moment Is Now: Carl Bernhard Wadström’s Revolutionary Voice on Human Trafficking and the Abolition of the African Slave Trade

Edited by Anders Hallengren

978-0-87785-317-6 / hc / 320 pages / \$29.95

News Roundup

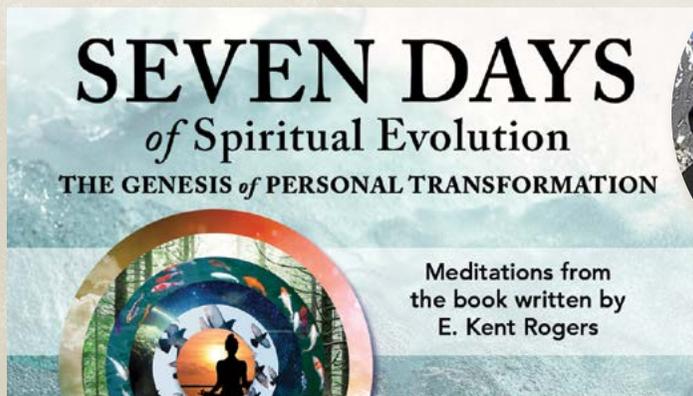
Our new release [*Seven Days of Spiritual Evolution: The Genesis of Personal Transformation*](#) is now available in two new formats! For those who like to read on phones or tablets, the full text is available as an e-book, or, for those who want to work more deeply with the material, we now have free audio versions of the meditations made available courtesy of author E. Kent Rogers.

Seven Days of Spiritual Evolution takes the reader on a journey through the seven days of creation as described in the book of Genesis and interpreted by Swedenborg. For each “day” of our spiritual development, Kent offers insights based on his personal journey and his training as a psychologist, paired with [meditations and exercises](#) for people who want to apply those ideas to their own lives.

The Swedenborg Chapel in Cambridge, Massachusetts was so inspired by the content of the book that they launched a series of weekly services based on the seven days of creation, which as this was being written was scheduled to culminate with a talk by Kent on April 7.

Speaking of appearances, Curtis Childs, host of our weekly webcast *Swedenborg & Life*, was featured on a recent episode of the **Spiritual Realities radio show** on the KWAM station out of Memphis, Tennessee. If you’d like to take a listen, go to <http://spiritualrealities.podbean.com/> and search for episode 6, “[Karmic Secrets and Curtis Childs](#).”

For all the latest news, make sure you’re signed up for our e-mail newsletter by going to www.swedenborg.com and filling out the form at the bottom of the page. •



NCE Minute: Why Two Works about Life?

By Jonathan S. Rose

Emanuel Swedenborg’s book [*The Lord*](#) begins with an author’s preface. There Swedenborg lists the full titles of nine works, including *The Lord*, that he intended to publish soon. The works fall into two groups of four, separated by one that is in neither group:

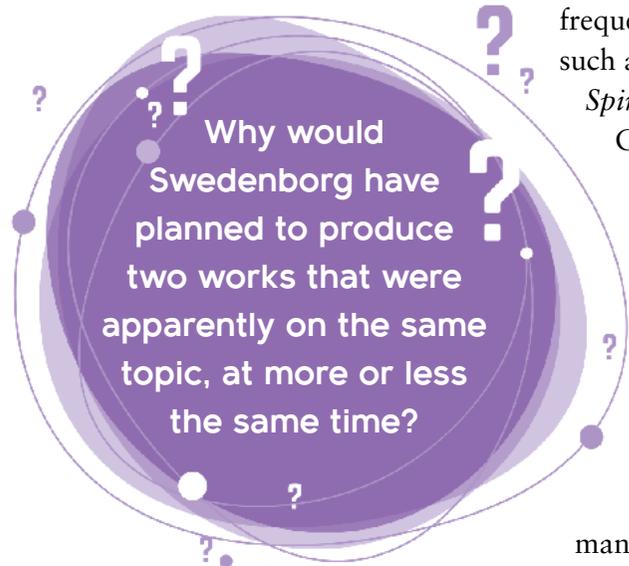
Teachings for the New Jerusalem on the Lord
Teachings for the New Jerusalem on Sacred Scripture
Teachings about Life for the New Jerusalem: Drawn from the Ten Commandments
Teachings for the New Jerusalem on Faith

Supplements on the Last Judgment [and the Spiritual World]

Angelic Wisdom about Divine Providence
Angelic Wisdom about Divine Omnipotence, Omnipresence, Omniscience, Infinity, and Eternity
Angelic Wisdom about Divine Love and Wisdom
Angelic Wisdom about Life

The list contains something of a puzzle. Each of the two groups contains a book “about life”: *Teachings about Life for the New Jerusalem* and *Angelic Wisdom about Life*. Why would Swedenborg have planned to produce two works that were apparently on the same topic, at more or less the same time? Since he eventually decided not to publish the second of these, we cannot compare the texts of the two; but we do have at least the two titles and one of the works in full, and we can see what clues they offer.

