

SWEDENBORG STUDIES 2002: "ON THE SHOULDERS OF GIANTS"*

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INTRODUCTION AND FOUNDATION

Good evening! We gather here tonight to commemorate the birthday of Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772) and to honor his role in the salvation drama of the human race. We recognize him as the man who, over two and a half centuries ago, was called by the Lord to announce the Last Judgment and proclaim His Second Coming. As we know, he did not preach this from a pulpit or shout it from the hill tops, but as Jorge Luis Borges wrote in a poem "Emanuel Swedenborg" (Borges, 1988, 353),

Taller than the others, this man
Walked among them, at a distance,
Now and then calling the angels
By their secret names. He would see
That which earthly eyes do not see:
The fierce geometry, the crystal
Labyrinth of God and the sordid
Milling of infernal delights.
He knew that Glory and Hell too
Are in your soul, with all their myths;
He knew, like the Greek, that the days

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Of time are Eternity's mirrors.
In unadorned Latin he went on listing
The unconditional Last Things.

"The unconditional Last Things," about which Swedenborg so diligently and quietly wrote were the long-awaited and profoundly feared cataclysmic events of Christian lore—the apocalypse. Over the centuries the teachings of the church inspired Christian artists and artisans to depict the gruesome unfolding of the "end of times" in vivid detail for the popular imagination. There would be earthquakes, floods and fire, the dead would rise from their graves, and the jaws of hell would open and swallow up the damned. To many, including Voltaire, the great earthquake in Lisbon in 1755 was a sign of things to come.

But the theological works written in unadorned Latin and published anonymously beginning in 1749 told a very different story. The *Arcana Coelestia* revealed the internal sense of *Genesis* and *Exodus*, line by line, and often word by word. In addition, the author of these books shared his "experiences with spirits and angels." As he wrote,

I have been allowed . . . to hear and see astounding things in the next life which have never come to any man's knowledge, nor even entered his imagination. In that world, I have learned about different kinds of spirits, about the state of souls after death, about hell . . . , about heaven . . . , and above all else about the doctrine of faith that is acknowledged in the whole of heaven. In the Lord's mercy more will be told about these matters in what follows. (AC 5)

Later in *Arcana Coelestia*, after explaining the internal sense of chapter seventeen of *Genesis*, the author initiates a discussion of the Last Judgment. He states, "Few at this day know what the last judgment is. They suppose that it will come together with the destruction of the world" (AC 2117). However, he states that "by the last judgment is meant the last time of a church and also the last state of each person's life" (AC 2118). And furthermore, "That a last judgment is at hand cannot be so evident on the earth and within the church as in the other life, whither all souls arrive, and flock together" (AC 2121). "That the last time is at hand may also be

seen from this fact in the other life, that all the good which flows in from the Lord through heaven into the world of spirits is there turned in a moment into what is evil, obscene and profane" (AC 2122). It is clear that the coming judgment discussed here is spiritual and not natural. It confounded the expectations of those few who read it.

In 1758 the author of the *Arcana* published five additional volumes in London which even more explicitly challenged the taken-for-granted assumptions and plain teachings of the Christian churches. These books explored the spiritual world, the doctrine of the church, the Last Judgment, the nature of the Word, and the existence of other worlds and their inhabitants. Despite their revolutionary content, few were either purchased or read.

In 1759 an event occurred in the life of the author of these strange and wonderful books that would rob him of his anonymity and identify him as their author. That event was Swedenborg's clairvoyant experience of the Stockholm fire, which he saw occurring over three hundred miles away, on the 19th of July, while he dined in Gothenburg in the company of other guests in the elegant home of the merchant William Castel. On several occasions the intensity of the experience forced him to leave his companions, but upon his return he described the progress of the fire to those around the table. Finally, with great relief, he was able to report that the fire had stopped just before it had reached his own house.

You can imagine the stir that such an occurrence would have caused then and even now. The next day, he was called to the provincial governor's house to give a detailed description of what he saw. One can only imagine the incredulity of governor, even if he wished to believe. However, on the 21st of July, a messenger arrived from Stockholm with a letter reporting the disaster and it coincided exactly with the account given by Swedenborg. Before long the story was circulating both in Sweden and abroad.

