

News from the SWEDENBORG FOUNDATION

Celebrating Five Years of *Swedenborg & Life*

Five years ago, we launched a new series of videos on our [offTheLeftEye](#) YouTube channel. The premise was simple: host Curtis Childs reads Swedenborg's writings from text on a screen, stopping to comment on what each piece means for us personally. From those humble beginnings, our hit webcast [Swedenborg & Life](#) was born.

Nobody expected it to be a success—especially not Curtis. “[The show] actually began as, we were just reading through the writings of Swedenborg and offering a bit of a guided tour. And of course, I thought, not many people are going to want to watch that. And I was completely wrong. That is really when our channel took off,” he said as he hosted the five-year anniversary special for [Swedenborg & Life](#), recorded in front of a live audience at the Swedenborg Foundation's

continued on page 2

IN THIS ISSUE

- New York Gathering a Success
- Annual Meeting Reveals Future Plans
- New Book: *Medicine, Mysticism and Mythology*
- NCE: Parallel Passages in Swedenborg's Works
- S&L Recap: *Where Stories Are Kept in Heaven*
- Blog: *The First Librarians*

JOIN THE COMMUNITY

Being a member of the Swedenborg Foundation is very much like being part of a movement. It's the opportunity to become part of an organization that reaches over 200,000 individuals each month through our [offTheLeftEye](#) YouTube channel, breathes new life into Swedenborg's words through our New Century Edition translations of his works, and is constantly seeking new ways to bring our community together, whether online or in person.

To join, go to swedenborg.com/membership or call Gwen Williams at 610-430-3222 ext. 109.

recent annual meeting (see page 5). “It didn’t happen right away, but after a couple of months of this, that’s when our minutes watched started going up, that’s when our subscribership started going up. That’s when we realized, we’ve really got something here.”

The first episode of the new series, “[What the World of Spirits Is](#),” aired on June 2, 2014. The text for the episode was taken from the World of Spirits section of Swedenborg’s classic [Heaven and Hell](#), and the following episodes continued on the same theme. In the fall of that year, the show



shifted to an interview format. Five months after the original air date, an interview with future co-host Dr. Jonathan Rose tackled the question “[Why Don’t Those Who’ve Died Communicate with Us More?](#)” That show would go

on to become the most-watched video on the channel by a wide margin: to date it’s racked up more than 1.5 million views and 14.4 million minutes watched, and is still consistently among our top ten episodes.

In the anniversary special, Curtis and the [offTheLeftEye](#) team take viewers on a journey through the show’s creation process. Starting with the translation of the text by the expert team at the [New Century Edition](#), they show how the channel’s writing and production team develop different ways to express a single idea. There are the shorter, more focused episodes of [Swedenborg & Life](#), followed by a live show that focuses on biblical questions, followed by [Good Question!](#), a panel show where contributors give different perspectives on viewer questions. Our new twice-weekly show [News from Heaven](#) features Curtis commenting directly on short passages from Swedenborg.

[News from Heaven](#) is itself a throwback to the origins of [Swedenborg & Life](#)—the short, twice-weekly show is a very similar format to those early episodes where Curtis was reading from text on a screen. In five years, the channel has gone full circle—or rather, full spiral, always upward!

Thanks so much to all the viewers, donors, and amazing community members who have made the [offTheLeftEye](#) channel such a wonderful place to learn and grow. We look forward to seeing what the next five years bring!

NOW AIRING: SEASON TWO

The second season of [Swedenborg & Life](#) centers around the question of what happens after we die, with a series of four episodes that explore the afterlife:

June 24: “[What Happens Immediately after You Die?](#)” What happens to us as we make the transition? Are we still ourselves? The team explores five things that everyone finds waiting for them in the afterlife.

July 15: “What Is Hell Really Like?” Swedenborg tells us that hell is a choice—but who would choose to go there?

August 5: “How to Get a Home in Heaven.” After we enter the spiritual world, we’re drawn to the community that’s best for us. What kind of homes might we find there, and is it possible to start building one before you die?

September 2: “What Happens to Celebrities in the Afterlife?” We can’t see into the afterlife to know the fate of those who have passed away recently, but Swedenborg got a peek at what happened to some famous people of his own time.