First of all, let’s look at the general differences between the books Swedenborg wrote that are titled *Teachings* and those that are titled *Angelic Wisdom*. One difference is that the works labeled *Teachings* tend to cite and quote the Bible far more than do the works labeled *Angelic Wisdom*. A striking example of this is that *Teachings for the New Jerusalem on the Lord* and *Angelic Wisdom about Divine Love and Wisdom* are both about God, and yet the former quotes Scripture fully forty-five times as much as the latter. Another difference is that the works labeled *Teachings* make



frequent use of Christian terms such as *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Spirit* and quote from the Christian creeds; the works labeled *Angelic Wisdom* speak instead in terms of “the Divine” and “the Divine-Human One” and rely heavily on argumentation and analogy. The underlying teachings are consistent, but the tone and manner are quite distinct. It

seems that the works labeled *Teachings* presume more familiarity with the Bible, and therefore a different audience, than do the works labeled *Angelic Wisdom*.

Another clue that the two books about life were to be quite different in approach can be seen in the fact that Swedenborg uses a different term for a work on “angelic wisdom” than he does for other works: he calls it a *transactio*, or “treatise.” Swedenborg’s general practice from the beginning of his theological publishing was to refer to a sizeable work as an *opus* (“a work”) and to a shorter one as an *opusculum* (“a small work”), but in *Sacred Scripture*, written in 1763, he introduced *transactio* as a new term specifically for the four *Angelic Wisdom* books we have been discussing:

These are mysteries familiar to heaven’s angels that will be unfolded, as far as possible, in the treatises mentioned in the preface to *Teachings on the Lord* that are to be drawn from angelic wisdom: namely, *About Divine Providence*; *About Omnipotence, Omnipresence, Omniscience*; *About Divine Love and Wisdom*; and *About Life*. ([Sacred Scripture](#) §32)

Even within a single passage where Swedenborg lists the titles of several books, he will use *transactio* for [Divine Love and Wisdom](#) and [Divine Providence](#) (both *Angelic Wisdom* books), but other terms for other books. For example:

... in the treatise *About Divine Love and Wisdom* and earlier in this treatise *About Divine Providence*, and also in the work *Heaven and Hell* ... ([Divine Providence](#) §163)

In the mid-eighteenth century the term *transactio*, unlike the vaguer *opus*, was used of works that were juridical, historical, or argumentative in nature.

A final clue to the difference between the two books about life occurs in a statement made in [Sacred Scripture](#) §115; it refers to people who believe in God but not in the authority of the written Word, and says how one needs to deal with them:

There are people who propose and then prove to themselves that without the Word we could know about the existence of God, about heaven and hell, too, and something about other things that the Word teaches. They then use this assumption to undermine the authority and holiness of the Word, if not out loud, then in their hearts. *There is no dealing with them on the basis of the Word. We must appeal to the light of reason* because they do not believe the Word, only themselves. ([Sacred Scripture](#) §115, emphasis added)

Although this is expressed in a way that was no doubt insulting to that readership, the material in italics in the last two sentences could serve as a program statement for the approach taken in the treatises labeled *Angelic Wisdom*: they lean heavily on the light of reason and only lightly on Scripture references.

All these clues suggest a possible explanation for that otherwise puzzling fact that Swedenborg planned to issue two works “about life” at the same time. One (the one that was actually published) was apparently geared toward the clergy and those who are steeped in the Bible and the principles and traditions of the Christian church; the other (which was not published after all) would presumably have been written, like the other *Angelic Wisdom* books, as a treatise for an audience that appreciated philosophical rather than scriptural reasoning. •

This article is adapted from the introduction to the [New Century Edition](#)’s forthcoming Deluxe volume, *The Shorter Works of 1763*.

Swedenborg & Life Recap: Secrets of Heaven

By Josh Cole, Swedenborg.com Contributor

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

To kick off the new year, *Swedenborg & Life* launched a series of live episodes that explore some of Swedenborg's most famous works in detail. In this first episode, hosts Curtis Childs and Jonathan Rose explore Swedenborg's magnum opus, [*Secrets of Heaven*](#).

When Swedenborg learned about the spiritual world, [he did his best to capture and share everything he learned](#). His first attempt was a huge, multivolume work called [*Arcana Coelestia*](#), which translates from Latin to mean [*Secrets of Heaven*](#).