The famous philosopher, Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), was one of those intrigued by this and other stories of Swedenborg's extraordinary powers. Writing at the height of the Age of Enlightenment, Kant and other philosophers sought to banish superstition. Clearly, Swedenborg's clairvoyant experiences demanded explanation. Kant, unable to explain them, heaped ridicule upon them instead. In 1766 he published *Traüme eines Geisterschers* (Dreams of a spirit seer), a satire on Swedenborg and his

spiritual experiences and theology. The philosopher Moses Mendelssohn (1729–1786) upon reading the book immediately wrote to Kant deploring its tone. Kant replied, “I realized that I would have no peace from incessant inquiries until I had rid myself of my suspected knowledge of all these anecdotes” (Berninger, 1948, 257).

In a naturalistic and scientific age, the very public nature of Swedenborg’s clairvoyant and extraordinary experiences demanded assessment of them and the man who had them. Kant made a negative assessment in order to distance himself and his philosophical system from the taint of Swedenborgianism. Others during the 1760s such as Friedrich Christoph Oetinger (1702–1782) and Johann Christian Cuno (1708–1796) painted on the whole more sympathetic portraits of the man, but not necessarily of his claims or doctrines.

By 1763 some of his theological writings had not only been reviewed in foreign journals, but in Swedish ones as well. Again, some reviewers were critical while others were more positive. In some of the reviews, Swedenborg was identified as the author, while in others he was not. But in any case, it can be safely said that throughout the 1760s the educated public in Europe became increasingly aware that Swedenborg was in fact the author of the books that he had published anonymously. More and more frequently, regardless of where he was, people sought him out as their author. It is not particularly surprising therefore, that in 1768, with the publication of *Conjugal Love*, he inscribed the title page with his name, “Emanuel Swedenborg, a Swede.”

In acknowledging his authorship of *Conjugal Love*, he also acknowledged all of his previously published works by listing them on a page in the back of the book. His authorship established, he then included his name on the title page of his three remaining works. As you may remember, *True Christian Religion*, published in Amsterdam in 1771, is signed “Emanuel Swedenborg, Servant of the Lord Jesus Christ.” It is useful to point out that Swedenborg, toward the end of his life and in the waning years of his role as the scribe of heaven, claimed authorship of these works. It would appear that he purposefully threw off the cloak of anonymity in order to vouchsafe his great service to humanity—to protect it from harm. I say this, because we need to imagine what the fate of this work might have been, without the earthly protection of Emanuel

Swedenborg's name and reputation. Perhaps, without this protection, after his death, his manuscripts might have been judged worthless and thus disposed of without a second thought. As it was, it appears that some of his letters suffered such a fate (Sigstedt, 1981, 435).

During this same period, the Reverend Thomas Hartley (1709–1784), a friend of Swedenborg and a believer in his doctrines, encouraged Swedenborg in a letter written in 1769 “to leave with us some particulars respecting yourself, . . . and . . . anything else that might be useful in establishing your good character, . . .” (Sigstedt, 1981, 384). Swedenborg complied. He wrote to Hartley: “After reflecting on this, I have been led to yield to your friendly advice and will now communicate to you some particulars of my life . . .” (Sigstedt, 1981, 385).

This activity of commenting upon and documenting the character and life experiences of Emanuel Swedenborg, which began during his lifetime and to which, in fact, Swedenborg himself contributed, is clearly one aspect of Swedenborg Studies. Thus, it might be said, that at the time of Swedenborg's death in 1772, this area of endeavor already existed.

Having established this reality, I would like to elaborate on what the field entails today and its increasing importance. Then I will give a brief review of the activities within its domain since the death of Swedenborg. I will focus on the work of the giants upon whose shoulders the field stands, and then look to its urgent needs in the present and the foreseeable future.

