

## News from the SWEDENBORG FOUNDATION

### OffTheLeftEye Introduces New Web Series

On February 8, our offTheLeftEye (OTLE) YouTube channel introduced a new series: *Chasing Swedenborg*. Inspired by a video where OTLE director and host Curtis Childs talked about his health issues during the pandemic, the series will take a more personal look at what it's like to walk a Swedenborgian spiritual path in the modern world.

Premiering on Mondays at 3 p.m. EST, the new series will take the place of *Swedenborg & Life* in the weekly OTLE lineup. Other regular series will continue as scheduled, including *News from Heaven*, in which Curtis does a deep dive into a particular passage from Swedenborg, and *Swedenborg & Life Live*, a Q & A show where a panel of OTLE contributors tackles viewers' questions during a live webcast.

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### GIVING FOR THE FUTURE

The Foundation has endowments supporting two of its programs: off-TheLeftEye (The OTLE Endowment Fund) and the ongoing translation efforts of the New Century Edition (The Dr. Jonathan S. Rose Translation Endowment Fund). If you love the videos and books that we're giving to the world, you can help make possible for the long term what we do by donating to either of these funds through [swedenborg.com/donate](https://swedenborg.com/donate). For more information, contact Director of Development Tim Bilger at 610-430-3222, ext. 101, or at [tbilger@swedenborg.com](mailto:tbilger@swedenborg.com).

The team hopes to take advantage of *Chasing Swedenborg*, which will require fewer graphics than *Swedenborg & Life*, to work on a series of longer-form, documentary-style explorations of some of Swedenborg's key theological concepts that could be used to boost those ideas to a broader audience.

In addition to watching on the [OTLE channel on YouTube](#), you can keep up with the team's latest releases on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram or visit [www.offthefteye.com](http://www.offthefteye.com) to explore past videos by topic.

## REGISTRATION NOW OPEN FOR THE [OFFTHELEFTEYE EXPERIENCE](#)

The OffTheLeftEye Experience, a gathering of fans of the offTheLeftEye YouTube channel, is officially on for July 23–26, 2021! This was originally envisioned as an in-person gathering, but after taking stock of the uncertainties around the pandemic, we've decided to make this a completely virtual event.

While this newsletter was being prepared, we were still working on adapting the program to an online format. As we finalize plans and determine costs, we will post updates and registration links at [offthefteye.com/otle2021](http://offthefteye.com/otle2021). If you have any questions, contact Gwen Williams at [gwilliams@swedenborg.com](mailto:gwilliams@swedenborg.com), or at 610-430-3222, ext. 109. •



## Curtis Childs Talks [Chasing Swedenborg](#)

On February 8, a new series debuted on the offTheLeftEye YouTube channel: [Chasing Swedenborg](#). Morgan Beard, our executive director, sat down with Curtis Childs, the director of offTheLeftEye and host of the new series, to talk about the genesis of this new venture and about what else the future holds for the channel.

**MB:** All right, set this up for us. What is *Chasing Swedenborg*? What is the premise of the series?

**CC:** *Chasing Swedenborg* grants direct access to see how we're using Swedenborg's ideas in our own lives. Even though I've gotten immense benefit from Swedenborg's ideas, I feel like I'm still "chasing" the vision cast in his books—trying to understand it, and trying to figure out how to make it work on the specific challenges I'm facing in my twenty-first-century life.

**MB:** What can people expect to see? What's the experience you're hoping to give viewers?

**CC:** *Chasing Swedenborg* is a behind-the-scenes look at our spiritual process. You'll get a window into our experience as we grapple with concepts and challenges in our own lives, and you'll see the real-time application of Swedenborgian concepts. It's short and fast-paced. It's meant to be consumed quickly to introduce you to a concept and to our process of trying to use it effectively, leaving you equipped to begin "chasing" that concept yourself!

