

A guide to the enjoyment of Swedenborg

Author's Preface

Swedenborg's theological writings help some people to soar, to wander in spiritual worlds, and to gaze upon the design of creation. For others, these same books are dull stuff. Same books. Different reactions. It would be easy to say those who soar have spiritual insight, while the others are dull clods, but I don't believe it. Although we do not yet fully know why some soar and others are left behind on earth, we know enough to help many more enjoy the writings. If you take a volume like *Divine Love & Wisdom* and read it as you would any novel or non-fiction, you have a good chance to be left behind on earth. It is something different. Some people, like the blind and deaf Helen Keller, were inwardly prepared by their experiences and took off with the first few passages. My purpose is to help you soar also.

My focus is Swedenborg's theological writings, all completed late in his life. His 150 or so scientific works, completed earlier, are qualitatively very different. They read like the efforts of scientist in the 1700's to piece together what little was discovered with intense reasoning and speculation. Having surveyed almost all the knowledge then known, in 1744 he turned inward and explored the nature of mind itself. He had a series of spiritual experiences. Thereafter he wrote some 30 volumes of the richest theological/psychological material we could hope to find. These 30 volumes are our focus. In contrast to the analytical reasoning of his prior scientific works, these read like the reports of a seasoned traveller who has come back from very moving experiences in an amazing land. He knows. He reports. He later saw his long journey thru all the sciences as merely preparation for this spiritual journey. Swedenborg patiently wrote and copied these 30 volumes of his theological works with a quill pen and saw them through the press at his own expense. For some 200 years people excited by these writings have continued to make them available in dozens of languages. Yet only a few thousand people are privileged to have seen into their richness. Beyond this small circle there are millions who know nothing of them, or seeing them, find no riches.

Consider the life of a person who suddenly took to the writings and you will get a clue to what is involved. Helen Keller was struck in infancy with total blindness and deafness. Apparently she was an intelligent person, but this intelligence was imprisoned in a body that could only feel its way through the world. She appeared to be a mentally retarded person needing care. She had no language, no books, no conversation, only blind touch and the routine of eating and sleeping. She later described this period.

It was not night - it was not day
But vacancy absorbing space,
And fixedness without a place:
There were no stars - no earth - no time -
No check - no change - no good - no crime.'

She was given a teacher named Anne Sullivan. Anne taught this 10-year old girl tactually to spell out the names of simple things. She learned to imitate these hand signs, but it did not immediately dawn on her that these were words for things. The frustrated teacher wanted to intensify Helen's experience. She took her to a pump and let cold water flow over her hand as she spelled out *water*. It dawned on Helen that these hand movements meant water. She later wrote, "That word, water, dropped into my mind like the sun in a frozen world." The concept of language as a way of talking about things dawned. With the slow and limited tools of sign language and later Braille she went through school and college. Later she was introduced to

Swedenborg and wrote "...it was but a step for me from the wonders of nature to the wonders of the spirit. When Swedenborg's message was revealed to me, it was another precious gift added to life. I will try to clothe my emotion in words. It was as if light came where there had been no light before, the intangible world became a shining certainty.... To one who is deaf and blind, the spiritual world offers no difficulty. Nearly everything in the natural world is as vague, as remote from my senses as spiritual things to the minds of most people. . . . My mystic world is lovely with trees and clouds and stars and eddying streams. . . . I am often conscious of beautiful flowers and birds and laughing children where to my seeing associates there is nothing."

What was Helen's readiness to 'see'? The barrenness of her outer life was accompanied by an inner richness. She saw flowers, clouds, and children where others didn't. Her inner life was very rich. This richness found itself described in Swedenborg's spiritual writings. The writings talked about her experience. She recognized in them what she already knew. For the spiritual clods among us, this is a clue how we may enter by the same door. Perhaps not as easily and powerfully as Helen Keller, but we can enter.

Getting Into The Writings

Swedenborg begins *Divine Love and Wisdom* talking of love. **What is love?**

Since people cannot formulate any concept of it when they reflect on it, they say either that it isn't really anything, or that it is merely something that flows in from sight, hearing, touch, and conversations and therefore exerts an influence. People are unaware that it is their very life-not just the general life of their whole body and the general life of all their thoughts, but the life of their every element.

This is something wise people can perceive as they say, "If you take away affection, which belongs to love, can you think anything? Can you do anything? To the extent that affection, which belongs to love, cools off, do not thought and speech and action cool off? And as the one warms up, do not the others warm up? But these wise people are not perceiving these matters on the basis of a thought that love is a person's life, but on the basis of their experience that this is how things happen. No one knows what human life is unless he or she knows what love is. (DLW 1) *

*AD Swedenborg's theological writings have abbreviations' i.e., DLW 1 is **Divine Love & Wisdom** paragraph 1. all the writings have numbered paragraphs, making it easy to refer to individual parts.

This can be taken in a dry, academic way. Swedenborg says love is the life of man. Without it, all falls dead, a spiritual platitude. Or you can take this more personally. You *are* life. Refer to your own life, the only example you have of what Swedenborg is talking about. He is making love and its derivative affections the same as your life. Is this true for you? I think of a time recently when I felt depressed. I tried to go shopping to fire myself up. It didn't work. Standing in the store, near the things I wanted, nothing mattered. My affection for them was gone. I left and went home to bed. My love, interest, affections are the same as my life. When they are withdrawn, there is no life. You should be able to come up with similar examples from your own life. Swedenborg has nailed down a central concept. Your life is your loves and affections coming into play, making this person significant, others less important; making this clearly wanted and that unimportant.

Here is the secret. Swedenborg's theological writings are always referring to real life and experience. There is nothing in the writings, including God Himself, that you cannot find in your experience. And this is the way to understand them. Under stand, get *under* or in them. As an intellectual statement, 'life is love', is merely a rosy platitude. But be careful of what you say of the love that is my *life*, for I will be checking its validity against my experience. If you take the writings as abstract theorizing about good, wisdom, spirits, etc. they do soon fall dead. But continuously check them against the very fabric of your experience and they unfold an exciting story. There are many other clues as to how to proceed, but this is number one. Enter the writings.

They are talking about you personally. Everything said can and should be checked against your life. There is not a trace of abstraction in this theology. Cut it and *you bleed*. It is far easier to remember this way. Nothing is really understood until it is lived. Besides, it is a central purpose of the writings that they become 'of the life' so that they might live.

This was the point of my pamphlet on *Uses*.² Use is at the core of heaven and hell. If I think of my life in relation to others, how I fit in, how I contribute, I literally live in a world which opens out into endless larger spheres. But, in contrast, if I think of myself only, what is in this for me, I literally live in a closed in, narrowing world. This is the difference between heaven and hell. In the heavenly attitude I am in a world where I am of some use. My use is my place, my function, how I fit into the scheme of things. In the attitude of hell I am thinking of myself; how is this good for me? What pleases and displeases me? Others are pushed aside as less important. In the larger social sphere I am useless or even anti-use. In this for-me-first world I am never pleased enough, comfortable enough, rich enough. It is hell. Oddly enough I am more considerate of myself in the heavenly world. I must eat properly and go to bed early enough, to be able to work tomorrow. It even includes business. I make things and sell them. People buy them because it pleases them. I am useful to them. Yet I can thereby make a living. This is an example of how I have interiorized or linked to my life experience Swedenborg's concepts of uses, heaven and hell. I see heavens and hells all around me. Feel free to use your imagination to visualize.