In between these episodes, we’ll have plenty of episodes of [Swedenborg & Life Live](#), [Good Question!](#), [News from Heaven](#), and short clips from previous videos. Go to [youtube.com/offTheLeftEye](#) on Mondays at 8 p.m., Thursday at 12:30 p.m., and Saturdays at 11 a.m., all Eastern time, and find your new favorite video! •

GET THEM BEFORE THEY'RE GONE!

Because of rising inventory costs, we are streamlining our book catalog by removing dozens of titles from our list. Now is your chance to get a copy before they go! Visit [swedenborg.com/last-chance-sale/](#) to see the full list and use discount code SF50LCS to get a **50% discount** (members get free shipping, too!).

New York Gathering Promotes Local Community

On Thursday, May 9, 2019, we held the second in a new series of regional gatherings aimed at bringing together people of all backgrounds who share a passion for Swedenborg.



Folks gather at the New York New Church to celebrate OTLE.

An Evening with [offTheLeftEye](#), held at the [New York New Church](#) in Manhattan, featured Curtis Childs, director of our [offTheLeftEye](#) YouTube channel, along with other members of the staff and board of directors of the Swedenborg Foundation. The guests were fans of [offTheLeftEye](#), members of local Swedenborgian groups, and other Foundation supporters. This gathering marked a rare opportunity for these groups to mingle and form connections with those they might otherwise never have met.

The evening kicked off as Director of Development Tim Bilger welcomed everyone to the gathering and thanked our hosts at the [New York New Church](#) for offering this space.

Tim introduced Executive Director Morgan Beard, who gave a short overview of the history of the Foundation and what we do today, and then turned the stage over to Curtis Childs to talk more about [offTheLeftEye](#).

Curtis started off by talking about usefulness—the Swedenborgian concept that the function of something is its true essence. In that light, he acknowledged our talented team and the channel's statistical accomplishments, and suggested that one of the best ways to measure our success is by considering the impact [offTheLeftEye](#) videos have on people's lives. Curtis read through a number of powerful comments left by audience members, making it clear that our videos provide a service to souls in need.

If you weren't able to attend this time around, there are more events coming up: the next will be on [July 14 in Los Angeles at the historic Wayfarers Chapel](#) and another will be on October 27 in Philadelphia at [World Cafe Live](#). •

2019 Annual Meeting Celebrates New Initiatives

On Saturday, May 4, 2019, members, staff, our board of directors, and the general public convened at [Glencairn Museum](#) in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, for the [Swedenborg Foundation's 169th annual meeting](#). It was a delight to connect with our constituents to review our successes from 2018 and tell them about the many initiatives they can expect to see from us in 2019!

We made huge strides in 2018 as generous donations from a benefactor in Canada and the Asplundh Foundation allowed us to expand our studio space, invest in new equipment, and hire additional personnel for technical support as well as community moderation. That, in turn, gave the team more free time to do long-term content development.

In early 2019, we introduced a new format for our hit webcast [Swedenborg & Life](#) and a brand-new show called [News from Heaven](#). As we diversify the content on [offTheLeftEye](#), we're moving toward a network concept: different types of shows aimed at different types of audiences, but all under the umbrella of the channel that audiences have come to know and love.

As we expand our content, we're taking the first steps toward building a wider community, both online—not only through the chats and comments on our videos, but through vibrant discussions on our [Watching & Reading Swedenborg Facebook group](#)—and in person. In 2018 we began testing the idea of holding regional gatherings with a reception in San Francisco, and we're following up in 2019 with gatherings in New York, Los Angeles, and Philadelphia.

The New Century Edition team made great strides in 2018 with the release of three new books: two paperback volumes containing three of Swedenborg's short works, [Other Planets](#) and [Last Judgment / Supplements](#), and an annotated hardcover, [The Shorter Works of 1758](#). As a preview of the next volume coming out in 2019, [The Shorter Works of 1763](#), Series Editor Jonathan Rose shared some of the original ads that Swedenborg had used to market his works in British newspapers.

We also had three books come out this past year that each gave a special insight into Swedenborg's thought: [The Universe and I](#) by George Dole, a spiritual take on what we know scientifically about the origins of life and

the nature of the universe; *A New Key to the Bible* by Bruce Henderson, a beginner's guide to the correspondences of the Bible; and *Seven Days of Spiritual Evolution* by Kent Rogers, which helps the reader explore the seven days of creation as a path to personal spiritual growth. Authors Kent Rogers and Bruce Henderson joined the event to discuss their books with readers before the meeting began and again at our community reception afterward.