**MB:** What does a real-time application of Swedenborgian concepts look like? How might that work in the moment?

**CC:** Rather than hear me explaining how a concept works or how to understand it, I'll be letting you in on exactly how I used it today to try to solve a specific issue I'm struggling with. This is seeing me as a consumer of Swedenborg's ideas rather than as a distributor. It's the old "show, don't tell" maxim. I'm hoping the practicality of it will be even more effective in equipping people to apply that concept to their own unique situation.

**MB:** For people who haven't seen the video that inspired the series, could you talk a little bit about it? What was in the video, and what was the reaction to it?

CC: The video, called “[What Happened to My Health During the Pandemic](#),” was a very candid moment. I sat down during a low point for me this summer and talked about some health challenges I had been having, as well as about my struggles with anxiety and depression. The response was instant and overwhelming. We quickly got more than a thousand comments on that video, with many viewers expressing gratitude that I had articulated struggles that were similar to the ones they were going through. It was the impact of that video and people’s response to the tone and format that inspired *Chasing Swedenborg*.

MB: One of the reasons that you’re launching this new series is to make room for another project. Tell us about that—what do you have in the works?

CC: The other project’s code name is “The Netflix Series.” No, we don’t actually have a deal with Netflix, but it speaks to our ambitions for the project. I’ve found that almost everyone who works with Swedenborg’s ideas in-depth has a longing to see those ideas in their full glory, rendered through state-of-the-art storytelling, technology, and design. We’ll be giving the pillars of Swedenborg’s worldview that treatment in this series with the intention of breaking through to a much larger audience than we’ve reached before.

MB: I’d like to take a moment to acknowledge the passing of *Swedenborg & Life*, which is the series that—against all expectations at the time, I think—was the show that really launched the offTheLeftEye channel into the stratosphere. How does it feel to not be doing it anymore?

CC: While it’s a bit sad to see the end of anything that’s been a longtime companion, I think in a way we are still doing that show. While we won’t be airing a program with that name, the show went through so many major format changes—I think there were five iterations—that it really was a series of shows. It was just the spirit and the name that kept consistent. For example, back when the show started, it was really very similar to what *News from Heaven* is now. I think the spirit of *Swedenborg & Life* lives on in our current programming, and we’re looking to take that spirit to the next level in the new series I mentioned above. It’s the same people, same energy, same mission, now just with some different containers and strategies around it. •

*Chasing Swedenborg* airs on Mondays at 3 p.m. EST on our offTheLeftEye YouTube channel at [youtube.com/offthelefteye](https://youtube.com/offthelefteye). You can also find companion content at [offthelefteye.com](https://offthelefteye.com) and the podcast Inside OffTheLeftEye, which is available through most podcast streaming services.

## New Book Release: [Swedenborg’s Principles of Usefulness](#)

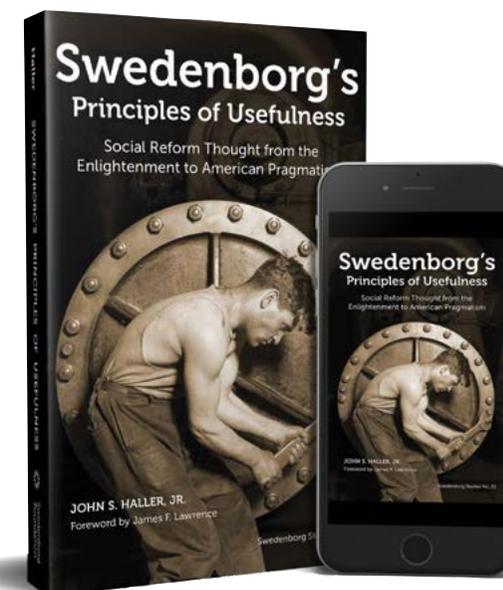
Historian [John S. Haller, Jr.](#), returns to our lineup with *Swedenborg’s Principles of Usefulness: Social Reform Thought from the Enlightenment to American Pragmatism*. In it, he explores how Swedenborg’s philosophy of usefulness moved people across all walks of life in the United States to launch social movements that changed lives.