SWEDENBORG STUDIES

Swedenborg Studies involves examining Swedenborg's life, his intellectual development, and his revelatory call, in context. Swedenborg Studies requires the availability of a complete and accurate Latin edition of the whole of Swedenborg's corpus, including his memorials and letters, as well as good translations of these works into modern vernacular. It also requires access to all the known documents related to Swedenborg's background and life, including the books he had in his library, used, or mentioned in his works. These are the kinds of materials included in what is called Swedenborgiana. In addition, Swedenborg Studies requires the use of materials from and about Swedenborg's day. This would include having a familiarity with books that were part of the taken-for-granted knowl-

edge of the educated, as well as with the social, cultural, religious, and political climate of eighteenth-century Sweden in particular, and of Europe, more generally. To sustain the vital work involved in Swedenborg studies, scholars with a knowledge of both Neo-Latin and Swedish are essential.

Questions about Swedenborg's sanity and character arose before his death and have not abated since then. The Lord was crucified in an attempt to silence his Word, but He arose from the dead, and His message took on more power than His earthly enemies could have ever imagined. They killed the body, but they could not touch the spirit of life itself. Emanuel Swedenborg in his role as "Servant of the Lord" was called to write and publish what he saw and heard while in the spirit. The enemies of the new Word did not seek to kill his body, but they assaulted his character instead, hoping thereby to rob the Word of its power. It is difficult to silence the written Word, however, particularly when it embodies the living spirit, and copies are dispersed worldwide. Nonetheless, history has shown that enemies seem to emerge in each succeeding generation and re-open the question of character, making it difficult for the living spirit to spread its roots.

Swedenborg Studies requires access to the incredible wealth of material outlined above, in order to address and answer questions about the man whom the Lord entrusted with the awesome task of giving testimony about the spiritual nature of the Last Judgment and the Second Coming, as well as providing the doctrinal foundation of the true Christian religion. As R.L. Tafel wrote in 1875 in his preface to the first volume of his *Documents Concerning the Life and Character of Emanuel Swedenborg*,

... the editor indulges the hope that the present collection of documents, many of which have no doubt been rescued from destruction or oblivion, will be accepted by the members of the New Church as an important contribution towards a knowledge of one [Emanuel Swedenborg], in whose personal as well as official life and character they must feel a deep interest. (Tafel, 1875, X)

Sigrid O. Sigstedt, who was deeply involved with the collection of additional documents during the first quarter of the twentieth century,

elaborates on this use in an article for the *New Church Messenger* in 1939. She writes:

The fact that so many varying opinions exist about this wonderful man [Emanuel Swedenborg] has made the entire New Church realize the importance of reproducing and publishing every scrap of material from his pen. This work has continued since his death, and is not yet finished. The fact that questions about him will always arise makes the collection of documentary evidence about him a permanent use. (Sigstedt, 1939, 265)

Let me illustrate the vital need for this work with an example from my own research. In it, among other issues, I have had to address the question of whether or not Swedenborg read the mystic Jacob Boehme, was a Freemason or had an affinity for the Kabbalah. The first two questions I examined in an article entitled "The Place of Emanuel Swedenborg in Modern Western Esotericism" published in 1998, and the exploration of Swedenborg's relation to the Kabbalah in another entitled "Emanuel Swedenborg and the Kabalistic Tradition" published in 2001. My example is drawn from my research investigating Swedenborg and the Kabbalah.

In 1877 Kenneth Mackenzie in his work *The Royal Masonic Cyclopaedia* called attention to the relationship between Swedenborg and the Kabbalah in the following quote:

Thus the *en Soph* having assume Spherical form, this present world became permanent; and it is from this Archetypal Man that Swedenborg derived the notion so constantly elaborated in his writings of the Grand Man . . . (408)

He also sees a Kabbalistic source for Swedenborg's doctrine of correspondence. He illustrated this with a quote from the *Zohar*. "The lower world is made after the pattern of the upper world; everything which exists in the upper world is to be found as it were in a copy upon earth; still the whole is one (*Zohar*, ii, 20a). What is this other than Swedenborg's doctrine of correspondences upon which his whole system is based" (Mackenzie, 1877, 408).

Martin Lamm's 1915 Swedish intellectual biography entitled *Emanuel Swedenborg: En Studie över hans utveckling till Mysticker och Andeskådare* assumed Swedenborg's knowledge of the Kabbalah and makes repeated references to it. This book has recently been translated and published in English by the Swedenborg Foundation (1999). The title is *Emanuel Swedenborg: The Development of His Thought*.

