

News from the SWEDENBORG FOUNDATION

News from Heaven Celebrates 100th Episode

In January 2019, we launched a brand-new web series on our offTheLeftEye YouTube channel: *News from Heaven*, a twice-weekly series where host Curtis Childs takes viewers on a journey through Swedenborg's writings, examining passages that are difficult, illuminating, or just plain weird and showing how the ideas connect with our spiritual growth.

On January 2, our one-hundredth episode of *News from Heaven* was released: "How Soon a New Spiritual Era Is to Be Expected." The text was taken from a private letter written by Swedenborg to his friend Gabriel Beyer, responding to a question from Beyer about when the new spiritual age that Swedenborg had foreseen would arrive.

New episodes from the series are posted every week on Thursdays and Saturdays, with episodes

continued on page 2

IN THIS ISSUE

- *OTLE Weekend Event in June*
- *In Memory and In Honor*
- *NCE: Percipere*
- *S&L Recap: The Meaning of Lucifer*
- *Blog: Protection from Evil Spirits*



WHY YOUR GIFT MATTERS

Every day we get messages from the people who watch our videos or who have been inspired by Swedenborg's writings telling us that they've been inspired to go out and become better people—or even to keep going in the face of tragedy. Your donations help ensure that we can keep putting this life-changing content out into the world for the people who need it most.

Please help keep the love going by giving today at swedenborg.com/donate or calling Gwen Williams at 610-430-3222, ext. 109.

averaging twenty to twenty-five minutes in length. You can see the one-hundredth episode, or popular past episodes like “[An Interview with Spirits Three Days after Their Death](#)” or “[How to Detect Evil Spirits](#),” at youtube.com/offTheLeftEye.

THE NEW SEASON OF SWEDENBORG & LIFE IS HERE!

Also premiering in early January was a brand-new season of our hit webcast *Swedenborg & Life*. The four-episode season is focused on the experience of the afterlife:

- “**What Does It Feel Like to Die?**” (Jan. 6): Near-death experiences show us how we are protected from fear and pain.
- “**Will Your Body Look the Same When You Die?**” (Jan. 27): What is our spiritual body, and how will it be different from our physical one?
- “**Will Life Be Different When You Die?**” (Feb. 17): Swedenborg says the afterlife is very much like our life on earth—with some key differences.
- “**What Happens to Your Mind When You Die?**” (March 9): How does our mind bridge the gap between the physical and the spiritual?

In between these core episodes, you can hop online to view one of our two live series: *Swedenborg & Life Live*, which explores biblical mysteries from a Swedenborgian perspective, and *Good Question!*, where our panel gives live responses to viewers’ spiritual questions. New episodes of each series are released on a rotating schedule on Monday nights at 8 p.m. Eastern U.S. time on youtube.com/offTheLeftEye. •



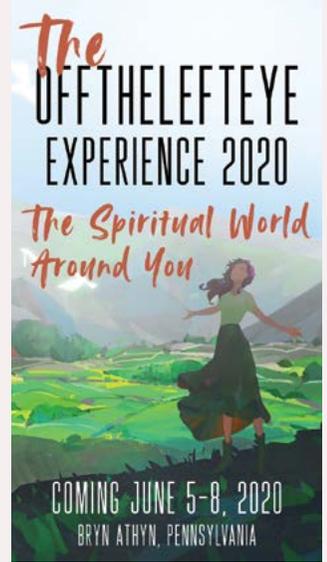
OTLE Weekend Event Coming in June

We're offering our first-ever weekend-long event, the OffTheLeftEye Experience, June 5–8 on the campus of Bryn Athyn College in Bryn Athyn, PA.

Especially designed for fans of our offTheLeftEye YouTube channel, the gathering will give fans and spiritual seekers alike a chance to meet, share their stories, and enjoy an immersive weekend that focuses on seeing the influence of the spiritual world around you.

The event launches on the evening of Friday, June 5 with a keynote welcome from Curtis Childs, director of the offTheLeftEye channel and host of its many programs, followed by two full days of workshops, tours, and lessons taught by members of the offTheLeftEye team and guests.

We offer packages with shared on-campus accommodations for those looking for more affordable options, or day or weekend passes for people who live nearby or who prefer to make their own lodging arrangements. For those who aren't able to come in person, we also offer a "virtual pass" option to view core events online after the weekend is over. To see registration options, our FAQs, and more, go to swedenborg.com/events/otle2020.