For much more about everything that we did in 2018, including statistics and financial reports, you can download our 2018 annual report by going to swedenborg.com, clicking on “Featured Content,” and then “Catalogs, Newsletters, and [Annual Reports](#).”

INCOMING BOARD MEMBERS

As part of the business meeting, members elected a slate of board members for the 2019–23 term. Two of those board members were continuing their service: Cory Bradford-Watts is now ordained in General Convention and serving as pastor to both the Convention ministry Swedenborgian Online Community and a congregation in Kitchener, Ontario; he is also the host of the webcast *Transcendents*, which you can watch on the Swedenborg Foundation YouTube Channel. Soni Werner is a professor emerita of psychology from Bryn Athyn College, now living in New Hampshire.



Chad Odhner



Carl Godlove

Of our two new board members, Chad Odhner brings legal expertise and a lifetime of interest in Swedenborg as an attorney and native of Bryn Athyn, while Carl Godlove is our very first board member to be recruited from among the fans of [offTheLeftEye](#). In addition to his passion for the mission, Carl brings leadership experience as a former CEO and current executive leadership coach. •

New from the Swedenborg Society: *Medicine, Mysticism, Mythology*

Swedenborgian James John Garth Wilkinson (1812–99) lived at the intersection of a number of crucial social movements in the nineteenth century: from emerging alternative medical practices like homeopathy, hypnotism, and mesmerism to spiritualism to an emerging understanding of how mythology reflects our unconscious. In *Medicine, Mysticism and Mythology: Garth Wilkinson, Swedenborg and Nineteenth-Century Esoteric Culture*, author Malcolm Peet explores Wilkinson's influence on a variety of fields.

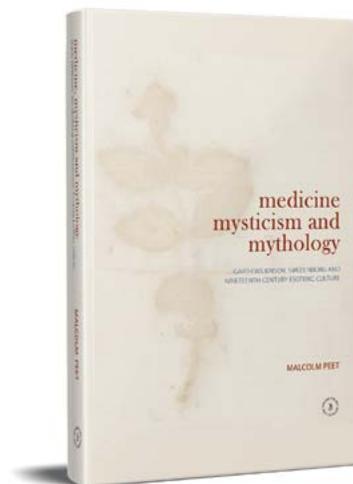
Wilkinson was in deep contact with some leading figures of his time. He helped William Blake publish some of his most famous works; he was a regular correspondent of transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson; his understanding of the unconscious mind influenced the foundational works of hypnotist James Braid and psychologist William Carpenter. His approach to homeopathy became the standard after being popularized by fellow Swedenborgian James Tyler Kent. Although he is relatively unknown today, his many interests provide a fascinating insight into how these movements fed into each other as they took hold of nineteenth-century popular culture.

This book is not only a sketch of Wilkinson's life and interests, but a snapshot of the early Swedenborgian church in England—the different ways in which Swedenborg's writings were read and interpreted by his followers, and how those ideas in turn filtered out into the broader culture and helped shape our modern society.

You can order copies from our online bookstore at swedenborg.com/bookstore or by calling us at 610-430-3222 ext. 100. Members get 20% off; if you're not a member, you can join through our website, too! •

Medicine, Mysticism and Mythology:
Garth Wilkinson, Swedenborg and
Nineteenth-Century Esoteric Culture
By Malcolm Peet

978-0-85448-205-4 / hc / 464 pages / \$24.95



NCE Minute: Parallel Passages in Swedenborg's Works

By Jonathan S. Rose

Anyone who reads Swedenborg for long enough—and that could be for as little as a few minutes—soon discovers that the great Swedish theologian repeats himself. Readers today, both new and long-experienced, find this deliberate practice of his to be somewhat challenging. We are not used to such repetition in written works, though we endure it in countless other forms, media advertising being an omnipresent example. There can be no question that Swedenborg believed the repetition of an idea in different contexts and with different illustrations and nuances to be a powerful teaching and communicating tool.

However, many of these repetitions are not spontaneously generated and fresh expressions of a previously stated idea. They are clearly passages that were deliberately copied by Swedenborg from one place to another—usually from an earlier work into a later one, but sometimes even from one part of a work to another. Some passages were so useful to his discussion that he copied them more than once. After all, a lot of his theological text must have been very difficult to create—especially the indexlike and heavily biblical material; it is quite understandable that when possible he would lift a riff from an earlier book rather than write it again from scratch. He even created careful indexes as he went, in order to make it easier to find those definitive passages and copy them over to new locations.