In 1975 Jorge Luis Borges in his essay "Emanuel Swedenborg, Mystical Works" wrote: "The Doctrine of correspondences has led me to mention the Kabbalah. As far as I know or remember, no one has investigated this intimate affinity" (Borges, 1999, 456).

Moshe Idel in a 1986 article in a Hebrew journal entitled *Studies in Jewish Mysticism, Philosophy and Ethical Literature* discussed Swedenborg within the framework of "The World of Angels in Human Shape." He suggests that "... it is very nearly certain in the matter of the structure of the world of the Angels . . . the Swedish Theosophist was influenced by Kabbalistic concepts" (Dan & Hacker, 1986, 65). One of the avenues he mentions for Swedenborg's knowledge of the Kabbalah are lectures given at the University of Uppsala by a Jewish convert to Christianity during the years he was matriculated there (Idel, 1986, 66).

Recently Inge Jonsson suggests in his work *Visionary Scientist: The Effects of Science and Philosophy on Swedenborg's Cosmology* (1999) that Swedenborg's contemporaries believed that Swedenborg drew on the Kabbalistic tradition for some of his insights about the nature of heaven. He indicates that this connection needs clarification (Jonsson, 1999, 175).

While at the moment I cannot review all the research that I have done to explore the possibility that Swedenborg had intimate knowledge of the Kabbalah, I can say a few words. First of all, Swedenborg was generally familiar with the concept of the Kabbalah. It is in his investigation of the human form and its hidden nexus, the soul, that we find his only references to it. They are three in number. These references are not in the body of any published work, but are found in a notebook of quotations he had transcribed in his research process. This notebook was published by the Swedenborg Scientific Association in 1931. It is called *A Philosopher's Note Book*. The material in it is from Swedenborg's manuscript Codex 36 and it was translated and edited by Alfred Acton.

An examination of these references clearly indicates that the Kabbalah came up only incidentally as he copied quotes from other philosophers into his notebook. Two references are found in quotes from Leibniz's *Theodicia* (Theodicy) and another in Hugo Grotius' *De Veritate Religionis Christianae* (The truth of the Christian religion).

While there are substantial differences between Kabbalistic systems and Swedenborg's, that does not rule out the possibility, nonetheless, that Swedenborg drew inspiration from Kabbalistic texts. So the question becomes could he have either been instructed about them or read them. Initially, it would appear that the answers to these questions lie in the educational environment of Uppsala in the early part of the eighteenth century. Idel, in a footnote, mentions that possibly there were public lectures on the Kabbalah when Swedenborg was a student in Uppsala. This does not appear to be the case, however, when the series of articles in *The New Philosophy* (1932–1934) on "The Curricula in Swedenborg's Student Years" is consulted. This information was collected in the first part of the 20th century as part of the *Documents* project.

Knowledge of the converted Jew by the name of Johann Kemper (1670–1716), who was resident in Uppsala and who did work for the University, has come to the attention of other scholars interested in Swedenborg and his possible Kabbalistic connection. While Kemper did not give public lectures, he did private tutoring in Hebrew. During his tenure in Uppsala he also wrote an extensive commentary on the *Zohar*, a well-known Kabbalistic text that was purchased by Eric Benzelius, Swedenborg's brother-in-law for the University. Kemper also wrote the only known Hebrew commentary on the book of *Matthew*. His aim in the *Zohar* commentary was to show how Kabbalah spoke about the coming of the Lord, and his aim in the *Matthew* commentary was to show that the coming of the Lord was the fulfillment of the ancient prophecies. Kemper wrote these texts to be a means to convert other Jews to Christianity.

I have personally done a lot of research on Kemper to determine whether or not he could have been the means whereby Swedenborg could have been instructed into the wisdom of the Kabbalah. In the process I collected many documents about Kemper, with the help of two Kemper scholars in Uppsala. While they both lived in the same small town for ten

years, and we do know of contact between Kemper and Benzelius, to date we have no documentation that indicates that Swedenborg and Kemper ever met. This is important, and finding even these inconclusive results has been very time consuming. Nonetheless, it is a topic that is still fresh and important to scholars. I will return to a discussion of this later in my talk. Now I would like to turn to the Giants that made even tentatively addressing these matters possible.

