

Abstract

There has been real concern over the slow growth of the Swedenborgian Church and its intellectual challenges have increased toward demonstrating the relevancy of Swedenborg's ideas to a post-modern world. This article, taken from my address in April at the 2011 Annual Meeting of the Swedenborg Scientific Association, attempts to briefly explore the radical idea that today's scientists must still catch up to Swedenborg's models of reality. The implications of this are brought to light by pointing out that Swedenborg's theology and multi-level interpretation of the Bible were saturated with universal scientific principles that embrace the wide-ranging concepts of gravity, quantum non-locality, poly-dimensional space, process theory, creation, and evolutionary theory and neuroscience. If Swedenborg's discoveries can offer insights that provide rational solutions to many of today's nagging scientific questions, this would be a truly explosive event in the history of human thought. I have expanded on some of the points made in my original address to give other researchers' additional avenues of exploration. In spite of this added information, this article represents the labor of one trained in right-brained thinking.

PROVING GOD

In spite of the fact that there are millions of Christians, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus and a spattering of Swedenborgians all over the planet earth, today's major religion is really Science. To be more precise, today's major religion is the New Paradigm Science, which includes relativity theory, quantum theory, 11-dimensional superstring theory and the neo-Darwinian synthesis.

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Black holes, wormholes, time travel, quantum tunneling, multi-universes and the human genome have captured much of the thinking world's imagination. However, I have set out to show that these post-modern topics are mere child's play, compared to the wisdom and knowledge of the prehistoric members of the Most Ancient Church who had direct perception of heaven's non-physical dynamics and causal connections to the world of nature. This rarefied knowledge, reintroduced by Emanuel Swedenborg, *may* become the future property of those who will eventually populate the Lord's Holy City, The New Jerusalem!

Swedenborgians feel a special connection to the Lord's establishment of The New Jerusalem on earth. By embracing the Lord's new dispensation, they have been given the "inside track" toward obtaining universal truths. But something seems askew.

If the decline in membership of the New Church began after the First World War, I find it curious that modern, non-Classical Physics came out of this same period in the early 20th century and began to flourish. In other words, the Swedenborgian Church, with its treasure of knowledge, offered very little response to the emerging non-Newtonian science.

The Creator surely foresaw all this. So, if the Lord God, in His Infinite Wisdom, *is* the greatest marketer and promoter of *serviceable* ideas—then where do you think He would find His future niche? Perhaps in science!

There seems to be some historical evidence for this unexpected assumption. The trend toward a more scientific worldview began to pick up steam with the Enlightenment period in Europe. It was during the age of Enlightenment, where mankind believed it could reduce everything to calculation, that the Lord providently chose to enlighten the world with new revelations concerning heaven and Holy Scripture. These divine revelations included the first causal principles of creation and the *spiritual* nature and character of ultimate reality; and God chose a scientist to help assist in this eternally important mission. We know this scientist, and later, theologian, to be Emanuel Swedenborg.

The Lord's *sacred strategy* was to capture the thinking world's imagination with a new rational and lawfully precise approach to the deepest mysteries of faith. This new divine effort to communicate potent, paradigm-changing knowledge to the world was encapsulated by Swedenborg's *Nunc Licet* statement: "Now it is allowable to enter intellectually into the

mysteries of faith." Finally, the world was offered a religion aimed precisely at the human "noggin," that is, at the cognitive and contemplative functions of the human intellect and its unique heavenly potentials.

For many people, this new dispensation from our Creator involves bringing rational clarity to the most challenging theological topics. But wouldn't this refreshingly new approach to theology offer *even more* divine "bang for the buck" if it could help answer some difficult current scientific problems as well? That would certainly turn scientific heads around and make Swedenborg highly relevant for the 21st century and beyond.

Just think—Swedenborg would no longer be called "crazy" or suffering from "temporal lobe seizures." Furthermore, obtaining this new level of scholarly prestige would remove the fear and stigma of his followers being labeled a "cult," whereby they are backed into the proverbial corner of simply "joining the ecclesiastical crowd," rather than promoting their genuine uniqueness.