Haller starts at the beginning of the nineteenth century, examining the appeal of Swedenborg to [Ralph Waldo Emerson](#), who counted Swedenborg as one of the “representative men” who

made the unseeable more understandable for the rest of humanity. [Emerson’s Transcendentalism](#), in turn, was one of the inspirations for a series of emerging utopian communities, many of which attracted Swedenborgians for their emphasis on a harmonious society based on each person serving their own useful function.

But perhaps the clearest intersection of Swedenborgian thought and the broader culture was in the development of the distinctively American philosophy of pragmatism. [William James](#), son of Swedenborgian Henry James, Sr., and perhaps the nation’s most representative pragmatist, taught that the value of ideas comes from their practical importance to us, an idea that resonates well with Swedenborg’s teaching that what is good in this world must also be useful—that if goodness is not expressed in action, it cannot be said to be truly good.

This overview of usefulness and practicality in American culture is woven with the history of [the New Church](#), starting with its beginnings in England and its impact on the antislavery movement there and examining the response of Swedenborgian institutions at key points in American—and church—history.



*Swedenborg's Principles of Usefulness* is available from our online bookstore at [swedenborg.com/bookstore](http://swedenborg.com/bookstore), or you can contact Constituent Service Representative Regina Lee at 610-430-3222, ext. 100, or at [rlee@swedenborg.com](mailto:rlee@swedenborg.com).

## NEW FROM THE SWEDENBORG SOCIETY: ON THE CONJUGIAL ANGEL

*On The Conjugial Angel* contains the text of a talk given by Booker Prize-winning novelist A. S. Byatt about her novella “The Conjugial Angel.”

Starting with her early literary encounters with Swedenborg, Byatt describes the literary foundations of her novella, a fictionalized depiction of real-life events: the tragedy that struck the poet Alfred Tennyson’s family when his nineteen-year-old sister Emilia’s fiancé Arthur Henry Hallam died suddenly at the age of twenty-two. Tennyson’s family was Swedenborgian, and they expected Emilia to live as a widow so that she could be married to Arthur in heaven. When several years later she married another man, it caused a furor.

In the Q & A that followed—also included in this volume—Byatt admits that she struggles with the concept of eternal marriage:

I am very worried, I think, by the idea of the conjugial angel, and everybody having only one partner. I was terribly distressed that poor Emilia Tennyson was required by her religion to wait forever for Arthur Henry Hallam, who had been so long dead. (*On The Conjugial Angel*, 45)

But Byatt’s also fascinated by Swedenborg’s descriptions of the afterlife:

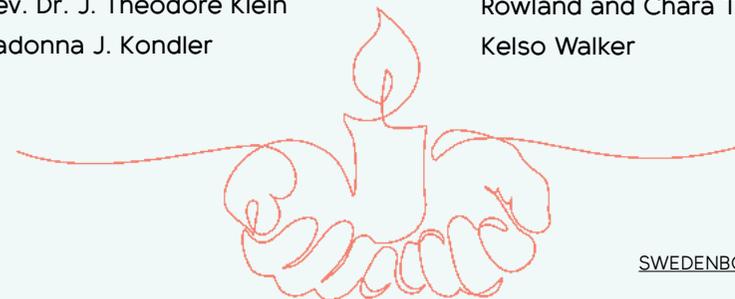
... this is why I love [Swedenborg] so, because he is so precise and so endlessly capable of describing whatever it is he was experiencing. I love the bit about how he knows exactly what dead people feel like. (*On The Conjugial Angel*, 54)

This short work includes selections from Byatt’s novella as well as her research into other literary figures, including novelist Henry James, Jr., Honoré de Balzac, and Elizabeth Barrett Browning. You can find *On The Conjugial Angel* on our online bookstore at [swedenborg.com/bookstore](http://swedenborg.com/bookstore), or you can contact our Constituent Services Representative Regina Lee at 610-430-3222, ext. 100, or at [rlee@swedenborg.com](mailto:rlee@swedenborg.com). •