The fundamental premise of this work is that the Bible contains hidden spiritual meaning. This meaning can actually reveal much about the true nature of the spiritual world and our reality.

Through “correspondences,”

which are living symbols for spiritual truths, almost everything can be understood through the Bible.

[*Secrets of Heaven*](#) was published from 1749 to 1756. In it, Swedenborg provides detailed analysis of the books of Genesis and Exodus interspersed with his own spiritual experiences and his high-level understanding about God and the universe. He offers the reader the essence of the book in its very first lines:

The Word in the Old Testament contains secrets of heaven, and every single aspect of it has to do with the Lord, his heaven, the church, faith, and all the tenets of faith; but not a single person sees this in the letter. In the letter, or literal meaning, people see only that it deals for the

most part with the external facts of the Jewish religion. The truth is, however, that every part of the Old Testament holds an inner message. ([*Secrets of Heaven* §1](#))

THREE BITES

To get a closer look at what [*Secrets of Heaven*](#) has to say, [we'll do a deep dive into three key passages](#) that explore some of its recurring themes. The first idea is that spirits and angels have a strong connection to our own human experience.

The source of perception, inner dictates, and conscience needs to be understood. Because no one these days knows anything about it, let me say a little. It is entirely true that the Lord governs us through spirits and angels. When evil spirits start to take control, angels put their effort into deflecting evils and falsities, and conflict results. This conflict is what we sense by means of perception, an inner dictate, or conscience. From these three sensations, and from the trials we are going through, we would see clearly that spirits and angels are present with us if our focus were not thoroughly physical. Such a focus prevents us from believing anything we hear about spirits and angels. Body-centered people could experience those conflicts a hundred times over and still claim that an overactive imagination or some kind of mental illness lay at the root of them. ([*Secrets of Heaven* §227](#))

Another concept that Swedenborg brings up quite a bit is the phrase “[as if of self](#),” which refers to those times when you feel that you're doing something on your own when in fact it is coming from the Lord.

Spirits newly arrived [in the spiritual world] absolutely rack their brains trying to understand the idea that we cannot do what is good or think what is true on our own but only from the Lord. They believe that this would make them machines, incapable of anything, and that if so, they may as well drop their hands and let themselves be pushed around. “No,” they are told, “you really have to think, will, and do good on your own. Otherwise you wouldn't be able to develop a heavenly sense of autonomy or heavenly freedom. But you still ought to acknowledge that what is good and true comes not from you but from the Lord.” All angels, they are taught, make this acknowledgment and even live in the perception that it is so. The more keenly they sense that the Lord leads them and that they therefore live in the Lord, the freer they are. ([*Secrets of Heaven* §2891](#))

Think of this like moving your arm. You will your arm to move, but you don't know all the inner workings and muscles that make it work. Goodness and truth flow through you, but you have to let them flow.

Finally, Swedenborg does a good deal of redefining and contextualizing commonly accepted terminology. For example, in the case of the word *worship*, he upends what we usually take it to mean.

The most genuine way of worshiping the Lord consists in a life of neighborly love, not a life of religious devotion without a life of neighborly love. Living a devout life and not a charitable life means wanting to consult one's own welfare alone, not the welfare of one's neighbor. Living a devout life and at the same time a charitable life means wanting to consult one's own welfare for the sake of one's neighbor. The former type of life is based on love for oneself; the latter, on love for one's neighbor. (*Secrets of Heaven* §8254)

So how can *Secrets of Heaven* help people in their daily lives? As Jonathan points out, Swedenborg offers a truly unique view of the Bible and of the spiritual world. Where else can you go for this kind of insight? For Curtis, one of the most special aspects of this book is how it describes a relationship between us and the Divine that is present in all aspects of our lives.

This episode also features many other special segments—go to youtube.com/offTheLeftEye to get the full experience! •

VIEWER COMMENTS

Oh my Lord only 13 min in and I am feeling much beyond the mind as if I am one of the people this is meant for. By observation I see that you guys put so much thought and heart into this it is a blessing to witness. Thank you guys and of course (without a doubt) thank you Lord God for giving the increase to this and us. This is so great I am being filled and my thirst is being quenched. —Riku

My next book will be the *Secrets of Heaven* volume 1 and God bless you and keep you safe so you can keep producing the programs which are brilliant!! —Glenn