NEW DESIGNER JOINS OTLE TEAM

We're excited to welcome Jesse Johnson as the newest member of the offTheLeftEye production team! Jesse is one of two motion graphics designers who work on the channel, meaning that he creates animated sequences and special video effects in addition to helping with a variety of other video projects.

A self-taught artist, Jesse joined the team in our Bryn Athyn office at the beginning of January after a period of several months working as a contractor. You can see examples of his work in our new season of *Swedenborg & Life*, the first episode of which was posted on January 6. Jesse replaces Shiloh Silverman, who left in June to accept a new position with another company.

In Memory and In Honor

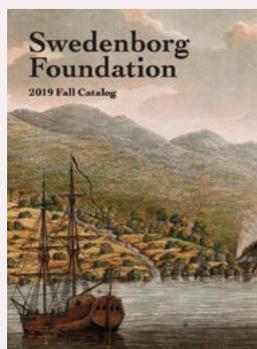
Often our supporters give donations either in memory of (for those who have passed) or in honor of (for those still living) particular individuals. In this section, we list all the people who have inspired gifts in 2019. Please note that the names are listed exactly as they were given to us and may be a shortened or alternative version of the person's legal name. Names are listed in alphabetical order by last name where a last name is given. •

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All of You
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Jeffrey Childs
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Olle Hjern
Jesus Christ
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Earline Jones
Gordon Jorgenson
Eduard Kazanchyan
Janet B. Kedig
Sande Chaikin Kirby
Laura Kmet
Esther Knierim
Remy Kruger
Amy Larned
Bertil & Lilian Larsson
Carol Lawson & Alice Skinner
Nicolas Leslie
Mama Amalia, Tia Emy, Papa Marine

FIND OUT WHAT'S NEW IN OUR BOOK CATALOG

Between recent releases like *The Moment Is Now*—an examination of Swedenborgians' roles in the antislavery movement—to reprints of popular sellers like *Observing Spirit*, *A Swedenborg Sampler*, *Swedenborg: Buddha of the North*, and *Why Does God Let It Happen?*, you can find the latest on what's available from our bookstore in our just-released print catalog. You can request a copy today by calling our customer service representative Regina Lee at 610-430-3222, ext. 100, or by e-mailing rlee@swedenborg.com. •



Neal McCafferty (1952-1993)
Richard Douglas McClain
George McClure
Lieselotte Niederau McGuire
Clay & Kathy McQueen
Andrew Strauch Meyer
Mom
Theresa Murata
Melinda Nemitz
Oliver & Rachel Odhner
Patricia Hope Peebles
Lawson & Marcia Pendleton
Joseph T. Pergola
John Perry
Robert Cartledge Rausch &
Kelli Rausch Black
Rev. Norman Reuter &
Justin Reuter
Ednah Edmiston Richard
Sherri Riddle-Guzy
Rev. Donald L. Rose
Evelyn Rosenberg
Tony Ruch & Sarah Kleinman
Ruthie

Fran Sechler
Winyss Acton Shepard
Dr. Kurt Simons
Alice Skinner
Carey N. Smith
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Deborah Sonner
Linda Sorenson
Emanuel Swedenborg
Chris Taylor
Susan Keene Timberlake
William Edward Todd
Diane P. Trantham
LaVerne Twardowski
Vince
Jan H. Visser
Vlad
Nicholas M. Walker &
Jane Sither Hogden
Dr. Arvid E. Westerdahl
Nadia Williams
Dr. Jane Williams-Hogan
Denian Zhang & Shengying Chen



NCE Minute: *Percipere*

By George F. Dole

Through the years in which I was occupied with translating for the New Century Edition (NCE), I was repeatedly frustrated by the verb *percipere* and the related noun *perceptio*. Translators had traditionally taken refuge in “perceive” and “perception,” which are derived from those Latin words, but do not necessarily mean the same thing they do. This choice seemed to me to be an admission of ignorance, as if the translator were saying, “I don’t know what this word means, but this is what it looks like.”

A quick run through the relevant entries in John Faulkner Potts’s Swedenborg Concordance suggested that the terms were associated with good (*bonum*) more often than with truth (*verum*). For a long time, that remained no more than a hint, a suggestion that in seeking the meaning of *perceptio* and related words, we should look less toward the intellect (or understanding) and its focus on what is true and more toward our volition (or will), with its concern with what is good.