Here is another example. You tell me whether this friend is in heaven or hell. He is 69 years old, paralysed by a stroke on the right side. He barely gets around on a cane and has an electric powered wheel chair. He has money enough to live in a fancy rest home. He doesn't have to do anything. He feeds himself meals they prepare, but they bathe and dress him. It is a life of eat, sleep, sit in a wheelchair and watch others do things. So far the picture is not clear. This could be a heaven or hell. But look closely at the quality of his life. He has no wife or children and is estranged from all relatives. He is alone. He doesn't try to do anything, so his muscles are weakening. He could bathe and dress himself if he tried. Around him he finds just boring, dying old people. He is impatient to get to meals and impatient to leave. He doesn't listen to anyone even though the house is full of older persons who would like to talk to someone. In this life of total ease, where everything is done for him, he is in hell. And he knows it. He could be in heaven if he tried to do as much as he could and enjoyed the company of others. I don't say this as a way of judging others, but as a way to illustrate the fundamental difference Swedenborg is speaking about in heaven and hell. We can't judge because there is more here we don't know about. For one, he used to be a physically active man, a counsellor who made a living listening to others! He's depressed now. In the long view of eternity it could be he has been put through this period of paralysis to show him he should treasure and use better his capacity to do things. But qualitatively his is now a narrowed in, hellish world.

Take, as a contrast, my mother. She spent her whole life caring for others. When there was no longer husband and children she was taking care of birds, a cat and a garden as busily as ever. Give her the same stroke, and the same paralysis and rest home and what do you suppose she would do? She would use her one good hand to clean up her room, would manage to bathe and dress herself, would smuggle bread out to the birds, and be more of a delight to have around.

We tend to gravitate toward a more hell-like or heaven-like adaptation. When Swedenborg published *Heaven & Hell* there was a bit of commotion among theologians. He said that the habits established here cause us to drift toward the society of heaven or hell we are accustomed to. The theologians preferred that God condemn people to hell. Swedenborg's description is more human and common sense. God doesn't condemn. We continue in our ways and drift towards the society that fits us. We sort ourselves out. God doesn't need to assign us. How reasonable. Look closely and see we are doing it here and now. How awesome! God doesn't condemn us. We do. We are responsible. This is a very human theology, easy to link to and check against experience.

Some will think it is dangerous to connect theology with your experience. You might make a wrong interpretation. They prefer theology to remain otherworldly, beyond human touch, to leave it abstract. I have no quarrel with others' understanding. But, in my experience, theology is not understood until it is 'of the life'. The whole drift of Swedenborg's theology is to connect what seems otherworldly with human experiences. To really grasp this, connect what he said with your own experience. The spiritual is the whole of human experience except the body, and the body serves under the spiritual and is enlivened by it. This is the universality of the spiritual and its usefulness. It will also be true for countless other lives the world has not yet seen. To enter upon this kind of experience, connect it with your life. This is not just a device. That is what it is all about. This is in the direction of the real thrust and purpose of the writings. Yet it also makes the writings come alive, because they are easily remembered and above all, relevant. So when Swedenborg says heaven and hell are not to be understood as places but rather are states of experiencing, you should say, well of course, because that is what we have been talking about. And eternity? It is all the time, forever, easily found as the now.

The psychologist Eugene Cendlin once examined the difference between people who did well or poorly in psychotherapy. He found those who did poorly tended to treat their problem as abstract: "I've been diagnosed as migraine." The person who does well is personal about it. "I have these terrible pains starting in my cheek and radiating to my head as though my head is slowly catching fire." Cendlin calls this the *felt sense*. It is a complete bodily feeling, the gut feeling. It may be difficult to put into words because it is a complex whole. The person might never have put into words before. It is clear. It is whole. It is real. It is there. Cendlin developed a method called Focusing to aid people to get to this level. It is this same felt sense we are looking for in Swedenborg. Cendlin says,

The body is a biological computer, generating enormous collections of data and delivering them instantaneously. Your thinking isn't capable of holding all these items of knowledge you know about your friend and your relationship to her. Your body, however, delivers 'all about your friend' in one great, rich, complex experience of recognition, one felt-sense. 3

As you read Swedenborg what could seem abstract should come to be seen in your life and acquire felt-sense. You should be able to feel your way in the following

passages. Even if you aren't a person who focuses on wealth, you ought to be able to picture such a person.

What a man loves above all things is constantly present in his thought, and also in his will, and it constitutes his veriest life. For example, he who loves wealth above all things, whether it be money or possessions, constantly turns over in his mind how he may attain it: when he does attain it he rejoices inwardly, when he loses it he grieves inwardly; for his heart is in it. He who loves himself above all things, remembers himself in everything; thinks of himself, speaks of himself, acts for the sake of himself: for his life is a life for self.

A man has for an end what he loves above all things, and has respect to it in each and all things; it is in his will, like the hidden current of a stream which draws and bears him away even when busy with something else; for it is that which animates him. This is what one man seeks for, and also sees, in another; and according to which he either leads him or acts with him.

A man is altogether of such a quality as is that which rules his life; by this he is distinguished from others; and the nature of his heaven, if he is good, is formed according to it; and also the nature of his hell, if he is bad. It constitutes his very will, his own Self (proprium), and his character; for it is the very Esse of his life, which cannot be changed after death; because it is the man himself. (HD 55-57) 4

It helps very much in understanding yourself if you can identify your ruling love, the love at the head of all the tributaries of affection. How to find it? Look at the things you enjoy the most, that have the most meaning. They point in the direction of the ruling love. What you love you perceive more easily, learn easily, remember and enjoy. You feel better when near it. You are more alive in your loves than elsewhere. As Swedenborg describes it, the ruling love is unique in each person and lasts through all eternity. There can be a healthy development of expression for your love in which case it opens out into the heaven of a wider world of uses. Or it can be stifled, turned back on itself, and narrow into hellish eccentricity. It is not only easier to understand yourself in terms of your ruling love, but to understand another person through seeing their love. My wife's ruling love is the enjoyment of beauty in the living environment. Hence it is easy to understand why she enjoys house designs, has a house full of paintings and glassware and is a potter and gardener. These all fit together. It is not just the enjoyment of beauty. It must be in a practical living setting. Family gatherings and the polite harmony between people are also a part. She easily remembers the layout of a house she visited for a few minutes 20 years ago. But she can't remember how a part of the car works even though explained several times. So you see a ruling love is selective and reaches into many spheres. My own ruling love is in enjoying the discovery of the design of existence and making this useful to others. Hence this pamphlet. The ruling love is literally our way, our own spiritual path.