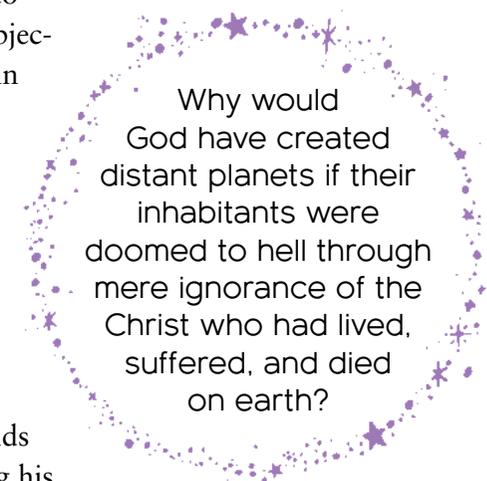
From Our Blog: *Other Planets*

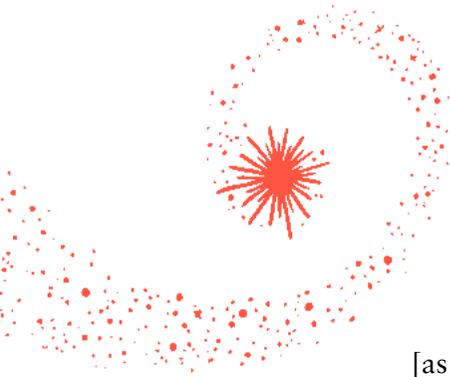
By Richard Smoley

The following is a condensed version of a post that originally appeared on our [Scholars on Swedenborg](#) blog on swedenborg.com, and also in a longer format in the introduction to the New Century Edition volume *The Shorter Works of 1758*, translated by George F. Dole and released in 2018.

It would seem that Swedenborg had some clear objectives in mind when he published *New Jerusalem*, *Last Judgment*, and *White Horse*—namely, to set out the teachings of the new church, to describe the judgment that had taken place in the world of spirits in 1757, and to underscore the fact of an inner meaning in Scripture. The fourth of these shorter works of 1758, *Other Planets* (in earlier translations called *Earths in the Universe*), has the aim of showing, first, that the universe exists to populate heaven, and second, that the Lord is worshiped everywhere. Swedenborg uses the ongoing debate about other worlds to achieve these very Swedenborgian objectives. Like everyone else before him in this debate, Swedenborg in his scientific phase comes across the immovable barrier created by the lack of empirical evidence.

It would prove otherwise in Swedenborg's theological period. At this point, Swedenborg does attempt to provide empirical evidence for the existence of other worlds and other beings—the evidence being his own spiritual experiences, as the full title of his book indicates: *The Earthlike Bodies Called Planets in Our Solar System and in Deep Space, Their Inhabitants, and the Spirits and Angels There: Drawn from Things Heard and Seen*. He begins *Other Planets* by describing his experiences with spirits from the planets known in his time: Mercury, Jupiter, Mars, Saturn, Venus, and the Moon (in that order). He then proceeds to beings from planets outside the solar system, of which he





enumerates five. He does not seem to know of any other planets in our solar system, in keeping with the knowledge of his day: Uranus would not be discovered until 1781, nine years after his death.

These experiences differ radically from later encounters with extraterrestrial creatures [as described, for example, in modern books, television shows, and online forums], whether one

believes such encounters real or imagined, in one chief respect: Swedenborg is not dealing with these beings as they lived in physical form, but rather with their spirits. Nonetheless, he makes it clear that these spirits originally had physical bodies on their respective planets, just as inhabitants of Earth have, and thus he is able to learn about and even view these planets for himself.

Swedenborg does not appear to be interested in drawing general scientific conclusions about beings from other worlds, or what their nature might imply for scientific knowledge; rather he limits himself to concrete descriptions of these inhabitants, their patterns of mind, and their way of life. He does, however, draw theological conclusions. His work has two chief purposes, which he himself states when he quotes *Other Planets* in his major work of 1758, *Heaven and Hell*: “To let people know that the Lord’s heaven is vast and that it is all from the human race, and also that our Lord is recognized everywhere as the God of heaven and earth” (§417:7).

The first purpose is expressed slightly differently when it actually appears in *Other Planets*. Here he says it is to show that “not enough people come into heaven from our world” to fulfill all the roles to be played in heaven. We on earth, says Swedenborg, “are relatively few, so people from many other planets are needed as well. As a result the Lord has provided that the moment there is any deficiency” of quantity or type of people

to fulfill the roles in the heavenly order, “people from another planet are immediately summoned to fill the need, so that the proper proportion is maintained and heaven therefore stands firm” (*Other Planets* §9). Since the heavenly order resembles a human being (called by Swedenborg the *homo maximus*, the “greatest” or “universal human”) these roles are often identified by parts or functions of the brain or body. The spirits of the planet Mercury, for example, supply “memory, but specifically the memory of abstract concepts, apart from things that are earthly and merely physical” (§10).