The hint became a pointer when a colleague called my attention to Secrets of Heaven §10155, which I give here with the old standby translations indicated with quotation marks:

The reason knowing is a matter of understanding, believing, and “perceiving” is that it involves both our intellect and our volition. When we focus on the intellectual part, that is understanding; when we focus on the intellectual and the volitional, that is believing; and when we focus solely on the volitional part, that is “perceiving.”

In other passages, we find that “perception” is characteristic of the angels of the highest heaven, and for that reason those angels

never try to figure out divine truths, much less argue whether some particular truth is true or not. They do not know what it is to believe or have faith, but say, “What is faith? I ‘perceive’ and see that this is so.” (Heaven and Hell §270)

This is stated at greater length in Secrets of Heaven §202 (and in many other passages), citing Matthew 5:37: “What you say should be ‘Yes, yes; No, no.’ Anything more belongs to evil.”



This would seem to pull the rug out from under any church that prides itself on the rational coherence of its doctrines and evangelizes by means of doctrinal debate. Understood in context, though, it simply takes doctrinal debate down a few pegs. It says that deep down inside (for we all have that third-heaven level within us), we don't need convincing, we simply *know*.

I suspect that we have all had little samples of this kind of “knowing,” times we have known what we wanted to say but have been unable to find the right word. We *know* that this word or that word is simply not right, though we can't identify what's wrong with it. Then the right word occurs to us, and we know that it is right. Again, we can't explain why. It simply is. Obviously, in finding the right word for something, we have not discovered the meaning of the universe, but in the limited context of our immediate consciousness, we have found a simple, secure “Yes,” somehow beyond the whole domain of argument.

The astronaut Edgar Mitchell seems to have had such an experience in a far larger context of consciousness—not cosmic or universal, but quite explicitly global.

It began with the breathtaking experience of seeing planet earth floating in the immensity of space—the incredible beauty of a splendid blue-and-white jewel floating in the vast, black sky. I underwent a religious-like peak experience, in which the presence of divinity became almost palpable, and I *knew* that life in the universe was not just an accident based on random processes. This knowledge, which came directly, intuitively, was not a matter of discursive reasoning or logical abstraction. It was not deduced from information perceptible by the sensory organs. *The realization was subjective, but it was knowledge every bit as real and compelling as the objective data the navigational program or the communications system was based on.*¹

This is not the certainty of an impulsive, thoughtless “gut feeling.” Mitchell's was a highly disciplined mind, a mind that actually understood the navigational program and the communications system. His words are carefully chosen and clear; and his sense of the value and validity of the



experience led him to found the Institute of Noetic Sciences (IONS)—a clarion call for further research into hitherto unstudied ways of knowing. Were we to heed this, where might we start?

Revelation Explained §273 notes that “what comes into the mind through hearing is both seen and ‘perceived.’ It is seen in the understanding and ‘perceived’ through sharing with volition.” Swedenborg then goes on to refer the reader to *New Jerusalem* §140, which offers a challenge—no fewer than sixteen descriptive entries with references to passages in *Secrets of Heaven* that deal explicitly with “perception,” several containing further references.

This leaves us with door wide open to further inquiry—and with a vexing translation problem. That is, the most appropriate English word for *percipere* might well be simply “know,” which has quite a wide range of colloquial usages. Mitchell came wondrously close with the word “realization,” but you have to strip it down to its core to discover how appropriate it is, how precisely Mitchell intended it. What we “perceive” becomes undeniably real to us. “The presence of divinity,” Mitchell wrote, “became almost palpable.” Perhaps the best we can do is to use the word “know” and italicize it to indicate that we mean this word in its strictest, most essential sense. If exactly the right word does come to mind, we’ll *know* it. “Right” words take charge.

In the meanwhile, the excitement generated by the NCE urges us onward. We may hope that it is moving us from merely striving to preserve what we have learned (and sometimes preening ourselves for our good fortune) to discovering how very, very much we have yet to learn. After all, the ultimate goal has been described by Swedenborg as the “ignorance of wisdom” (*Secrets of Heaven* §10225). Or as William Blake, who was a reader of Swedenborg, once said: “If the doors of perception were cleansed, everything would appear to man as it is, infinite”—with every discovery therefore posing new questions, opening new doors. •

¹Edgar D. Mitchell, “Outer Space to Inner Space: An Astronaut’s Odyssey,” *Saturday Review*, vol. 2 (February 22, 1975): 20 (emphasis mine).