## 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, groups, or others. In this section, we list all the people who have inspired gifts in the fall and winter of 2020. Please note that the dedications are listed exactly as they were given to us, and duplicate entries have been combined. Names are listed in alphabetical order by last name, where a last name is given. •

Berith Acton	Dr. W. Kulman & Barbara Kulman
Donnette R. Alfelt	Paulo J. Leggerini
All who have suffered	Lynn Donald Lemieux
Michael Barbieri	Michael D. McCann
Squadron Leader George Barclay	Daniel B. Montgomery
DFC	Mr. and Mrs. William J. Moran CPA
Richard Bilger	Muhamed
Kelli Black	Thomas & Collene Newbold
2020 Christmas	Elaine O'Connor
Tom & Charlene Cooper	Malcolm C. Peck
Vincent Dickinson	Jackie Ramos
Margaret C. Echols	Justina B. D. Rosario
Bruce E. Elder	Rev. Donald L. Rose
Gladys	Rev. Frank S. Rose
Peggy Glasco	Jonathan S. Rose
Gael Martinez Gomez, beloved son,	Hakodesh Ruach
a brother	Lydia Cutler Schrader
Barbara A. Holt	Stuart B. Shotwell
E. G. Hurst	John Smailer
Hyland Johns	Bobby Smith
Eren E. Kilic	Rev. Douglas M. Taylor
Rev. Dr. J. Theodore Klein	Rowland and Chara Trimble
Ladonna J. Kondler	Kelso Walker



## NCE Minute: *Survey* and *Soul-Body Interaction*—Strange Bedfellows?

By Jonathan S. Rose

At the very beginning of the New Century Edition project, one of the goals that we envisioned was a set of deluxe volumes that readers could place on their shelves in chronological order. This would not seem like a great challenge, or even something worth talking about, but in fact it has never been done before.

Many of the publishers of Swedenborg seem to have approached his works as if they were randomly interchangeable, and as if nothing differentiated his early work from his late, or even his unpublished from his published work. There is indeed astonishing consistency across the corpus, but just as no art historian would think of studying Picasso without considering the different phases and periods of his paintings, no serious reader of Swedenborg should lack awareness of the sequence and time frame in which his works were published.

The New Century Edition's desire to avoid this pitfall led to what might at first seem to be some strange bedfellows, however. In particular, the year 1769 saw two new volumes by Swedenborg appear in print: what we title *Survey* (traditionally titled *Brief Exposition*) and *Soul-Body Interaction*. Because *Soul-Body Interaction* is extremely small, at only twenty-three pages in the first edition, we could not have issued the work by itself, especially in our Portable paperback format. So it has always

### FROM PHILOSOPHY TO THEOLOGY

From *Soul-Body Interaction* §20:4:

My questioner exclaimed, “Now I can understand why the Lord called and chose fishermen to be his disciples, so I am not surprised that he has also chosen you. As you just said, in a spiritual sense you have been a fisherman from your earliest youth—that is, someone who inquired into truths on



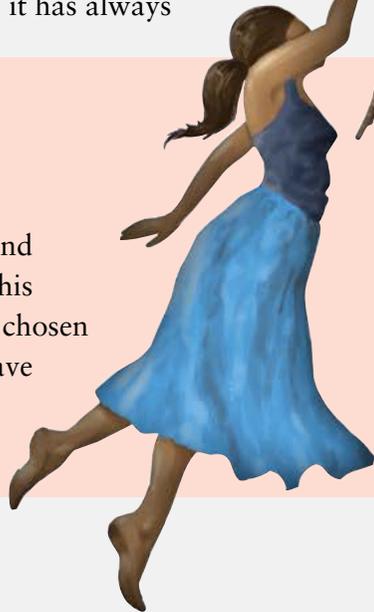
been our plan to bind it with *Survey*. The thing is, though, that these are two extremely different works. And that has always bothered us a little. They scarcely seem to have been written by the same author, although of course they were.

Let me explain.