Something more than half of Swedenborg's theological writings take passages of the Bible that could seem remote and show an inner sense in them. Their inner meaning is always in the realm of the personal, accessible to you. He does this with an immense amount of comparing of passages and building up of a case for the inner sense he gives. My brief excerpt can't do justice to this. But I just want to illustrate that the inner sense of the Bible is one that is accessible to your experience.

Genesis 12:10 And there was famine in the land. And Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; because the famine was grievous in the land. (AC 1459f)⁵

In this form it is difficult to relate to your life; famine, Abram, Egypt, what does this have to do with me? Famine is a terrible need. You could be fed enough and still experience a very great famine for something. Abram is the young Jesus or us in our own dumbness and searching. In this great need, out of our dumbness, we go down *into Egypt*. The implication of Egypt is basic understanding. Egypt had a rich culture and an understanding of the cosmos when surrounding nations were still primitive. You go *down* to it, because it is not ideal, but it is the best around. Sojourn means to be instructed. So in our famine we go down (inside, if you want) to a place to be instructed. Sojourn means to live, to stay. The process is not fast, it's slow. We have to live in it. We are dumb, in great need. We turn to what we can find, to live in it, to learn what we can.

It was Helen Keller's immense famine that made her easy to teach once she saw the new world of language. Her Egypt was all those tedious hand signals and Braille, in the midst of her famine. Can you not give examples from your own life how you were Abram, who went in to Egypt because of famine in the land? I can. I recall as a young man the amazement I felt when I paid ten cents for Troward's *Edinburgh Lectures in Mental Science*.⁶ Why was I amazed? It was the first book I ever owned that I chose beyond the fairy tale level. I was amazed I could actually buy and own such a treasure. It dealt with something close to the love of my life. There was famine in the land. I badly wanted to know how the mind works. I later became a clinical psychologist. I had gone down to Egypt, not the ideal place to be instructed, but it was a beginning. I can easily picture the famine abroad in the land when Helen Keller first learned she could communicate with others. This way of understanding goes quite beyond the simple formula, "famine equals the need to know". Any school child could repeat that on an exam quiz. Instead this way knows famine from experience. It is the difference between discussing famine and starving.

There are several easy corollaries of this idea of relating the writings to your life.

1) Don't read more at a time than you can really use. Reading Swedenborg is not like the classroom situation where you must finish three chapters by Tuesday. There is no rush. It is far better that you really experience one line. We have an eternity of time in which to read them. Once you feel into the writings, then you should also be able to recognize when you have lost that personal sense and are merely collecting more words. About spiritual matters there is never a hurry.

2) Everything that helps you in this enterprise ought to be tried. One might like to read the writings out loud. Another might copy especially pertinent sections and stick them on the refrigerator. Another might do better at marking up the books. Some will be shocked at this. You should see how Swedenborg marked up his copy of the Bible! I like to put a pencil line in the margin alongside passages of special meaning to me. Then, when I want something to quote, I can easily go through a whole volume and pick out everything most valuable to me. This is rather standard practice for college students. Some get a yellow marking pen and draw a broad yellow line through the most important passages. The more you mark it up, the more it becomes yours. A marked up book is only damaged for resale to others and Swedenborg has little resale value anyway! A well marked book can become invaluable. At times a new and better translation comes on the market, but I have a hard time shifting to it because the old one is so made mine with its marks.

3) At times you will come repeatedly to some term that just doesn't make felt-sense to you. I had trouble with proprium. I used the indexes at the back of the volumes to collect references to it. As a result I think of proprium as proper to me. It

has the connotation of self conceit. It is an overlooking of the fact that we are created and cast into existence, think and move we really know, not how. So I fall into the conceit that I really run myself. That's proprium. But there is a deeper aspect, for even proprium is designed by God. I can't take too much pride even in my conceit.

There are not many really unique words in Swedenborg. But often he uses words in a far wider and subtler sense than you will see elsewhere. For this reason it can be illuminating to nail down what he means by central concepts such as good, wisdom, the Word, etc. Many people use the Word to mean the Bible, but he uses it with wider meanings. The Word (the innate order of all things) existed before the Bible. The Word we have, the Bible, is superior because it also has a natural, worldly meaning whereas the Bible in heaven only has spiritual and celestial meanings. It is especially fun to track down meanings when you are curious, that is, your loves are involved. I felt Word meant far more than my religious friends thought, and I was delighted to find it did. Again, don't permit the writings to remain abstract or removed from your experience. Someone might ask "**But how can you experience the Lord?**" I leave that for you to discover.

4) Read under ideal circumstances for you. Find a time and place away from the stresses of the day. As a young man I used to study spiritual matters at night, in bed, while listening to classical music on a crystal set radio. The theme song of a late night radio program became loaded with spiritual connotations for me. You may need other people. Then read and discuss or even debate with a sympathetic friend. You are trying to experience theology. Do whatever enhances it for you.

5) Feel free to follow your interests. I wonder how many were turned away from the writings by trying the wrong volume first. It didn't touch their interests. Enter by your curiosity. Some people attack books as though they are forever in school and will have an exam next week. They go through a volume from cover to cover because they feel they must. Such an approach can kill interest if you don't feel like it. Since reading the writings is a spiritual journey, you will go further if you read what is closer to your loves. One older person, near the end of life in this world, might be interested in what is beyond this world. Then read *Heaven & Hell*.

Another is curious about how spirits can interact with man. Then look for this. Another will be curious about a possible inner sense in the Bible. Then start here. Even within each of these interests there will be minute differences. If you do it well, you are likely to come out with a broad understanding of the writings eventually. There is nothing wrong with curiosity. Following interests is like tracing tributaries of affection back to a river and finally back to its headwaters, your ruling love. A scholar is really one who follows the strong current of his or her interests.

6) I'm a natural scholar. I hope to be a scholar in heaven where presumably the schools and libraries are better! I've put the writings in a central and handy place. I used indexes at the back of volumes so much I finally marked the spines of those with indexes. I discovered there are often several translations of the same volume. So I bought all, made comparisons and chose the one best for my taste. Where available, the George Dole translations will usually be preferred for clarity. Now and then I get a sudden series of insights while reading and I write these inside the book cover. I also bought and use all the indexes and cross references. Bogg did a *Glossary of Terms and Phrases Used By Swedenborg*. This captures the essence of his ideas. I sometimes trip out in ecstasy over Boggs's *Glossary*! I've heard of one other person who so enjoys Boggs, so I'm not alone in my madness.

Some people are amazed at how I recall so many passages as in *Uses* . 2 I don't. I got interested in seeing the full ramifications of uses. So I used every index to copy on cards every quote involving it. I read the cards through, found an order, and set it down as the pamphlet. Anyone could do the same. I did it because I was curious, but it was useful to others also. It also involved some months of trying to apply the ideas, so I could describe the process as experienced. But this is a glimpse into the madness of a scholar. Be careful about following your interests, or you might end up a scholar too! It is not necessary to be this mad to enjoy Swedenborg. "Ecstasy over Boggs's Glossary, indeed!"