George F. Dole has translated several works in the New Century Edition, including its flagship volume, Heaven and Hell. All the translations in this article are his.

Swedenborg & Life Recap: Was Lucifer Really an Angel Who Fell From 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.

Everybody seems to have the idea that Lucifer was an angel who rebelled in heaven, then was cast down and became Satan. But where did this story come from? And what does it really mean for us in our lives today? In this episode, hosts Curtis Childs and Jonathan Rose reveal the true nature and meaning of the devil.

The Setup

Everybody knows that Lucifer is a scary name, but the name is only used once in the whole Bible:

How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!
How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations!
(Isaiah 14:12)

It's pretty clear from its context in Isaiah, though, that it's referring to the king of Babylon. At another point in the Bible, Jesus says, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven" (Luke 10:18), but Swedenborg learned that he's really talking about evil ideas, not "fallen angels." The true "satans" are evil states of mind and heart to which we can fall prey, and they are what Jesus came to earth to battle.

So what sense can we make of these references to Lucifer? What does Swedenborg say about the correspondences of the imagery in these passages? We dig deeper in the next section.

Three Seeds

Let's start with the falling star:

"And I saw a star fallen from heaven to the ground."—This means thoughts of truth falsified, and thus changed into falsity. This is evident from the meaning of "stars," which are thoughts of goodness and truth

. . . and from the meaning of to “fall” and to “drop from heaven,” which is to die. Thoughts of truth die both when they are denied and when they are falsified. In this case, it means when they are falsified, since this book is not about those who deny truth, but about those who falsify it. (*Apocalypse Explained* §535)

Good ideas can be turned evil through denial and falsity—for example, people who use interpretations of the Bible to lift themselves up above others. This is what the fallen star and the devil truly represent.

Lucifer, in a related concept, has to do with a desire to dominate and control others:

Arrogance consists in loving oneself more than others, putting oneself ahead of them, and wanting to control them. People who desire this also despise others in comparison with themselves. If another puts him- or herself first or fails to worship them, they go after that person in a spirit of hatred and revenge. Arrogance is self-love, and self-love is such that the more free rein it is given, the faster it races, increasing to whatever degree it possibly can till eventually it even reaches for God’s throne and wishes to take God’s place. That is what all the inhabitants of hell are like. This character of theirs can be sensed from the efforts it leads them to make and from the venomous hatred and fearsome vengefulness each inhabitant has for the other over the question of dominance. . . . People like this are also meant by Lucifer in Isaiah. (*Secrets of Heaven* §8678)

We can see plenty of people even today who give in to this type of self-worship. This is the core of what makes hell such a horrible place. But the more heavenly state would be to love others even more than we do ourselves.

So why is Lucifer known as the “light-bringer”? And what does Babylon have to do with it? The answer is a surprising commentary on the nature of churches:

“Babylon” or “Babel” means a church made up of people who use the holiness of the church to try to rule over the entire world. . . . A church made up of this kind of person is not the same over time as it was in the beginning. In the beginning, the people are in a state of fervor for the Lord, for the Word, for love, and for faith, and especially for saving humanity. However, there is a passion for dominance and

rulership that lurks within that fervor. As time goes on, the passion for ruling grows, and eventually breaks out. To the extent that this passion is acted on, the holiness of the church becomes a means to the end of ruling. When people's goal is to rule, then the holiness of the church is used as a tool to serve that goal, and so as a means of serving themselves. When this happens, they not only attribute to themselves the power of saving souls, but also credit themselves with all the Lord's divine power. By doing this, they pervert all the goodness and all the truth of the church. . . . The reason that Babel is called "Lucifer, son of the dawn" is because in the beginning Babel is a church that has a fervor for the Lord, for the goodness of love, and for the truth of faith. However, within the pastors' fervor lurks a craving to use the holiness of the church to rule over everyone they are able to subject. This is why Babel is called "Lucifer, son of the dawn." (*Apocalypse Explained* §1029:1, 3, 11)

So Babylon, in this case, isn't referring to the literal kingdom on earth but instead to people who set themselves up as gods over others and in doing so dedicate themselves to hell. They take something that was meant to lift people up to heaven and pull it down to the level of hell.