*Survey* has 132 biblical quotations and many more citations of scriptural references. *Soul-Body Interaction* has just 14. Even when adjusted for their relative sizes, the one has well over triple the amount of such quotations and citations as the other. And the biblical quotations in *Soul-Body Interaction* are short, while those in *Survey* are sometimes half a page long. *Survey* also repeatedly cites and quotes from the Christian creeds, *The Book of Concord*, the canons and decrees of the Council of Trent, the Canons of

the earthly level. The reason you are now inquiring into spiritual truths is that earthly truths serve as their foundation.”

He went on to say (since he was a man of reason) that only the Lord would know who was well suited to grasping and presenting the teachings that are part of his new church, whether that would be one of the church leaders or one of their servants. Besides, who among Christian theologians did not first study philosophy in college before they were introduced to theology? How else would they have developed their intelligence?



Dort, and the Belgic Confession. Perhaps more than any other work of Swedenborg's, *Survey* makes its intended readership explicit. Three times in one passage, "theology professors" are specified as a target audience; "less highly educated clergy and lay people" are mentioned as well (*Survey* §20).

*Soul-Body Interaction* instead speaks of Aristotelian, Cartesian, and Leibnizian philosophy and discusses theories about the interaction between the soul and the body—a topic of greater interest to philosophers of the time than to theologians. And in Swedenborg's day, the term *philosophers* included "natural philosophers," or what we would today call scientists. No wonder Swedenborg presented a copy to the Royal Academy in Great Britain, one of the premier scientific organizations of his day.

One thing in common between the works is that they challenge existing views and "set the record straight" about their respective topics.

Although we have long thought of these two works as strange bedfellows, I am coming to see them as actually well suited to each other. They show that in that one year, at a time when science and religion were already alienated from one another, Swedenborg felt called to address the adherents of both fields. In doing so, he adopted quite different methods and sources to challenge misconceptions popular in each. Perhaps the two works, when considered in combination, even represent an effort to bring the disparate fields back together by demonstrating that scholars need not be limited to science alone.

Furthermore, at the very end of *Soul-Body Interaction*, the second of the works, Swedenborg records his answers to someone who questioned him as to how he went from being a philosopher (or "scientist") to being a theologian—in effect, how did he go from being a member of the first group to being a member of the second? And so at the end of the later, philosophical work, we are brought full circle from philosophy to theology again, and both interests remain united across Swedenborg's life story.

In any case, whether it is important to the individual reader or not, it will finally be possible to arrange Swedenborg's works on a shelf in chronological order. •

*Jonathan S. Rose is the Series Editor of the New Century Edition. The slim volume containing Survey and Soul-Body Interaction will be issued in Portable paperback format soon.*

## On Our Blog: Swedenborg's Eve: On Mutuality, Meaning, and Mirrors

By Rebecca Esterson

*This is an abridged version of a blog post that originally appeared on swedenborg.com; you can read the full text on our "Scholars on Swedenborg" blog.*

In the fall of 1744, six months after his first Christophany, Swedenborg was told in a dream that he would write a "divine book on the worship and love of God" (Bergquist, *Swedenborg's Dream Diary*, page 290). Thereafter, he embarked on an ambitious project, expounding on the themes of love and devotion through a detailed narration of the creation of the world.

*The Worship and Love of God* (De cultu et amore Dei) is often described as a transitional work, as it was written during the year of his most intense spiritual crisis and awakening and published precisely in the time between his early scientific and later theological periods. Since this work contains so much material drawn from his previous publications, Swedish scholar Inge Jonsson argues that it is Swedenborg's attempt to synthesize and summarize his philosophy, astronomy, and psychology up to that point. *The Worship and Love of God* contains many of the foundational concepts that would occupy the pages of his subsequent works, but also presents ideas that are at odds with his later works. This theological confusion has resulted in an ambivalence to the work that has contributed to its obscurity—so much so that many readers of Swedenborg do not even know of its existence. This is a tragedy.

*The Worship and Love of God* takes its reader on a literary journey that defies genre classification. At its heart, it is a wild and mystical retelling of the biblical story of the first humans, created male and female in the image of their creator. We recognize these two to be the Adam and Eve of Genesis, even though they are unnamed in the text and even though the story strays considerably from the biblical account, wandering playfully in its own garden.