The second purpose of *Other Planets* is to confront “the scandal of particularity” as it applies to the topic of other inhabited worlds. The sense of the word “scandal” in this phrase is an old one; it means “a stumbling block to, or something that hinders the acceptance of, religious belief, specifically Christian.” The scandal of particularity, generally expressed, is the question of how any person who does not have access to knowledge about Jesus Christ can ever have the faith in Christ necessary to be saved from an afterlife in hell. In Europe in Swedenborg’s time, the scandal was already perceived as a threat to Christianity as a consequence of the growing knowledge of vast non-Christian cultures in the far-flung regions of the earth. The popularly held notion that there must be intelligent life on other planets greatly exacerbated the problem. Why would God have created distant planets if their inhabitants were doomed to hell through mere

ignorance of the Christ who had lived, suffered, and died on earth? Such an expanded view of the universe made the most basic tenets of Christianity look too limited and particular to be plausible.

Swedenborg directly addresses this scandal in the opening of the book: “As for the worship of God by the inhabitants of other planets, generally speaking any who are not idolators acknowledge the Lord as the only God.” To this he adds the clincher: “Everyone who worships the Divine in human form is accepted by the Lord,” or, in other words, is saved from hell (§7). He buttresses this assertion by giving many specific instances of the acceptance of the Lord by inhabitants of other worlds (see §§40, 65, 70, 91, 98–99, 107, 110, 141, 154, 159, 162; worship of the Lord is also strongly



implied in other passages, such as §130). And if that is not enough to meet critics of Christianity head on, he supplies an entire chapter (§§113–122) explaining “why the Lord wanted to be born on our planet and not on some other.” He also sketches the alternative: in §§161–164, he describes the spirit of a benighted preacher from earth who had refused to believe there were other planets precisely because of the particularity of Jesus’s birth on our world. Swedenborg’s treatment makes clear how wrongheaded he finds this attitude to be.

In sum, Swedenborg’s vision of other worlds reveals three main themes. The first two are the explicit purposes he mentions himself: the necessity for other worlds in order to furnish the full population of heaven, and a

refutation of the charge of particularity. The third is an emphasis on certain core values—notably the need for moral sincerity and the need to acknowledge the primacy of spiritual as opposed to earthly reality. His little book in fact often proves to be not just a telescope that reveals other worlds but a mirror that shows us the relative moral and spiritual backwardness of our own. •

*Richard Smoley is a director of the Swedenborg Foundation. He is the author of a number of books, including *Inner Christianity: A Guide to the Esoteric Tradition* and the forthcoming *God Now: A Fresh View of Ultimate Reality*. He is also editor of *Quest: Journal of the Theosophical Society in America*. His website is innerchristianity.com.*

SOME THEORIES ABOUT THE PROBLEMS POSED BY OTHER PLANETS

There is no evidence at present for life-forms in this solar system that even remotely resemble humans. One’s response to this fact will vary with one’s attitude toward Swedenborg’s thought as a whole. There are any number of theories offered by subsequent [Swedenborgian] commentators attempting to reconcile his assertions with current science. The following five major strands of hypotheses are offered for interested readers; but this list is by no means exhaustive.

1. Swedenborg was misinformed for any of several reasons. That is, his incorrect identification of the planets associated with spirits was a result solely of deductions based on insufficient information. Among such conjectures is the possibility that the angels, presumably the heavenly source from which Swedenborg learned the names of the planets he describes (see *Other Planets* §10), were themselves imperfectly informed.
2. Swedenborg intended *Other Planets* most importantly to deal with theological questions; its spiritual meaning is paramount, no matter what we think of its literal validity. Some of the critics who abandon the literal truth of *Other Planets* come very close to saying that the work is fiction written for a didactic purpose.

3. Swedenborg was describing the conditions of spirits in the world of spirits, not on physical planets.
4. The facts about extraterrestrials described in *Other Planets* somehow remain literally true, despite apparent scientific evidence to the contrary. For example, it has been maintained that the inhabitants of the planets in question have now died off or live out of sight underground, or that they possessed some kind of gaseous bodies while living.
5. Swedenborg was not misinformed, nor is modern science incorrect. The discrepancy arose from Swedenborg’s attempt to understand and explain his visionary experiences in light of the material world as he knew it. This complex theory maintains that knowledge about the planets in the spiritual world cannot “agree with” knowledge about the planets of the material world.

However literally or metaphorically one wishes to take his encounters with the spirits of planets from this solar system and others, they remain an integral part of his powerful and all-encompassing spiritual vision.

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