Sensing that the laws of nature were an important element in the Lord's marketing thrust and strategy for ushering in the New Jerusalem to an increasingly scientific world, I decided to write a book titled *Proving God*,¹ which attempts to unify science and theology by offering spiritual insights and solutions to some of the most troubling problems facing today's cutting edge scientists—based on the full spectrum of Swedenborg's writings.

Notice that I am not implying that Swedenborg laid down a foundation for the eventual discoveries of modern science. *It is even better than that.* I believe Divine Providence is using modern science and its new paradigm theories to help the world to better understand and catch up with Swedenborg's more profound ideas.

My strategy was to offer evidence that "Love" is the ultimate science and that God's Holy Word could be looked at as *a scientific document*—containing within the top-down, multi-leveled architecture of its narratives, important elements not just about salvation, but about how certain aspects of relativity theory, quantum theory and multi-dimensional string theory dovetail into spiritual enlightenment. In this way knowledge could be turned towards the soul which allows it to be stored up and reserved in the "remains" (see *Arcana Coelestia* 7601, 7604 and 7607).

I based my confidence on the fact that Swedenborg's writings offer strong suggestions that such unity of knowledge was indeed possible. Take the statement,

Universal nature is a theater representative of the Lord's Kingdom. (AC 6110, 3483, 4939)

This means that all natural law, process, and complexity in the visible world are a similitude or correspondence of higher (*a priori*), non-material spiritual laws, processes, and complexity.

Whereas in 1735 Swedenborg stated in his *Principia* that "*Motion adapts form to its own disposition*" (added emphasis), when his spiritual eyes were later opened by the Lord, he expanded this scientific idea of process to mean *love adapts truth to its own disposition*. Most Swedenborgians understand this later spiritual formulization as "*Truth is the form of love or good*" and "*spirit is the affection in form.*" Thus, a *physical principle of action corresponds to a spiritual principle of action*. All process in the universe obeys the same rules.

This notion of continuity and harmony between physical and non-physical levels of reality is made by similar statements found in both his scientific and theological writings concerning the concept that all things are arranged in a series (EAK II, 613-651 and AC 7408) and that there is a co-established harmony of all things within the same series. This harmony requires mathematical precision—a precision made possible because all things return to their first principles, which creates an orbit or gyre called the "Circle of Life" (DP 27 [3], WLG, 113). This circular chain of subordinated and coordinated determining steps is what constitutes Swedenborg's *Mathematical Philosophy of Universals* or *intuition of ends* (uses). He even offers an example of this model of holistic process in The Lord's Prayer. (*A Philosopher's Notebook*, pp. 466–468.)

Swedenborg claimed that this knowledge, if well digested, would become the "One science of all the natural sciences, because it is the complex of all" (EAK 651). It was this knowledge that brought him to the idea of symbolic *correspondences* and *representatives*, which was the key to unifying theology with science.

However, and to my personal dismay, I have discovered that a good number of Swedenborgian academics embrace modern science over Swedenborg's science. Professional ridicule from peers aside, there is a respectful belief that Swedenborg simply could not have known about today's cutting-edge theories. (This is only a concern if you accept modern models of reality as more closely representing the truth of the way things really are.)

Again, it was Swedenborg's science that led him to the idea of *correspondences* and *representatives*—the key to connecting spiritual dynamics with physical dynamics. So here is a question I ask my Swedenborgian brethren, "Do you think the Lord would risk leading Swedenborg to spiritual truths through what would become an antiquated science?"

I have heard it said that Swedenborg was limited to the science of his era—that mathematically, he was limited to exploring the universe from Newton and Leibnitz's classical *deterministic* formula of the calculus, rather than the more modern, non-classical analysis of probability distributions of the Schrodinger equation. On the contrary, I propose that Swedenborg was forced to invent entirely new scientific doctrines because he found the thinking of his era to be insufficient for the problems he needed to solve. He took the concept of differentials and integrals in the *calculus of fluxions* to higher infinite powers so that his resulting *Doctrine of Forms* could provide an explanation of how classical or physical principles of action can jump to higher non-classical levels of abstraction, whereby action and form lawfully removes itself from its involvement with time and space and becomes evermore expanded, psychical, and spiritual.