The Frame of Reference of the Writings

You and I are standing, looking at a lovely country estate. Without altering the buildings and grounds, notice what happens as I simply alter the meaning by saying, "This is now your place, you won it in a contest; let's go in"; versus "This house exists only in the spirit world where you now are"; versus, "This is Hitler's estate." The place stayed the same. I only altered the frame of reference in which you experienced it. As McLuhan pointed out, often the medium (how a thing is presented) is a large part of the message. I'd like to put the writings in a frame of reference that helps you to understand and appreciate them.

Part of the frame is to have a sense of the author. What kind of man was he and how did he perceive these works? Although Swedenborg was a Baron, a member of the Swedish House of Lords, a man of means and one of the great scientists of his time, you could hardly tell it by the modest way he was inclined to live. He took lodgings in London with a craftsman so he could learn a trade. He asked only for meals and privacy. That was about it. If meals weren't prepared for him, he got by on very sweet coffee, chocolate and biscuits. His life was devoted to his task, to explore the spiritual and to set this down for others. He laboriously wrote, and copied his 30 volumes of theology with a quill pen, and saw many of them through the press at his own expense. Through most of his life their author was anonymous. Only later in life, when word got out who was writing these wonders did his name, with the Lord's permission, appear on a title page. He had to be a devoted and modest scholar, in marked contrast to other nobility with a life of regal pleasures.

Swedenborg had a slight stammer, which suggests he was not fully at ease in social situations. Yet he enjoyed being invited out to social gatherings (where he probably got better meals). He evidently startled a few of these social groups with his frankness about his experiences in heaven and hell and his evident extrasensory perception. His extrasensory capacity was simply an outgrowth of his constantly consorting with angels. He thought so little of this capacity that this careful scientist, who seemed to record everything else, didn't bother to mention it in his journals. We learn of it from the accounts of others he startled, including Wesley, the founder of Methodism. Swedenborg was a modest scholar clearly totally involved in what he was finding and in making this available to others.

The followers of Swedenborg frequently use his name. I am reasonably certain that should he return to earth he would try to stamp out this practice. His followers do this not to praise or to elevate him, but rather his name is used as shorthand to refer to his theological writings. Most of his followers would agree his theological writings were given to him by the Lord. In the estimation of most of his followers he is essentially just a servant of the Lord, a careful reporter. It is the theological writings that are held in great esteem, not the man, even though his life was close to exemplary. It would be more accurate to refer to the New Jerusalem as really the center of what is being referred to, rather than Swedenborg's theology. The unassuming writer fades

into the background. The gigantic concept of the New Jerusalem comes forward and is the center of it all.

Basically Swedenborg is dealing with the universal of religion in Christian terms. This is a difficult point for some. "Swedenborg is always speaking in Christian terms, and does this not make Christianity the supreme of churches?" Many assume this exclusive use of Christian terms puts down other religions. You have to look closely to see he is pointing even beyond historic Christianity. For instance, he says many Christians do poorly in heaven because they assume they have the answers,, while the blacks of Africa do well." In the 1700's he is speaking of black animists, most of whom never heard of Christianity. Animists see spirit in everything about them; all trees, rocks, and animals have spirits. Why would they be easy to instruct? It's simple.

They are accustomed to seeing everything as spiritual. Also, living naked in the jungle, you have to be careful and respectful of the forces of nature, especially with all these spirits about who see into your very nature. In contrast, many Christians feel they have it all understood, and they spiritualize very little, except at Sunday worship. Note also Swedenborg said all who act by the good they know will be saved. The good known by more than half the world's population doesn't include any specifically Christian concepts. So the spiritual New Jerusalem is beyond culture, time, and historical accidents. It is the universal. There have been Jews, Hindus and Buddhists who saw this universal aspect in the writings, so they found much in them while remaining Jews, Hindus and Buddhists. Hence the writings are describing the Universal that will be true even on other planets, but they do so in Christian terms.

The writings do have dated aspects. For instance in Swedenborg's day it was not known that the female contributed half to the genetics of the child. It was thought the father's seed was the determiner and the female was just a nurturing vessel. He refers to it this way. He also refers to church conflicts which were truer in his day than now, another dated aspect. Swedenborg did not know of the major religious texts of the East because they had not been translated and made available in the West in his day. In many ways though I see far stronger parallels between the writings and Eastern religions than I do with conventional Western Christianity. This revelation came through a man living and writing in the 1700's. Accept simply that there are a few dated aspects, and seek out the essence of what he has to give us.

One dated aspect is the language. Swedenborg wrote in Latin, the universal language in the West in those days. It was the style for sentences to run on with commas where there would now be a period. The challenge of translation is to present the writings in current English. Usually readers will find more modern translations easier to understand. I never really understood what had been given as *esse and existere* until Dole translated it as Reality and Presence.⁹ Yet the situation is similar to the Bible. There have been many translations. Those who want to understand will tend to do so regardless of the translation.

Earlier I referred to these writings as theological/ psychological without elaborating. I combine these concepts because there is no aspect of this theology that doesn't have personal and psychological implications. That is really an odd thing to say. Rarely would it be said of other theologies. *Theos-logy* means writings of God. For most, God is quite beyond our grasp, beyond anything man can get his muddy hands on and for them, this is the beauty and perfection of theology. Throughout the theological writings Swedenborg is dealing with a Design, within a design, within a design. God/within churches/within persons. In other words each of us is a microcosm (a little

universe) whose design is that of the macrocosm (the whole of what is). That is how it is made. Our inner world contains heaven and hell experiences because we are the little image of the whole, and in the whole there really is a heaven and a hell. *Heaven and Hell* can be read as describing those spiritual worlds, or as describing the internals of your experience, or both simultaneously. Understanding this is central to appreciating the writings. Treated as external things heaven and hell are quaint. But seen as very fundamental aspects of the nature and quality of life, they become quite central and relevant. If you come to recognize this reality now, you will fit in better when you die!

When Swedenborg describes the spiritual history of churches this is, again, easily taken as external, about some remote historical events. But when he says we are each a church in the least form you have the key to interiorizing these churches. We each go through the spiritual dynamics of the churches he describes.

I suspect theology would best be presented as a drama on a stage. We easily empathize with a well-presented drama. But to carry it a step further I would suddenly call you out of the audience, stuff a script in your hand and say, "Now you are all the Jews. You have wandered for centuries without a homeland. Now, play that!" After you sweat this role a while I'd then go a step further and suggest you could deepen the role by looking closely and seeing how you have been "wandering without a homeland" your whole life. It is a terrible mistake to think of theology as otherworldly.