The two types of repetitions (the spontaneous restatements and the deliberate copyings) are sometimes lumped together under the single label “parallel passages.” It might be better to follow the lead of the compiler of the six-volume concordance of Swedenborg’s works, John Faulkner Potts, and call the deliberate copyings “repeated passages” to distinguish them from those passages where an idea simply crops up again in discussion. But since the term “parallel passages” has become standard, the Swedenborg Foundation’s [New Century Edition](#) (NCE) has retained it.

Tables of parallel passages in the NCE are drawn in large part (with respectful acknowledgment) from the tables composed by other scholars. As part of the process by which the NCE tables are compiled, each parallel

is reexamined for fitness, and entries that NCE editors consider of marginal value are discarded. Parallel passages that have been missed by others are also added.

In its tables, the NCE tends to include only the deliberate copyings, the true “repeated passages.” Though two passages may have similar content, and may therefore be considered in some sense “parallel,” they may still not show signs that Swedenborg was looking at the one as he wrote the other. They rate inclusion only if, in a more-than-random way, the material is presented in largely the same sequence, and (if applicable) with the same illustrations or biblical quotations or cross-references to his own books.

So what is the point of all this careful labor of compilation, one might ask? Generally, parallels serve to show Swedenborg the Editor at work. They give us an idea of how he assembled and shaped his books. Sometimes the parallel passages differ negligibly: Swedenborg may have randomly chosen to capitalize different words in the two versions, for instance. But sometimes one version of a passage may shed light on the significantly different content of another, or reveal how Swedenborg reshaped his material in transposing it. Readers who take the time to explore the parallel passages table in an NCE volume will usually find that some striking information is available there.

For example, [True Christianity](#) contains an extended passage of “additional material” at the end of the main text (§§794–851). Here one can read a great deal about the spiritual world as Swedenborg saw it. He reports on the fate of the theologians Luther, Melancthon, and Calvin; the Dutch; the British; the Germans; and various religious groups. An examination of the table of parallels in [True Christianity](#) reveals that at the beginning of this passage, Swedenborg began drawing heavily on material he had already composed for various other works. The table is fairly simple and straightforward up to §794, but then it explodes with references to his unpublished diary, [Spiritual Experiences](#); to the unpublished *Draft of “Supplements”*; and to the published work *Supplements* itself. (For a discussion of the changes Swedenborg made to the arrangement of this material as he copied it over, see the translator’s preface to the New Century Edition of [True Christianity](#), pages 19–21.)

A more focused comparison of parallel passages can also reveal important details one would otherwise miss, such as text that has been lost

because of an error. For example, in *New Jerusalem* 35:3 we find this statement:

Whatever is accepted by our will becomes part of our life and our consequent understanding.

But if we check the parallel passages table, we see that Swedenborg copied this passage from *Last Judgment* 39:16. The text there reads (with boldface added):

Whatever is accepted by our will becomes part of our life: **3161, 9386, 9393. It follows then that we are human because of our will** and our consequent understanding.

The length of the printed Latin for the text shown in boldface equals exactly one line, and the comparison of the parallels suggests that when the text from *Last Judgment* was being copied to *New Jerusalem*, the eye of either Swedenborg or the typesetter must have skipped from near the end of one line to a comparable position on the line below. This error resulted in the omission of a portion of the intended text (the portion here indicated in boldface) from *New Jerusalem*.

Thus the parallel passages tables provide a method of cross-checking the text. It is not often necessary to consult the tables for this purpose, but when it is, the parallels provide our best means of knowing what Swedenborg meant—a way of asking the author himself.

On the whole, this is the function served by the parallel passages tables: they are a way of asking the author for more information about what he intended in his writings. They are a gathering of evidence that can help us understand what he found most important to say and that can show us how he labored to say it more and more clearly as time passed.

So next time you read an NCE Deluxe volume, take a few minutes to look through the parallel passages table at the back. You never know what you might discover about the book you have just read. •

Swedenborg & Life Recap: Where Stories Are Kept in 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/offthelefteye. You can also read recaps of other recent episodes at www.swedenborg.com.