THE GIANTS

While, as I have already indicated, a great deal of effort to document Swedenborg's life, work, and character took place in the years immediately following his death, as well as efforts to translate both published books and manuscripts, I want to focus my discussion on some of the later laborers in this field. Specifically, I want to discuss the work of Rudolph L. Tafel (1831–1893), Alfred Stroh (1878–1922), Alfred Acton (1867–1956), and Sigrid O. Sigstedt (1888–1959).

The Work of R.L. Tafel

In the mid-1860s, the Reverend William H. Benade read a manuscript written by Dr. Rudolph L. Tafel, a philology professor at Washington University of St. Louis, Missouri, entitled "Swedenborg—the Philosopher and Man of Science—Vindicated by Philosophers and Men of Science." With Tafel, Benade saw the possibility of rescuing, copying, and publishing the entire corpus of Emanuel Swedenborg. Benade was clear, the Church must sustain him and send him abroad for this great task of collecting the manuscripts, and then it must support him in the work of generating good Latin editions and translations, so that Swedenborg's symbolic books might be received by scholars everywhere (Alfelt, 1969, 132–133).

Benade's idea to publish the manuscripts and republish the printed works was put before the General Convention in June of 1866 by the Reverend Samuel M. Warren. The resolution adopted was to accomplish the work in conjunction with the Swedenborg Society of London, and Dr.

Rudolph Tafel was recommended to do the work. The resolution was adopted and a Committee of Convention was formed to oversee its implementation. While the Swedenborg Society declined to explicitly cooperate, they did suggest that “measures be taken, if possible, to obtain photographic copies of the manuscripts with a view to their being deposited in a fire-proof place” (Alfelt, 1969, 134).

Arriving in Stockholm in 1868, Tafel not only explored how the project might be executed, but he made another discovery. While examining some of the Royal Academy’s treasures, he found in his hands some documents concerning Swedenborg that had never been published in English. The idea immediately occurred to him of “not only making an exhaustive examination of the author’s unpublished writings, but also of collecting such documents respecting him as might still be in existence, scattered over the various part of his native country”(Tafel, 1875, V). The Royal Librarian, Mr. G.E. Klemming, saw the use of this plan and sent calls out to the libraries of Sweden.

By 1870, not only were the manuscripts reproduced by means of the photo-lithographic process, but countless documents had been preserved as well. Funds for the second or Document project were supplied by the newly founded American Document Committee, under the direction of Benade, Secretary of the American Swedenborg MSS. Committee, and L. C. Iungerich, Esq. of Philadelphia, and R.L. Tafel. The original documents were also owned by this committee. In their published form, Tafel’s three-volume work contained 315 documents and 310 notes. Rudolph Tafel published the first volume of *The Documents Concerning the Life and Character of Emanuel Swedenborg* in London in 1875, and the next two volumes in 1877.

There was simply not enough money to copy all the manuscripts, so it was necessary for Tafel to select which Codices should be copied. Even though incomplete, their arrival in America stimulated Convention to publish a new Latin edition of the Writings. The existence of the photo-lithographic copies made this undertaking possible (Alfelt, 1969, 135–136). For the next twenty years little work was done to complete the task that R.L. Tafel had begun.

The Academy Interest in Manuscripts

In 1895, after the founding of the Academy in Bryn Athyn, it was decided to send the Reverend Carl Th. Odhner to Sweden to continue the work. By this time a new and less expensive method of copying the manuscripts had been developed. It was called phototyping. The Reverend Odhner brought back a small manuscript entitled *Prophets and Psalms* copied in this way as an example of what was now possible.

Support from the Swedenborg Society for this work was not forthcoming, thus, the separation of the Academy from Convention loomed large as a possible road block to continuing this work at all. Negotiations between the two groups were difficult, but by 1898 the work was again started, under the leadership of the Reverend Joseph Boyesen in Stockholm. In 1901, the first bound volume of the *Spiritual Diary* was in hand (Alfelt, 1969, 139).