I would like to point out that Swedenborg's science was *God-focused* and led him directly to grasping the idea that all true knowledge promotes *goodness*. On the other hand, Erwin Schrodinger was having an affair when he came up with his famous equation in quantum mechanics. While modern "objective" science excludes personal values as a topic of enquiry, Swedenborg claimed that one could find truth and elevate his or her mind only by elevating the heart. Values counted in one's search for knowledge! Therefore, modern science can only hope to trump Swedenborg's if it more deftly demonstrates how *love* is the first causal principle of the universe and drives evolution.

Even more astounding to the modern worldview is Swedenborg's statement that,

The truth proceeding from the Lord is what is called "*the Word through which all things were created.*" (Emphasis added; AC 6115)

Astounding, because if the universe was created from God's Holy Word as mentioned in John 1:1-3, it must somehow—through continuity—contain within its "historical and prophetic" stories the top-down patterning principles through which the universe was designed and maintained. Therefore God's Holy Word must, among other things, *truly be a scientific document.*

As mentioned above, in Swedenborg's scientific works he talks about everything in nature (and the human intellect) as being arranged into "series" and "series within series." He continues this idea of order into his theological writings. The steps in these series are the determining subjects by which distinct states of equilibrium (centers of gravity) are harmoniously arranged into orbits or repeating cycles, representing a full, comprehensive concept, whereby all things return to their first principles. Here, Swedenborg has solved the nagging modern mystery in astrophysics of grasping the *thermodynamics of gravitating systems* by which self-organization and coherent structure spontaneously emerges in nature. I repeat, Swedenborg maintained that the idea of series and repeating cycles (Circle of Life) within all *whole* processes occur in both nature and the Bible. I offer examples of this universal periodic model or *mathematical intuition of ends* (uses) in my book *Proving God*¹ to show how all order represents an "idea of the universe." Most of today's scientists could not endure the notion that all of nature, on all its scales, is so profoundly fine-tuned for creating universal mimetic analogue (correspondences).

Therefore, I personally believe God rests His hope in that brave Swedenborgians will emerge over time who have sufficiently elevated their hearts and minds in order to represent the leading edge of a unique intellectual movement and become the true pioneers of future thinking.

¹*Proving God: Swedenborg's Remarkable Quest for the Quantum Fingerprint of Love*, Edward F. Sylvia, M.T.S., (Troy, IL: Staircase Press, 2009, 2010), 421pp.

My bold pronouncement concerning the *dual* serviceability of Holy Scripture as both a theological and scientific document is what I call a real “Wow” factor. This idea is completely unexpected in the academic world. This is the precise “Wow” factor that I labored to incorporate all through my book to get the attention of the post-modern world and make Swedenborg relevant. (I also felt I could not succeed in such an attempt unless I could also convince even long-time Swedenborgians that there remain potent new insights to be plucked out from his Writings and completely fresh approaches to get excited about.)

Now, some of you serious students of Swedenborg may be thinking that any success in this area “would constitute a form of compulsion and force a person into believing in God’s existence and governance in the world, thus destroying human free will.” Do not worry. Those who seek out my book do it freely. And, terrestrial scholarship is far from grasping Swedenborg’s *mathematical intuition of ends*, which is the intellectual property of angels (and those of the Most Ancient Church) to see all things as *wholes*, that is, in one *complex* (AC 6175).

This great universal knowledge forms the mathematical basis for Swedenborg’s “Circle of Life” and the *science of all sciences*. I suggest in my book *Proving God* that this knowledge, while still obtainable, is guarded by God’s Cherubim. In other words, this knowledge is only obtainable by those who submit themselves to intense regeneration and profound spiritual evolution. □