To sum up: divine ideas are meant to serve divine purposes, and divine purposes are all about loving others and putting them above you, not the other way around. •

VIEWER COMMENTS

I love these shows that explain the Bible in a deeper way. I think we can fall into that Babylon/Lucifer mindset in more subtle ways than just wanting to domineer. I think it probably starts out with the feeling of "oh, the poor dears, they just don't understand." That sort of patronizing attitude towards people who "just don't know any better" can seem harmless, or even masquerade as compassion, but hidden within can actually be the seeds of superiority. It's something that can rise up in almost any setting in which there are differing viewpoints, lifestyles, priorities, etc. It's really important to let people go on their own path and have their own ideas, weeding out our desire for them to conform to ours or thinking we have some better understanding of God and spirituality in comparison. —Nadine



On Our Blog: How Your Body Can Protect You From Evil Spirits

By Chelsea Odhner

I was driving in my car on the way home to relieve a babysitter, but I was cutting it close on time. The babysitter happened to be my sister, who had just gifted me and my husband with an overnight shift so that we could attend a wedding. Even though I felt grateful for that time away, I was also concerned about the toll that a twenty-four hour stint watching five children would have on my sister. I wanted to get home promptly to relieve her of at least three-fifths of that burdensome ratio, but I missed a turn. In the farmland of upstate New York, a missed turn can mean doubling the length of the trip. In our case, that meant adding thirty minutes of driving time. While this was not such a big deal in the grand scheme of things, my mistake triggered a tidal wave of self-blame within me.

Learning and practicing mindfulness meditation has been a recent focus of mine, and this surge of self-judgment was one of the more intense moments to which I'd had the opportunity to apply its techniques. As we go about our day, our thoughts and feelings tend to drive our mental states unchecked. Mindfulness, however, trains one to notice them as they arise and to pay kind attention to them. From a Swedenborgian perspective, this idea is quite significant, since "just as the organs of our outer or physical senses are attuned to material objects, the organic substances of our inner senses or our minds are receptive of spiritual objects" (*Divine Providence* §308:2). According to Swedenborg, "every thought arises from some feeling and is the form of its feeling" (*Divine Providence* §196). And since a feeling is a matter of love, every feeling we have has drive. It actually intends to carry something out and wants us to live a certain way. The associated thoughts serve the feeling's goal. With mindfulness, we make an effort to pause at the moment of experiencing a feeling and its related thoughts. By doing so, we can begin to draw our awareness out of the self-concept that those thoughts and feelings are inspiring and give ourselves space to consider them in freedom.

In Swedenborgian terms, when we engage in this kind of self-reflection, we are beginning to open our spiritual mind. We have an earthly mind and

a spiritual mind, and our spiritual mind enables us to witness the shifting states of our earthly mind. In the mindfulness tradition, this is described as witnessing our states from a place of loving awareness. Our spiritual mind actually functions as an access point to a loving, wise perspective inflowing from divine love and wisdom itself. But while our spiritual mind has this built-in connection to heaven and the Lord, our consciousness is rooted to our earthly mind—it’s the default level we operate from—so when feelings are flowing into our earthly mind from “the hells,” even if we can witness them from our spiritual mind, how do we keep ourselves safe from their negative effects? If our thoughts and feelings make up our everyday awareness, where can we go to find purchase enough to pause and make the space we need to see them for what they are? Both mindfulness and Swedenborgian theology describe our bodies as protective barriers that provide a neutral zone of sensation through which we can wake up and take notice.

Just as the natural world operates within the spiritual world, our mind encompasses our body. Swedenborg writes that “the life of the body does not belong to the body, but only appears to be the body’s, but it is the life of the spirit that is felt in the body” (*Spiritual Experiences* §2355). Since we feel the life of our spirit through our body, our body functions as an important interface on our spiritual journey. It serves as an anchor point that stabilizes all the shifting winds of our inner experience.