The Swedenborg Scientific Association and *The New Philosophy*

Eighteen ninety-eight saw two other significant developments that would affect the reproduction of Emanuel Swedenborg's entire corpus—the creation of the journal *The New Philosophy* and the founding of the Swedenborg Scientific Association. The Reverend John Whitehead (1850–1930) founded the *The New Philosophy* in March of 1898, as a vehicle for “the exposition of the philosophy presented in the scientific, philosophical and theological works of Emanuel Swedenborg.” The very next month in April the Reverend Frank Sewell, D.D. (1837–1915) issued a call for members for a “Swedenborg Scientific Association” that would be independent of existing ecclesiastical bodies of the New Church. The object of the association was “the translation and publication of the scientific and philosophical writings of Swedenborg, and the study and discussion of the principles laid down therein” (*New Church Messenger*, April 1898). Thirty-seven individuals responded to the call and attended a meeting in New York City in May of 1898. The founding group included ministers, lawyers, physicians, editors, and academics with M.A. and Ph.D degrees.

It was an auspicious beginning. Members of all the existing church bodies were there and a genuine spirit of cooperation prevailed. At the

same time there was a sense of urgency about making Swedenborg's scientific and philosophical manuscripts available, because almost all of the published titles were now out of print. The first project of the association was to be the republication of the *Principia* and the transcription and publication of the *Lesser Principia*. In 1900 the SSA acquired the *The New Philosophy* as its own publication and adopted the format of a quarterly journal.

The development of both of these—the SSA and its journal—was in response to the incredible development of science in the nineteenth century. It was clearly becoming the dominant intellectual force in Western civilization and it was felt by many that the growth and development of the church was dependent on being able to maintain a credible conversation with scientific ideas. The fact that Swedenborg was a scientist during the first part of his adult life made this approach a natural one.

As Dr. Hugo Lj. Odhner recalled at a banquet celebrating the 50th anniversary of the SSA in 1948, at that time “In England as well as here, it was seen that the materialistic interpretations increasingly adopted by the scientists of the world, were—unless challenged—a greater danger to the New Church than were the false dogmas of the old [Christian] church theology” (Swedenborg Library archival material related to the history of the SSA).

Enthusiasm was high and Miss Lillian Beekman's arrival in Bryn Athyn—with her profound interest in Swedenborg's scientific system—the same year that these two institutions were founded was an added stimulus to the enterprise. According to Alfred Acton, “Miss Beekman's teachings . . . set forth in clear light, not only that Swedenborg was prepared, but how he was prepared, and the effect of that preparation on the reading of the Writings” (Acton, 1953, 102).

Alfred Stroh

This is the environment at the beginning of the twentieth century in which tremendous effort was put into preservation of Swedenborg's manuscripts and their subsequent publication. In 1901 interest was high and funds were made available. Mr. Carl Hj. Asplundh (1862–1903), treasurer of the SSA, developed a plan to copy the seven codices of unpublished

material that contained approximately 2,500 pages. His plan was endorsed by both the Academy and the General Convention and support was also given by the Rotch Trustees. This plan involved securing a copyist in Sweden rather than using some photographic method. An Assistant Librarian at the Royal Academy of Sciences, a Miss Greta Eckelof, was hired and by 1903 a report was presented to the SSA that the project was complete—comprising eleven manuscripts and over twenty-seven hundred pages (Doering, 1932, 85; Alfelt, 1969, 139–140).

Alfred Stroh became involved in this project in 1902. He was to devote the rest of his life to it. The day after his graduation from the theological school in Bryn Athyn he set sail for Sweden. He had been engaged by Mr. Asplundh as his personal representative to supervise all the activity connected with the manuscripts in Stockholm.

Stroh's arrival in Stockholm not only had a positive effect on the manuscript preservation project, but it helped to coalesce a burgeoning interest in Swedenborg's works. While working with the Swedenborg manuscripts in the Royal Library Stroh made the acquaintance of Dr. Gustaf Retzius one of Sweden's foremost anatomists. He, too, was attempting to work with one of Swedenborg's manuscripts, one on the brain. He had been asked to investigate it by a Dr. Max Neuberger of Vienna, who had become intrigued with what he knew regarding Swedenborg's conclusions concerning the physiology of the brain. The request had been channeled to Dr. Retzius via the Swedish legation in Vienna. Retzius was having great deal of difficulty deciphering Swedenborg's handwriting that had become blurred and faded over time. Therefore, he was delighted to meet the young and friendly Mr. Stroh, who could read Swedenborg's manuscripts with ease and enthusiasm. They quickly began to cooperate with each other (Sigstedt, 1955, 396).