If you took a stroll in heaven, what would you see? It has to be more than just clouds and churches, right? According to eighteenth-century spiritual teacher Emanuel Swedenborg, the spiritual world has libraries, schools, and more. How'd he know? He went for a visit.

When Swedenborg first encountered a [spiritual library](#), he was following along with a group of newcomers who were curious about where all the books came from. A friendly angel pointed out to them that the spiritual world has substance that's even more real than what we know on earth.

There is a fullness of all things here. All the things that are here are substantial rather than physical. Physical things actually originate from substantial things. We who are here are spiritual people because we are substantial rather than physical. Therefore all the things that exist in the physical world are present here in their perfection, including books and documents, and much more. (*True Christianity* §694:5)

They met scribes who were copying down the words of local wise people. These texts were shelved alongside books by the ancients, which were written using correspondences and [conveyed the inner meaning of the Word](#).



These learning repositories catered to people who studied the books and would become learned, intelligent, or wise. Some areas, though, were off-limits to those who were attached to external matters.

But libraries weren't the only kind of places of learning in the spiritual world. One of the [wisdom centers](#) that Swedenborg saw was a kind of school for lecture and debate. Learning doesn't end in the afterlife!



According to Swedenborg, there were five halls “where educated people meet to discuss various deep questions that serve to develop their knowledge, intelligence, and wisdom” (*True Christianity*

§136:1). One of these halls, for example, was hosting a symposium entirely on the nature of goodwill.

In the “[Olympic halls](#),” ancient philosophers gathered to discuss the progress of wisdom on earth. People from this region would seek out those who had newly crossed into the afterlife to find out what people thought about spirituality on earth.

[Games](#) were another way that people developed wisdom and knowledge. In the “[wisdom games](#),” spirits debated deep spiritual topics and came up with conclusions together, with prizes awarded for the best wisdom.



Another wisdom center isn’t a building at all, but a garden called “[Adramandoni](#),” which means “the delight of conjugal love.” Here, angels discussed what love in marriage means and what makes it wonderful.

I went in, and behold, I found olive trees, with vines running and hanging down from one tree to another, and with bushes in flower beneath the trees and between them. In the middle of the garden there was a grassy circle, on which husbands and wives and young men and women were sitting, paired off in couples; and at the center of the circle was an elevated piece of ground, where a little fountain of water spurted up into the air owing to the force of its stream. When I moved closer to the circle, I saw two angels in purple and scarlet, who were speaking with the people sitting on the grass and talking about conjugal love—its origin, and its delights. And because this love was the subject of their conversation, the people were listening with eager attention and full receptivity, producing in them a feeling of exultation,

as though from the fire of love in the speech of the angels. (*Conjugal Love* §183)

This is the spiritual world that Swedenborg described—expansive and dynamic, where problems get solved and people learn and grow. And that was two hundred and fifty years ago. Just imagine how much might have happened since then!

In our next episode, “[How to Change Your Spirit Connections](#),” the team takes a look at how the spiritual world can affect us while we’re still here on earth. •



VIEWER COMMENTS

If Swedenborg had his experiences today, would he have seen computers? —Will

Yay! I am so excited about libraries in the afterlife. I am a voracious reader and love to learn. I stayed in college for 9 years just because I couldn’t get enough. This makes me so happy to hear that learning continues and WISDOM GAMES. . . Whaaaat?! How much fun would that be? Your team did an amazing job putting this video together. Thank you for everything you do to spread Swedenborg’s knowledge and experiences. I enjoy watching and learning. —Mel

I am just happy that these detailed discussions happen. I truly can’t get enough! I am always thinking about spiritual things. Your show super peaks that interest. Just resonates . . . I started watching last August when I lost a close friend of mine. I tried to find him/look for him, seek after him. Call him. . . Having learned of this deeper understanding of the Transition (through your discussions). . . I am at peace and know now, I don’t have to. . . —Shanna

Love you guys. You truly help me with daily life. I appreciate you all. God bless the team. —Shawn

From Our Blog: [Enoch: The First Librarians](#)

By Karin Childs

Libraries have long been considered precious treasures of human society. From ancient times, archives or libraries have served to preserve knowledge—whether on clay tablets, papyrus, or paper—and pass it from one generation, century, or millennium to another. The earliest written collections seemed to have been for the sake of conserving a nation’s own heritage. But in the second through fourth centuries BC, major efforts arose in both Eastern and Western civilizations to preserve a wider supply of knowledge. People like Aristotle in Greece and members of the Han Dynasty in China felt called to collect a wide array of literature and to categorize books for the sake of research and education.