My daily meditation training had primed me to take stock of the rising sensations I was experiencing that day in the car. A corrosive feeling filled my body, especially my arms, heart, and head. Amidst this wash of feeling, I was able to be aware of what was arising and to name it for what it really was: self-hatred. Recognizing this didn’t do anything to stem the tide, but it did enable me to see it. With as curious and as kind an attention as I could muster, I asked, “What would happen if I were to let this self-hatred run its course in my mind?” At that moment, a torrent of the most condemning insults against me flooded my mind. It was as if a band of pent-up horses had been unleashed, but within moments, the torrent was over. I ached with the grief of housing such a hateful perspective. It took a couple of hours for the waves of emotion to calm within me, but even as I was present to the aching sadness, I wasn’t attached to the self-hatred, and it was not driving my actions and words. I was seeing and feeling it fully, but it wasn’t defining me.



Evil spirits are able to stir up feelings that we feel through our body. As you read Swedenborg, you'll realize that he very often understands the influence of spirits based on where he feels their influence in his body. In the following, for example, he describes spirits pouring anxiety into his mind as a feeling that he senses in the area of his stomach.

[Certain] spirits have often been present with me, when I have experienced in the province of my stomach those who poured in feelings of anxiety—not that I knew where the feelings [ultimately] came from. Yet on every occasion I found out who they were, and then I heard them talking to one another about the kinds of things that were unacceptable to my affections. (*Arcana Coelestia* §6202)

We have this intuitive sense in us, too, but for many it remains largely untapped. Too often when we experience feelings we fail to pay attention to where we're actually feeling them in our body, and this blind spot lets evil spirits get away with a lot of influence over us. Swedenborg says that “spirits and demons control a person’s reasoning power through feelings” (*Spiritual Experiences* §48). Without paying attention to our body and noticing how feelings manifest in it, we are driven by stirred-up emotions and are quick to believe the thoughts they inspire. He describes this influence as follows:

[Evil spirits] take our misconceptions and weaknesses and shape them into a fog of emotion, which they use to block and distort the light of truth; or else they torture us with anxiety. Another device they use is to train our thoughts on a single issue, with no letup. They fill it up with crazy notions and at the same time secretly tie our cravings into the insanity. They have countless other underhanded methods as well, which could never be described intelligibly. Little of this reaches our conscious awareness, and only in its most general outlines. (*Secrets of Heaven* §1820:4)

So the evil spirits’ devices don’t reach our everyday awareness naturally, but with intention, they can be made known to us. If we pause and sense whatever feelings we are experiencing strictly as sensations in our body, we are staving off the influence of evil spirits. The onslaught of self-hatred over which I had initially felt powerless was stripped of its negative characteristics down to the bare physical sensation of buzzing heat and sinking pressure

in my arms and torso. It was a swirl of raw feeling within me, but it wasn't determining my identity.

When we engage the body as a tool for our own protection, it is very important to also draw on God's loving presence for support, as mentioned above. The love and wisdom in our minds is what gives us the mental capacity to see our feelings for what they are and relate to them in a loving way. Embodying loving attention toward ourselves as we are present to intense feelings and thoughts is what makes the practice healing. It can be helpful to visualize a warm light filling us and surrounding and infusing any contracted emotions that arise, as this is actually what is happening on the spiritual level: "the Lord as the [spiritual] sun is always flowing in with warmth and light, that is, with love and wisdom" (*Heaven and Hell* §158). This visual of a stream of light also depicts the activity of angels with us.

The angels work by exerting an imperceptible influence which, when presented in visual form, looks like a stream of light. The light consists of countless truths-within-goodness that encircle a single concept we possess, maintaining us in the truth and at the same time in the love that goes with it. So angels lift our minds out of falsity and protect us from evil. (*Secrets of Heaven* §5893:3)

As for the missed turn on our trip home that day, while it triggered self-hatred within me, pausing to sense the feeling in my body and hold it with kind attention served as a means to help free me from believing its message. Swedenborg makes the amazing claim that the Lord is capable of turning all evil into good within us (see *Arcana Coelestia* §§6574, 8626). So every wave of negative emotion that gets stirred up in us by evil spirits can actually further us in our spiritual healing. We can allow the wise, merciful inflow of heaven to counteract the condemning inflow of hell by our choosing to be present with awareness to whatever sensations are arising in our body. This is the power of loving awareness; and this breathing, buzzing body that acts in communion with our spirit provides the exact environment necessary for this transformation to occur. •

Chelsea Rose Odhner is the production manager and a writer for the Swedenborg & Life show on the offTheLeftEye YouTube channel.



SWEDENBORG FOUNDATION

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