Their cooperative efforts led to the decision on the part of the Swedish Academy to issue a twelve volume series of Swedenborg's scientific works. The tenth volume in the series was to be the text of *The Brain*.

Professor Retzius was not only a scholar, but an owner of the Swedish daily *Aftonbladet*. He invited Alfred Stroh to write a series on Swedenborg's life for his daily. This increased interest in Swedenborg and in the return of his remains to Sweden. In Uppsala a spontaneous outpouring of national pride and affection occurred in 1908, as crowds followed the caisson

bringing Swedenborg's remains to the Cathedral, where they were ceremoniously received by the Archbishop, in the company of Swedish and Swedenborgian dignitaries (Sigstedt, 1939, 266–267).

Stroh also took the opportunity to lobby members of the Riksdag with a pamphlet of quotes from prominent scientists celebrating Swedenborg's many contributions, just prior to the vote on funding a suitable sarcophagus for Swedenborg. The outcome of the vote provided a handsome sum of 10,000 crowns. The beautiful red granite tomb was installed in a memorable ceremony in the Uppsala Cathedral in November of 1910. The Royal family was in attendance, as well as the student body of the university, aristocrats and celebrities. Swedenborg was laid to rest at home in Sweden, along with many of Sweden's other illustrious sons (Sigstedt, 1939, 267).

At the same time, Alfred Stroh continued the work he had undertaken for New Church organizations in America, including completing the phototyping of the *Spiritual Diary*, the *Index Biblicus*, the *Arcana Coelestia*, and *Miscellaneous Works*. In addition he prepared a number of facsimile volumes and festival publications for the International Congress. In his work he also uncovered additional documentary material related to the life and work of Emanuel Swedenborg. One of his discoveries was the poem *Festivus applausus* written by Swedenborg in honor of Karl XII upon the King's return to Sweden in 1715. Until this discovery, no copy of the poem had been thought to exist (Sigstedt, 1955, 141).

1910 was certainly Swedenborg's year! Sigrid O. Sigstedt in a 1939 article in the *New Church Messenger*, captures the spirit of the times in the following: "Thirty years ago there was intense interest in the task of establishing Swedenborg's place in the history of science and philosophy, and enshrining him as a patriot in his native Sweden. Biographies and festival publications were issued by every institution that could possibly claim any connection with his life" (Sigstedt, 1939, 265).

Not only was he finally honored as one of Sweden's greatest sons, but the International Congress in London honored him as one of the world's most fertile minds. Gustav V, King of Sweden, was the Patron of the Congress. This drew many of Sweden's most eminent men to attend.

At the congress, scientists from Sweden, Europe, the British Empire, and North America lauded Swedenborg's contributions to anatomy and

physiology, cosmology, geology, atomic theory, crystallography, metallurgy and mineralogy. Alfred Stroh was asked to translate and edit many of their speeches. Institutions that Swedenborg had been associated with during his lifetime at last took the opportunity to honor him. Uppsala University chose to honor him by issuing a complete edition of his *Poetic Works*. Alfred Stroh was asked to assist in the production of this volume. The Society of Sciences decided to publish a facsimile of Sweden's first scientific journal *Daedulus Hyperboreus*, the brainchild of Swedenborg, and they asked Mr. Stroh for help. The Royal Academy published Swedenborg's *Journals of Travel* in his honor, and again they called on Mr. Stroh for assistance. The Royal Academy also included Alfred Stroh's "Abridged Chronological List of the Works of Emanuel Swedenborg" in its Proceedings. This is only a fraction of the material prepared to celebrate Swedenborg during that helicon year. New Church organizations were not to be outdone, and they, too, called on Alfred Stroh to aid them (Sigstedt, 1939, 265).

Unfortunately, this great outpouring of interest was a culmination rather than a beginning. In 1910 the relevant portions of the world took time to acknowledge their debt to Swedenborg, but they stopped short of incorporating his contributions into their on-going work, and they did not use his thought or work to shape the intellectual conversation of the day.