At times the writings seem to be speaking of just the internal life of the Lord, other times of churches and at other times of persons. But because you are the microcosmic image of the whole, it is always speaking of you. This is where it connects and becomes real. The Lord is the Very Human, and your humanness is your private vista on The Human. This may seem like too much emphasis on the personal.

I do so because

- 1) it *is* personal
- 2) it must become 'of the life' to become real and
- 3) because your personal is your window to the Universal.

The person I know who was most radically changed thru the writings read them as though they were true of him. Yet he came out of it with a beautiful general understanding of the dynamics of churches and of the Life of the Lord and the underlying purpose of the writings.

True Christian Religion looks as though it is a manual for churches and is often so read. But Swedenborg is always dealing with this triple aspect, God, church, person. When read as personal too, it has much wider meaning and import. This triple aspect in the writings is rather easy to see in the *Arcana Coelestia* and in his biblical exegesis. You may meet Swedenborgians who are not aware of this simultaneously triple aspect. The prime example of this triple aspect is Swedenborg's detailed elaboration of the inner sense of the Bible which refers to the inner life of the Lord, the spiritual history of churches, and the psychodynamics of the spiritual regeneration of individuals. It is all of these simultaneously. This is not strange. It is similar to saying Christ's way is not remote history, but the living way you are in now. Or in Buddhistic terms, the Buddha that is sought, is ultimately the one seeking the Buddha. In effect, we are each the young Jesus struggling to find our way home to God, the Father who is the All and Only of creation. Particular parts of the writings will leap out at you, because this is where you are. In the whole of the world's religious literature you are not likely to find so much actual spiritual experience reported as in Swedenborg's writings. They were written by an explorer for explorers, and they were meant to be useful for this exciting journey.

Personal Development Through the Writings

It is quite enough to simply enjoy the writings. Enjoyment implies learning and understanding. Yet, there is a deeper aspect that should be touched upon for those interested.

Personal spiritual development is quite possible while reading the writings. The writings deal with heaven and hell, spirits, the internal sense of the Bible and many psychological/theological matters. **Yet if I had to put their focus into a single word, that word would be regeneration.** The term means re-birth, or being born again into a wider and more beautiful world. Regeneration is Swedenborg's term for personal and spiritual development. This focus on regeneration becomes clearest in the *Arcana Coelestia* because the inner sense of the Bible deals with the spiritual development of Christ/church/the individual. By delving into regeneration and identifying with this process, the individual comes to see regeneration occurring in himself. Hence the earlier key of relating the writings to your experience puts you on the path of regeneration already. This is another and very central reason for reading the writings this way. **The essence of the writings is regeneration and they are not really understood until the individual enters into this process and learns through personal involvement.**

How does the change of regeneration take place? The regenerating person has an active dialogue and relationship with The Lord. At first it seems that the individual, by his or her effort, is making the pattern of this development. Later, when the perspective has widened, it becomes apparent The Lord alone guides this development. It is not possible to be in an active relationship with The Lord without coming into greater truth and good. These are one and the same, for The Lord is truth and good.

One might ask whether the writings were aimed at the institution of churches or at individuals. The answer is both, but the writings are quite clear that a church cannot be better than the individuals in it. So the writings are aimed fundamentally at individuals and secondarily at churches for the individual is the "church in the least form."

Regeneration at first may seem like a vague process. "How do I regenerate?" First seek God, the rest follows. This change flows from a relationship with God. It is designed by God, just as each of us, our minds, and the whole of our existence was designed by God. This relationship is quite complex and subtle for it involves the conscious, the unconscious, the senses, perception, understanding, and all our acts. That is why the drama of regeneration described in the writings is extensive and complex. We don't need to master this complexity, for we are never to become its master.

It is much like observing a stage play such as *Hamlet*. If we get involved the drama means more, and it touches and affects us at different points. Seeing *Hamlet* several times we see something new each time. We identify with different parts of the drama at different times. Our lives are enriched. But we would be hard put to say exactly what occurred when. **Swedenborg was involved in the process of regeneration while producing the writings. The very first thing this process did was to alter his orientation from mainly intellectual to intellect enriched by great feeling.** His former mode of intellectual perception was too narrow for his task. **He was broadened to feelingful perception in which he experienced Living Truth.** This change was unplanned and unanticipated by him. He had entered on a drama,

and it moved him in an unanticipated direction. But without this change, the rest of what he was to do would have been impossible. Regeneration is a process like that in which we are carried in the direction of greater good and truth. Like a drama, it is exciting discovery.

To recapitulate:

- a) Becoming involved in the writings is entering on regeneration or personal and spiritual development.
- b) The heart of this process is the individual doing their best in a relationship to God.
- c) God answers in broad, subtle and unexpected ways, working on both the internal and external aspects of a person's life to cause a drift towards the good and true.
- d) The writings describe the universal nature of this process like a complex drama we are caught up in while partly recognizing certain aspects as our life. We may sense part of the drift of what is taking place, but the whole scope and beauty of the design of the drama is quite beyond us, because it leads into the nature of God.

The outcome of the drama is not the clever person who understands and controls it all. Far from it. The outcome is the mature servant who does very well the tasks at hand. At no point can the individual brag "I am regenerated." Regeneration is eternal, beginning in this world and extending through worlds to come. This is the same as saying we can always learn and develop more. The more we discover, the more we see there is to discover. Regeneration is an opening out enlarging process, without end. I'd like to describe some of the outer aspect of two people who did enter on regeneration, just to give the process more humanness.

The first is Swedenborg, whose process of regeneration is reflected in the richness of the writings themselves. The second is a modern day man who entered the process by reading the writings. Both of these cases are of somewhat heroic proportions. The proportion isn't important, but the drift of what happened is. With Swedenborg I ask you to note particularly how hard he tried.

The mid 1700's was the time of Newton and the beginnings of science. Out of an almost insatiable curiosity Swedenborg explored and mastered pretty much all that was known in his day. At the back of *Posthumous Theological Works*, Vol. 2 you will find a "Brief Bibliography" of some 154 of Swedenborg's works in science. Having mastered all the material sciences, he went after his real interest, the soul. In modern terms we would say he wanted to know the total nature of man and his relationship to God. The science of psychology had not yet been born. The oriental literature on how to approach God had not yet appeared in the western world. Swedenborg had to develop and perfect his methods on his own. **Since childhood he had a rather unique practice of meditating on a question or inner experience so thoroughly that his breathing slowed and his thought came into intense focus. This was his first, main way of looking at inner experience.**¹⁰ For his time this was an unusually direct approach, far from the wordy philosophical speculations on the faculties of mind by others.

In addition he tried automatic writing," (where spirits write through one) and discarded this as too unreliable.

He found the hypnogogic state between sleep and waking in which everyone suddenly had imagery. Even two centuries later we still know little of this state.¹²

He prayed to God and had vivid dreams, some of which verged on visions.¹³ His interpretation of his dreams seems accurate today, but he worked long before there was any real understanding of them.