All along, wars and power struggles caused the destruction of libraries and resulted in the tragic loss of information. And yet the number of libraries continued to increase worldwide, along with a universal respect for libraries as a valuable resource for knowledge.

In the nineteenth century, the concept of the “Akashic records”—a collection of knowledge that exists in some permanent form in the astral or spiritual world—arose. Since libraries, books, and even our modern-day digital information storage methods are physical and vulnerable to being destroyed, it can be comforting to think that there is a way for all knowledge to be preserved, no matter what happens on earth.

Did Swedenborg support this idea of a spiritual set of archives? I would say that he did. Besides reporting that the story of our own lives is being permanently recorded in our inner memory, Swedenborg saw actual libraries in the afterlife; and those libraries contained knowledge from very ancient times. In his journal of spiritual experiences, he writes about a library in heaven:

It was said that they have [in the library] very many things from the ancients regarding correspondences, and explanations of the Word through its inner meaning. Still more deeply within, there were books written for the most ancient, from whom the community called Enoch had collected the correspondences that were afterwards of service to those who were in succeeding Churches, which will be called the ancient Churches. ([Spiritual Experiences](#) §5999)

Swedenborg has more to say about Enoch, an intriguing character who appears in a genealogy in Genesis and who seems to have been given a special ability from God to avoid death. While every other character in the genealogy is said to have “lived” and then “died,” Enoch is said to have had a different fate:

Thus all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty-five years. Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him. (Genesis 5:23–24)



According to Swedenborg, all of the names in the Bible are symbolic of inner states of mind, and they are sometimes also symbolic of whole groups of people in history who shared a general state of mind. In the case of the name *Enoch* in this genealogy, a general state of mind also meant a shared role or function. As the earliest church was declining due to corruption, the God-given, human ability to perceive truth directly through observing

nature was in danger of disappearing. So in order to preserve this knowledge for the future, the group of people meant by *Enoch*, perhaps led by an actual person of that name, took on the task of cataloging and recording the knowledge of correspondences for posterity.

I have been taught that the people of the earliest church, the one that existed before the Flood, were so heavenly in nature that they talked with angels of heaven, and that they were able to talk with them in correspondences. This meant that their wisdom developed to the point that when they saw anything on earth, they not only thought of it in earthly terms but thought of it in spiritual terms at the same time, and therefore their thoughts joined those of angels. I have also been taught that Enoch . . . and others who joined him collected correspondences from the mouth of these [sages] and passed their knowledge on to their descendants. (*Sacred Scripture* §21 [see also *True Christianity* §202])

Swedenborg writes that this system of correspondences was later used by ancient church cultures in the Middle East and then spread to Greece and beyond, turning into the stories of myth and fable.

But what about this mysterious statement about God “taking” Enoch, rather than a statement that Enoch eventually died, like the rest of the characters? While the life cycles of the other characters in the Genesis 5 genealogy represent particular doctrinal beliefs or religious mindsets that arose and then died out, Enoch represents doctrinal knowledge that had to be preserved.

There were at that time people who developed a theology out of the things perceived by the earliest church and the churches that followed. They designed it to serve as a standard by which everyone could judge what was good and true. The people who did this were called *Enoch*, and what they did was symbolized by the words *and Enoch walked with God*. They also used the name for the theology or set of teachings itself, which is what the name Enoch—“teach”—means. (*Secrets of Heaven* §519:1)

It was important that this knowledge would not die out, as earlier knowledge had. But this did not mean the preservation of literal written scripture, because no such thing existed at that time. Rather, it meant the preservation of a system of recognizing truth through symbolism, a system that had been intuitive but that was now disappearing.

[Enoch] was no more, because God took him, means that this doctrine was preserved for use by future generations. The case with Enoch was that, as stated [§519:1], he took what the earliest church perceived and reduced it to a doctrinal system—a forbidden thing at that time.