In what few studies we have of *The Worship and Love of God*, Swedenborg's Adam has received thorough attention, but Swedenborg's Eve character is in fact the far more compelling one. Swedenborg discards the

millennia-old commentarial tradition that focuses on Eve's part in the fall of humanity and on her consequent suffering and hardship. Here, Eve is neither the first sinner nor the great temptress we have been warned about in pulpit and in fresco. Rather, she is described as a model of wisdom, beauty, and integrity, a move that is surely worth our notice and consideration against the backdrop of traditional interpretations.

### *Eve's Consent and Mutual Love*

Remarkably, Swedenborg's Eve is not born of a rib bone. Rather, she is born in her own garden and from her own Tree of Life, which are some distance from the garden and Tree of Life that produced her future mate. The story of her creation and education, which Swedenborg tells at great length, parallels that of Adam. She is raised by celestial companions and through the illuminating beauty of her natural surroundings. The two do not meet until their wedding night, except for one time in a dream before Eve was even born.

In the dream, Adam—still the only human on the face of the earth—falls asleep under a tree and dreams of a beautiful girl. He pursues her, dislocating his rib in the process, and eventually is able to kiss her, but later wakes up and believes that it was only a dream. However, as he was sleeping, Adam's animating force—his mother/queen/goddess soul—is shared through his contact with the tree, thus conceiving Eve. From this point on, they will both receive the inflowing of divine love through twin souls. Later in the story, the two of them meet and become acquainted through pleasant and intimate conversation, and they both declare their mutual love for each other, joining in marriage through mutual consent.

Radical as it may be, this reinterpretation of the biblical Eden nevertheless celebrates true marriage love, a union founded on maturity and consent. It also magnifies the divine image of both the male and female forms in their fullest expression. Eve is not made from the body and image of Adam; she is made from the body and image of God. Swedenborg's version draws out elements of the story that too frequently are minimized, and it repaints Eve as an equal partner and intellectual match to her mate.

### *Eve's Image in the Water*

A second aspect of the development of Swedenborg's Eve that merits our attention concerns the moment she first sees her own reflection in the water.

Once she reaches “the age of laughter and play,” Eve comes upon “a certain crystal-like fountain, transparent even to its opaque bottom,” and she is captivated by what she sees in the water: “Casting her eyes down into the water she was amazed at seeing an image floating beneath its surface, and at times emerging when she put herself in motion, just as if it was alive” (*The Worship and Love of God*, part II, no. 90, page 162).

Like *Ovid's Narcissus* and *Milton's Eve*, Swedenborg's Eve encounters her own reflection for the first time and is amazed by the beauty of her face and body. But this is not all. Her amazement grows as she realizes that through the movements of her face she sees every intricacy and facet of her inner mind. Eve sees her own astonishment, and then she sees her own thoughts about that astonishment: “She even recognized her wandering ideas about it, wondering that thus all the inmost recesses of her mind stood open and unlocked” (ibid.).

Eve asks the celestial spirits who populate her garden to explain to her what she is seeing, and one of them expounds on the correspondences between the soul, the mind, and the body, telling her that the influx from the innermost to the outermost levels of her being is shown in her facial expressions.

This is not a cautionary tale warning about the dangers of vanity. Rather than becoming enamored with and distracted by her own facade, Swedenborg's Eve sees that her face is actually a gateway to inner worlds. The surface of the water, like the surface of her body, celebrates and reveals her inner being. Soul and body, along with mind and nature, harmonize and synchronize, reflecting one another as in a mirror. Eve is drawn to this deeper truth, rather than to only the beauty of her outer self, and it is this truth that inaugurates further stages of her intellectual and spiritual development.

### *Eve as Master Interpreter*

After Eve encounters herself in the crystal-like fountain, her celestial companions and her soul “goddess” (ibid., no. 99, page 177). further educate her about the connection between inner things and outer things. Over time, she develops into a wise interpreter of the symbols around and within her, and she is praised for her ability to understand the complexities and connections in her world.