His main method of meditation deepened into trance. In trance, awareness of the outer world ends for a time, and one is in an intense inner world. His work on psychology¹⁴ showed a rather subtle understanding of the mind's dynamics. His was a brave exploration alone, through unknown and dangerous territory. Knowing something of the processes on the borders of religion and psychology, I am personally not surprised that he met the Lord and was allowed to explore heaven and hell.

He became so acquainted with visionary experience that it became present in his waking life too. This, too, is not completely unusual. I explored the hypnogogic state enough to be able to see it in my normal waking life. It's not so much that the inner escapes into the outer for it is always there. One just needs to learn to recognize it. Thereafter he spent years simultaneously in the company of angels and spirits while awake and able to carry out his social responsibilities in a normal manner.

After the direct experience of the Divine, he pretty much put aside all peripheral methods except meditation and, as directed, explored the spiritual through the use of the Bible. This became his supreme method, the approach he used the most, enjoyed the most, and the one he felt the most useful. I have described elsewhere how he used the Bible leading up to his enlightenment.^{15,16} His approach could be used by anyone. After enlightenment, insights came regarding the inner meaning of the Bible from a combination of guidance by the Lord and immense scholarship in the comparison of passages.

I don't believe heroic would be too strong a word for this explorer's ventures. It always amazes me that so few of Swedenborg's followers have even attempted any personal exploration of their own. It is as though we sit in our warm comfortable apartments reading the heroic ventures of a man who climbed over Mount Everest before there were oxygen tanks and all the modern climber's equipment. If you relate the writings to your life you have begun a little climb. Without a climb, not much will be found. The essence of the spiritual climb is to find some way to enter into a living relationship with the Lord. This is the substance of all the Ways. Many of the followers of the writings have concluded revelation was given to Swedenborg but would not be given to them even if they tried. This is unfortunate for the writings are not meant to be an end in themselves, but a means to an end.

The second case indicates something of what the writings can do. This case, also of somewhat heroic proportions, is that of a man in his early thirties whose only religious experience has been the writings. I had the privilege of speaking with him for two days. His story is so rich it is worth a book in itself. He was a hyperactive child who was thrown out of the educational system in the sixth grade. He went with a wild group and turned his hand to petty crime and spent some time in juvenile hall. He grew into a predatory businessman and enjoyed the high life with three wives, fancy cars, a stone mansion, and the lot. He seldom read and his reading was an odd progression from comic books, to car books, to Kahlil Gibran. He had wealth and six corporations. He wanted more. He found Swedenborg and started reading. The first two volumes seemed dull. But he began questioning, attacking and generally getting involved in the writings. I met him when he was three years and 28 volumes into Swedenborg. He had lived *the Arcana* in intense experiences with frequent glimpses of paradise. He now describes his former self in no uncertain terms as a garbage can. He has become an ethical man with a clear vision of the nature of things. His experiences

while reading the *Arcana* were so intense that he phoned me for guidance and support. His life is completely turned around. He dissolved a partnership with a dishonest man and restructured his remaining corporation along ethical and useful lines. I was privileged to learn from him his insights into the nature of the writings, of man and the cosmos, all told with the straight vigor of a man who has been there. Like Swedenborg he chooses to remain anonymous for the present.

I asked him what enabled him to turn around so. His answer: because he so badly wanted something higher. The only sign of the search for the higher in his earlier life is that he had looked for the perfect woman. He feels his present wife is that woman, and that she has been of great help to him in this change. He recalls now that none of his earlier criminal life and sensuality had ever seemed right to him, even though it did to his friends. Dull writings? He had to restrain himself from blurting out to friends and strangers the heavenly things he was experiencing. His aim now is to finish the two remaining volumes, clear out the remaining garbage, and live a useful life. He is pleased that his corporation supports a number of families. Asked whether he might serve even larger uses, he said he would be willing if it were given to him to do so.

Methods of Personal Development

Swedenborg's theological writings were intended to be used by individuals for their spiritual development. We have probably just begun to realize their potentialities for this.

Before Swedenborg set down these writings he explored inwardly and tried a number of things. If you imitated him you could lose a lot of sleep exploring the hypnogogic state between sleep and waking. You would find dreams are of some use, but easily misinterpreted until you catch the thread of this unusual inner language. Swedenborg tried automatic writing in which spirits write thru one's own hand and abandoned it as too unreliable. He used the trance state extensively, but neither he nor I would recommend it. It is difficult and dangerous. He was exploring, discovering, and sometimes discarding. Most of the above methods do not reflect directly in the theological writings. The method Swedenborg himself most preferred and the one most described in the writings involves participating in the internal sense of the Bible. Following that I will describe several of the lesser methods reflected in the writings. They are lesser only in the sense of being described less. Which of these approaches is most powerful for you depends on how you are designed and which you invest in the most.

1) *Use of the Bible* - Elsewhere I have done an exposition on how Swedenborg himself used the Bible early in his process of discovery.^{15,16} To summarize, a little known and badly misunderstood work of his, the *Messiah About to Come* ¹⁷ looks to be just a notebook in which he collected biblical passages. You have to appreciate that time in his life, what he was trying to do, and then examine it in detail to see Swedenborg's first use of the Bible. He sought God. He really believed the Bible is God's Word. So he read it as though God spoke to him. Many simple people do this. But Swedenborg went a little beyond this approach to systematically collect and set down the passages that were most alive to him. If you read these you can see Swedenborg searching for God, and God answering back. The process reached an intense climax at the end of this notebook, in which God wrote through Swedenborg's hand one line describing the essential nature of all Swedenborg was to do in the remainder of his life.

Swedenborg writes:

Nov. 17, 1745. I began to write.

Lord Jesus Christ, lead me to and on the way on which Thou willest that I shall walk.

And the Lord answers through his hand:

Be ye holy; be ye gifted with the Spirit of God and Christ; and be ye persevering in righteousness. This will be the testimony of the kingdom of God. (17, p. 105)

Note he was holy, gifted with the Spirit and persevering in righteousness. This itself is testimony that it was from God. This epitomizes the message from God in all the passages that had attracted him and the remaining 27 years of his life.

The process Swedenborg followed is simplicity itself. You could use either the Bible or the writings as he did and set down those parts that leap out at you. Take this as a personal message from God. For those afraid of the snows of Mount Everest, here is a hillock. An excellent introduction to experiencing the inner sense is Dorothea Harvey's sensitive *The Holy Center*.¹⁸

2) *Uses* - This I personally consider the most powerful of the simple ways. I've described it in detail elsewhere and will not repeat it.² The process is basically one of consciously using the practice of uses, as the writings describe them, as one's way of speaking to The Divine. I described the immediate ways in which The Divine answers. It is an active, simple and immediate way to relate to The Divine. In addition useful things get done. It is less of a "head trip" than other ways and will particularly appeal to practical people who have things to do anyway. It can be done any time, anywhere. It is short, fast, and highly educational. Use is a fundamental goal of regeneration anyway. It can be used alone or in addition to other ways. There is some danger of vanity, falsity and plain evil in most ways of dealing with spiritual matters. We easily fancy ourselves better than others. The method of uses undoes that. This method of use is at least implied in most of the world's religions, but, in the way described above, it has a more visible interior and more visible uses.