Recognizing from perception, after all, is completely different than learning from doctrine. People who have the gift of perception have no need to learn by way of doctrinal formulas what they already know. To illustrate: when we already know how to think effectively, we do not need an artificial system to teach us how. Using such a system would destroy our ability to think effectively, as it does for those who wallow in scholarly dust. People who recognize what is good and true on the basis of perception receive that intuition from the Lord by an internal route. Those who recognize it on the basis of doctrine receive their knowledge by an external route—the physical senses. The difference is like that between light and darkness. Furthermore, the perceptions of a heavenly type of person can never be described, because they involve the tiniest, most specific details and take into account all the variety of different conditions and circumstances. It was foreseen, however, that the perceptiveness of the earliest church would come to an end, and that people thereafter would learn from doctrine how to identify truth and goodness; in other words, they would travel through the dark to arrive at light. In consequence, it says here that “God took him,” which is to say that God preserved perception for the use of future generations. (*Secrets of Heaven* §521)

Swedenborg explains that “perception”—the original learning method that God created for humanity—is far superior to the learning method that we experience today. Perception receives truth from within, through intuition coming directly from God, and then applies those insights to outer circumstances and actions. But as corruption gradually opened humanity’s minds and hearts to hellish influences, that intuition became dangerously false. To keep the human race from destroying itself, God had to close off this inner perception and provide a new method of learning truth. Learning from the outside in, through studying collected information, was not ideal, but it could still lead people to enough knowledge about God and the spiritual life that they would be able to spiritually progress. And the group called “Enoch” were the ones infused with a desire and ability to take knowledge that used to be intuitive and craft it into the beginnings of an outward educational system.

The Book of Enoch is an ancient Jewish religious work estimated to have been written in sections spanning from about 300 BC to perhaps even the second century AD. It was accepted in early Christian churches, but was later excluded from the biblical canon. *The Book of Enoch* was traditionally attributed to the character of Enoch in Genesis 5, and the highly dramatic and symbolic stories make me wonder if this work has its original roots in the “Ancient Word” that, according to Swedenborg, preceded our current Old Testament. That Ancient Word was written entirely in highly symbolic divine allegory, or parable. It’s fascinating to read *The Book of Enoch* while thinking in terms of a group of people who were gathering information not for their present corrupt times, but for a future time:

The word of the blessing of Enoch, how he blessed the elect and the righteous, who were to exist in the time of trouble; rejecting all the wicked and ungodly. Enoch, a righteous man, who was with God, answered and spoke, while his eyes were open, and *while* he saw a holy vision in the heavens. This the angels showed me. From them I heard all things, and understood what I saw; that which will not take place in this generation, but in a generation which is to succeed at a distant period, on account of the elect.[1]

And:

Before all these things Enoch was concealed; nor did any one of the sons of men know where he was concealed, where he had been, and what had happened. He was wholly engaged with the holy ones, and with the Watchers in his days. I, Enoch, was blessing the great Lord and King of peace. And behold the Watchers called me Enoch the scribe.[2]

Likewise, in the *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*, a western translation of the Torah, this idea of Enoch’s scribal character is maintained:

The prominent scribal office of the seventh antediluvian hero was not forgotten in the later rabbinic and Hekhalot developments and reappeared in its new Merkabah form as an important duty of the new hero, the supreme angel Metatron. One of the possible early attestations to the scribal career of Enoch-Metatron can be found in the Targums, where the patriarch’s name is mentioned in connection with the scribal duties of the principal angel. *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* on Genesis 5:24 reads: “Enoch worshiped in truth before the Lord, and

behold he was not with the inhabitants of the earth because he was taken away and he ascended to the firmament at the command of the Lord, and he was called Metatron, the Great Scribe.”[3]

We could perhaps say that the people represented by Enoch were the very first librarians—called, like Aristotle and members of the Han Dynasty, to collect and preserve knowledge. While their method of preservation most likely did not start out in written form but was one of oral tradition and/or visual imagery, they developed a way that knowledge could be gathered and made available to people who could not learn directly from heaven through their own minds. Knowledge could now be learned from the outside and absorbed into the intellect where it could take root and grow. It was not the ideal method that God had set up, but nevertheless a crucial new method that would allow human beings to still learn about and connect with God and heaven, if they so chose. •

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William Blake. *Enoch Walked with God*. Pen and water color over pencil and charcoal, c. 1780–85. Cincinnati Art Museum.

Notes

[1] From *The Book of Enoch the Prophet*, chapter 1, verses 1–2, page 1.

[2] Ibid., chapter 12, verses 1–4, page 14.

[3] See Andrei A. Orlov’s “[Metatron as the Scribe](http://www.marquette.edu/maqom/metatronscribe.html).”

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