Struck by a kind of lightning of the mind, Eve finds herself in a moment of clarity, able to see the inner realities of all the natural things around her.

She is then told to once again look into her own face and see a chain of reflections, ultimately reflecting God's own being. "Look now from this mirror, and see what is the quality of Order itself, and in what manner the spiritual principle shines forth from the natural, and the Divine from the corporeal, consequently the whole of Order" (ibid., no. 99, page 180). At this point, Eve instinctually enters into a meditative state, slowing her breath to such an extent that she is able to direct her focus even more toward the "mutual discourse" of the universe. Her insights continue to multiply and her wisdom increases.

On the morning after her marriage, Eve puts to use her ability to interpret the symbols of the universe. As the sun rises, Adam and Eve look to the sky and witness a fantastic, seven-staged, mystical vision. They first see a light so bright that they are forced to close their physical eyes. The vision continues, however, unfolding now before their spiritual eyes, with images of orbs, radiantly colored borders, swirling spheres, and orbicular gyres. They see images of faces and human forms, masses of eggs, rivers, and veins. Images of fertility and life merge and multiply, culminating in a giant pyramid from whose apex flow spires that stretch out infinitely in the shapes of helices.

More than one commentator has noted the likely autobiographical nature of the mystical experiences described in *The Worship and Love of God*. Adam's out-of-body experience (described in part I), Eve's breath-induced enlightenment, and this final seven-staged vision all resemble the kinds of experiences Swedenborg was having this same year, as recorded in his dream diary. If this is the case, Swedenborg gives voice first to Eve and then to Adam as a means of interpreting the visions that were unfolding before his own inner eyes, and this he does with great attention.

Eve reaches into the sanctuary of her mind and opens for Adam the secrets of the vision. She explains that the whole universe is a great series, a complex of means to a holy end. She describes the flow of this series from first thing (God) to last things (creation) and then back again. Adam is full of delight and amazement at the wisdom of her interpretation, but she encourages him to offer his own interpretation, deferring to his abilities to read even more deeply into these symbols. Adam begins his exposition as an extension of Eve's "to further continue the thread of the web which thou hast so skillfully woven" (ibid., part III, no. 115, page 203).

Here Adam begins a line-by-line interpretation of the vision as it is written in the book—a curious first-person explanation of the third-person narrator's account. It is an odd literary move, but it anticipates the exegetical formatting of Swedenborg's later commentaries, especially those found in *The Word of the Old Testament Explained* and *Secrets of Heaven*. The formatting is the most noteworthy thing about Adam's explanations, which, as Jonsson notes in *A Drama of Creation*, "do not add anything new" to what his wife has already said. The line-by-line arrangement, while utilized by the author going forward, is too ambitious for this work, and Swedenborg gives up halfway through. The book is never finished, and Adam's interpretation is never completed.

## Conclusion

As noted above, *The Worship and Love of God* is often described as a transitional work, published between two distinct periods of Swedenborg's life and career, or so goes the theory. Given the consistency of many of the key ideas in this work with ideas from earlier and later works, both scientific ideas and theological ones, it may be more accurate to see this as a work that belies the distinction. In other words, *The Worship and Love of God* presents challenges to the very idea that Swedenborg had two, separate, mutually exclusive periods—a scientific one and a theological one.

Swedenborg's Eve is an appropriate character through which to consider the problems in distinguishing Swedenborg's science from his theology. Through her own reflection in the water, she beheld infinite inner worlds. Likewise, Swedenborg observed in nature's forms the image and functions of the soul, and ultimately of God. His views certainly changed and matured over time, and we can sense the movement of heaven's inspiration in the expansion of his ideas; but there is no hard break. Swedenborg's correspondences pervade the so-called scientific and theological works alike. Here, as if in the breach imposed between them, our first mother names their intimate relationship. Nature and heaven are alike; one is seen in the other as in a mirror. •

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# SWEDENBORG FOUNDATION

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