3) *The Spiritual Journal* - I owe to Rev. Horand Cutfeldt the idea that Swedenborg's *Spiritual Diary* represents another method he used that is available to us. The essential of a spiritual journal is to search for, record, and pay attention to the readings we get from our own internals. The journal is usually not for others, or for publication, just as Swedenborg's *Spiritual Diary* was his private journal. Because of this privacy one can feel very free to question, speculate, record wild ideas, and in general act in great spiritual freedom. Often the journal eventually comes alive like a sacred sanctuary where you can consult your higher self. Swedenborg's *Spiritual Diary* is not a particularly good example, mainly because it was recorded after he was well into the process and we see a chaos of spiritual visions. His *Journal of Dreams* is closer to what yours might be like. I've also detailed use of this elsewhere¹⁹ and will not repeat it. You might also be interested in two other descriptions of this rather well-known therapeutic process.^{20,21} A key to understanding the journal process is that it sets down the insights we all have and tend to forget. It makes the process more solid and of permanent use. Its importance might be glimpsed if I said I believe everyone to have rich spiritual experiences which they often neglect and forget. A journal also can be used in addition to other ways. Also this way furthers writing skills.

4) *Meditation*- Meditation may be second only to prayer as a spiritual approach common in all religions, but particularly in the Eastern. Swedenborg did not have the Eastern literature, but his reference to his breathing slowing is something well known in the East. Because meditation is widely associated with other religions, followers of the writings have tended to avoid it. The reference already given¹⁰ sets meditation in

terms of the writings. Two quotes will show something of the high store Swedenborg sets on it.

I have now been in conversation with spirits and angels concerning reflection, to which I do not know whether men have paid sufficient attention. If they do attend to this they will find there are more arcana in the doctrine of reflection than in any other whatsoever. (*Spiritual Diary*, 733)

. . . when (man) is in affection for understanding, and through that comes perception of truth, he is then in the thought of his spirit, which is meditation. (*Divine Love & Wisdom*, 404:8)

Just as Swedenborg said almost nothing of extrasensory perception, he tells us little of his actual approach to meditation. He appeared to become imbued with a subject and then totally focus in on it and allow his interior experience to open. It is a very lonely experience. One easily drifts into imagery and feelings. It is the depth side of experience. Much can be gathered on the substance of this by reading all he has to say on the internal versus the external man. Meditation is quite harmless and yet tends to open deeper insights. It requires a pleasant setting and a few minutes of time. One could easily combine it with the writings by reading until something leaps out at you as significant, and then meditating on that. There is a very large literature on this. I have practiced Chan (Zen) Buddhist meditation in a monastery with some emphasis on a painful position (zazen) my old bones couldn't get into. Technique isn't the thing. Read a little and then explore what works for you. Once you discover the beauty of meditation, you'll return to it like a garden cottage that shelters one from the rain, where you can go to recollect yourself.

Are there are other ways to enlightenment in the writings? Yes, probably. The essence of all the ways is to enter into an active relationship with God. The most productive way for you will be worked out between you and God. Whenever someone says they know the one perfect way, they are generally saying what was best for them. The very attempt to find a way, opens ways. Probably the process of trying is more important than the method one uses. After trying many ways Swedenborg tended to return to meditation. He was then led to use the internal sense of the Bible. A major reason why Swedenborg's writings fit with a personal quest is that their main content describes the subtleties, difficulties and wonders of spiritual development itself. Enjoyment of the writings is the beginning of a way.

Other Aids

The full array of Swedenborg's writings can be quite confusing to the newcomer for they have come out in various editions, languages and translations, sometimes with different titles for the same work. For this reason I've put a chronology of his theological works on the final end paper, for easy reference. First this eliminates all the works before the period of his enlightenment which are simply of little more than scholarly interest unless you happen to be interested in one of the varied sciences he worked in. I've included works written around the time of his enlightenment such as the *Journal of Dreams and The Spiritual Diary* because these give a rich picture of the man and his struggles. But the theological psychology that concerns us formally began with *The Arcana Coelestia*.

I distinguish between what he published and what was found in his papers and published by others. In general what he published himself was more useful and clearer. Most of the works not published by him are small pieces, most of which

appear in the Swedenborg Foundation's 2 volume *Posthumous Theological Works* and their *Miscellaneous Theological Works*. If you order the Swedenborg Foundation's 30 volume theological works, you have all his writings after his enlightenment. If you concentrate on what he published this only narrows the 30 volumes to 22 as follows:

- Ⓢ ★ **Heaven and Hell**
- Ⓢ ★ **New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine** (sometimes just **called** Heavenly Doctrine)
- Ⓢ ★ **Divine Love & Wisdom**
- Ⓢ ★ **Divine Providence**
- Ⓢ ★ **True Christian Religion**, 2 volumes
- Ⓢ **Four Doctrines**
- Ⓢ **Arcana Coelestia**, 12 volumes
- Ⓢ **Conjugal Love**
- Ⓢ **Apocalypse Revealed**, 2 volumes

In miscellaneous theological works:

- Ⓢ **Last Judgment**
- Ⓢ **Brief Exposition of the Doctrine of the New Church**
- Ⓢ **Intercourse of the Soul & Body**
- Ⓢ **White Horse**

I've starred the first 5 works. These have the widest appeal and are quite beautiful. Any one of these gives a very adequate view of what Swedenborg found. There is some repetition if you look at all his theological works, but there is a minimum in these five volumes. In part, so much is implied in even a single sentence that some further elaboration is needed to grasp the scope of what is revealed. The *Arcana* is the principal among the unstarred items. It is recommended that you have some grounding in the starred items before trying the monumentally long (12 volumes) and rich *Arcana*. It is as though he saw it all at once in his enlightenment, and the *Arcana* contains it all. *Heaven & Hell* and the other popular starred items were necessary to pull out and clarify particular aspects of the *Arcana*. If there is an Everest in his writings, it is the *Arcana*.

In contrast to the 30 volume edition of the Swedenborg Foundation, the Swedenborg Society of London has come out with a number of handy slim volumes which extract from the wealth of the writings all that is said on a particular topic. There are titles such as *End of the Age, God, Providence and Creation, The White Horse, Life in Animals & Plants*, etc. One of these I'd like to add to the starred items even though it wasn't published by Swedenborg.

★ **The Divine Love & the Divine Wisdom.** This is different from *Divine Love & Wisdom*. It was found bound with *Apocalypse Explained* and was formerly published under the better title *The Doctrine of Uses*. This is another of his lyrical, almost poetic works, and is the principal one on uses.

Below you will find some of the key reference works in case you wish to define terms or find all the references to an idea in the writings. Some find them helpful, while many readers have never seen them. With them you can pretty much find anything in the 30 volumes.

1. John Potts, **The Swedenborg Concordance'** Swedenborg Society, London, 1957, 6 volumes. The principal source for finding where a word or idea can be found in the writings.
2. John Bogg, **A Glossary**, Swedenborg Society, London, 1915. This defines all major concepts.
3. Arthur Searle, **General Index to Swedenborg's Scripture Quotations**, Swedenborg Society, London, 1954. This traces where individual lines of the Bible have been interpreted in the writings.
4. Alice Sechrist, **A Dictionary of Bible Imagery**, Swedenborg Foundation, N.Y.C., 1973. The spiritual correspondence of biblical terms.
5. Samuel Warren, **A Compendium of the Theological Writings of E. Swedenborg**, Swedenborg Foundation, N.Y.C., 1979. This quotes small sections of the writings so as to survey all the principal ideas.
6. George Trobridge, **Swedenborg Life and Teaching**, Swedenborg Foundation, N.Y.C., 1984. There are several biographies, collections of letters and accounts of friends and acquaintances, so a great deal is known of Swedenborg's life. This is the best biography.

Make a distinction between works written by Swedenborg and those commentaries published by others, which are called collaterals. This pamphlet is a collateral. Swedenborg's works are so rich they lend themselves to study. You might be surprised to discover there are literally thousands of collaterals, which vary from terrible to wonderful. Most were written in the 1800's and most are out of print. In general, I recommend you read Swedenborg. You can't really understand the writings by delving into others' thoughts on the subject. Occasionally a collateral will do a beautiful job of clarifying an area of the writings. When I visited the great Swedenborg scholar Hugo Odhner, I asked him what he thought of collaterals. He said brusquely, "I never look at them, I only read Swedenborg," even though he wrote some noteworthy collaterals himself!

Reading for Particular Interests

You will sometimes find one of Swedenborg's topics concentrated in a single volume such as *The Word and Its Holiness and Life in Animals & Plants*. At other times a topic unfortunately will be scattered through the 30 volumes and you will need the aids above to track it down. Here are some places to begin.

- a) **Spirits, heaven & hell, the hereafter.** *Heaven & Hell*. Very competent summaries are H. Odhner, *Spirits & Men* and *The Spiritual World*. I do not recommend the 5 volume *Spiritual Diary* except for scholars. This is a hodgepodge of his spiritual experiences. I do recommend the Memorable Relations which are scattered through the volumes. In these he describes an event in the spiritual world to illustrate a point.
- b) **The feeling side of existence.** *Divine Love & Wisdom*.
- c) **Our involvement in Divine providence.** *Divine Providence*.
- d) **The essentials of religious life.** *True Christian Religion, Religion and Life*.

e) **The inner sense of the Bible.** *Arcana Coelestia, The Internal Sense of the Word, The Word and Its Holiness, Apocalypse Revealed.* There are too many good collaterals to mention, often on a single book of the Bible such as MacLagen's *The Book of Deuteronomy*. Good authors are Bruce, Clowes, Fisher. See also Dole, the *Bible Study Notes*.

f) **The dynamics of regeneration.** *The Arcana Coelestia and True Christian Religion.* I know of no adequate collateral in print on this profound subject.

g) **Correspondence.** Correspondences is the symbolic language that translates what the things of this world mean in the spiritual world. For instance cloud represents the spiritual in some degree of obscurity, clouded. The serpent represents man's sensuality i.e., how we crawl on our belly. See *Heaven & Hell, Arcana Coelestia*. See also the *Dictionary of Bible Imagery*. There are several good collaterals on particular areas of correspondences, i.e., Worcester's *Physiological Correspondences*, Worcester, *The Language of Parable*, Harvey, *The Holy Center*,¹⁸ etc. The language of correspondence is a general key to the internal sense of the Bible, to dreams, to myth and to all symbolism. The capacity to think in correspondences seems to be a natural one. Our dreams seem a mix of our personal language of correspondences and the spiritual correspondences Swedenborg was talking about.

The principal suppliers in the English speaking world are:

a) **The Swedenborg Foundation**, 139 East 23rd St., New York, New York 10010. They have both the U.S. and British publications.

b) **The Swedenborg Society**, 20 Bloomsbury Way, London WC1A 2TH, England. I recommend you get their free catalogs.

Swedenborg libraries in English are:

1. **The Swedenborg School of Religion**, 48 Sargent St., Newton, MA 02158. This and 2. below are the most complete of the libraries.

2. **Swedenborg Society**, 20 Bloomsbury Way, London WC1A 2TH, England.

3. **The Academy of The New Church Library**, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009.

4. **Swedenborg Library**, Urbana College, Urbana, OH 43078.

Both the publishers and the libraries above will generally try to help inquirers.

[A Summary of How to Enjoy The Writings](#)

For reasons only partly known some soar with Swedenborg's writings and others don't. Helen Keller soared because she immediately found they described her experience.

A major key is to see them as personally addressed to you. Relate them to your experience and feel free to check them against your life. They should seem personally relevant rather than abstract. Do whatever enhances your experience, for instance:

a) don't read more at a time than you can make felt-sense of,

- b) mark passages significant to you,
- c) look up puzzling terms and pursue the wide sense in which he uses some ideas,
- d) read under ideal circumstances,
- e) follow your interests,
- f) pursue all aspects of a topic.

The frame of reference in which to view the writings includes:

- a) The life of the author who fades into the background as merely a dutiful servant who wrote down what he had been given.
- b) He is speaking of the Universal of religion in Christian terms. It can also be recognized by those who usually see the Universal under other terms.
- c) Overlook the few dated aspects in favor of the best that he has to offer.
- d) The writings are a theology/psychology because they are always dealing with the life of the Lord/churches/you simultaneously. This is true because you are the microcosm which is of the design of the macrocosm. Hence no aspect of them is beyond your experience.

Personal and spiritual development is possible through the writings because the dynamics of regeneration is their central topic. Or development can take place through one of the lesser methods in the writings through:

- a) noting what is especially meaningful to you in the Bible or the writings,
- b) practicing uses,
- c) use of a spiritual journal,
- d) practicing meditation.

We recommend you:

- a) give preference to his theological works, written after his enlightenment,
- b) give preference to what he published, for these he considered his best,
- c) give preference to the starred works (particularly beginners),
- d) give preference to what Swedenborg himself wrote over the collateral commentaries of others, although some are useful for surveying an aspect of the writings.

There are a number of reference works you might find useful.

We have recommended places to start for those with particular interests and list the world's major publishers and libraries in English.

The writings are the work of a spiritual explorer for spiritual explorers. They were set down that you might enjoy them and make them life.

ENJOY

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5. E. Swedenborg, **Arcana Coelestia**.
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7. **Arcana Coelestia**, 9322, 10323, 1059', 17994 2121, etc.
8. See **Arcana Coelestia** 2604, **Heaven & Hell** 514e, **Last Judgment** 51, **Continuation of The Last Judgment** 75-77, **True Christian Religion** 837-40, etc.
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