No doubt this state of affairs went unnoticed in Swedenborgian circles for some time. In any case, Alfred Stroh, after this flurry of intense activity, continued his important work of phototyping manuscripts and collecting documents concerning Swedenborg's life and work.

Cyriel Odhner

It was possible for Stroh to assist the Swedish delegation, prior to the 1910 Congress, in part, because in 1909 he was able to hire Cyriel Odhner as a secretary. Cyriel had returned to Sweden after a fourteen year sojourn in Bryn Athyn. She had recently graduated from the Academy of the New Church College with a degree in education, and had come to live with her mother from whom she had parted as a young child. She was able to work for Mr. Stroh half time and was employed as the English corresponding secretary for the Curator of the Royal Ethnographic Museum for the other half.

Miss Odhner was to organize, systematize and develop the Chronological List of Swedenborgiana. This required going over all known biographical sources and any new bits of information that surfaced. For every new item, it was necessary to secure the exact text. This kept Cyriel quite busy for her four-year stay in Sweden. Uncovered during this time, among other items, was a record of Swedenborg's baptism, his plans to work for Christopher Polhem, a proposal for a professorship in Uppsala, and Swedenborg's marriage proposal to a daughter of the Bishop of Skara. A total of 129 new documents that Swedenborg authored were discovered during this period, and 292 new items of contemporary information about him (Sigstedt, 1955, 398).

From 1909–1913, while Cyriel Odhner focused on Swedenborgiana, Alfred Stroh took on the work of phototyping the *Index Biblicus* and the remaining theological manuscripts. He had been commissioned by all the various New Church bodies to do this work during the 1910 International Congress. This work was continued during the First World War with the help of others and, in 1922, the year of Alfred Stroh's death, the last volumes of the phototypes were distributed to the subscribers. The eighteen volume set of phototyped manuscripts, containing 12,069 pages of reproductions, is a tangible symbol of Alfred Stroh's enormous legacy to the New Church¹ (Alfelt, 1969, 141).

Alfred Acton

At the time of Alfred Stroh's death, Alfred Acton had been editor of the *The New Philosophy* for thirteen years. During this time the Swedenborg Scientific Association had published Acton's translation of *The Fibre* in installments in the journal for six years until it was complete. In 1910, the association also published as a pamphlet, a description of Swedenborg's *Flying Machine*. This small work "attracted some notice in the aeronautical world" (Doering, 1932, 89). Also serialized in *The New Philosophy* was a work Acton titled *Psychological Transactions*. It included the work called *Posthumous Tracts* published in 1847 by the Swedenborg Society, but long

¹ This number of reproduced pages represents 16,847 original pages. In Notes by the Editor, *The New Philosophy*, Jan.–April, 1922, 136.

out of print. Acton added three small works to the collection, “Faith in Christ,” “The Heiroglyphic Key,” and “Correspondences and Representations.” It was published in book form in 1920. The serial printing of Swedenborg’s work on *The Brain* began in October of 1918, and in 1920 the *The New Philosophy* began to publish excerpts by Swedenborg of philosophers he read during 1740 and 1741, while working on the *Fibre* (Doering, 1932, 95).

Dr. Acton in a report on the translation activity of the SSA in 1916 lamented its meager output, particularly when compared to the work done by the Swedenborg Association of London during the 1840s. Thus in 1922, when the work of phototyping the theological works was complete, he wrote in the *The New Philosophy* that it was now “time to give some preliminary thoughts to the continuation of the work of phototyping by the reproduction of all Swedenborg’s scientific and philosophical writings” (Alfelt, 1969, 141).

Dr. Acton had briefly been involved with this work in the early years of the twentieth century, but now he was to assume responsibility for all the remaining work. In contacting the librarian of the Royal Academy of Science for some work he needed immediate access to, he was informed that there was a new method for facsimile reproduction called photostating. It could be done for the same amount of money as employing a copyist. Upon receipt of this information, he requested the work that he was interested in be done by this method (Alfelt, 1969, 141–142).

Thoroughly satisfied with the results, he investigated both what manuscripts remained to be copied and what the expense to copy them would be. Dr. Acton then submitted a proposal to the SSA “to take it upon itself to finish the work. The cost was estimated at \$2,000” (Alfelt, 1969, 142). The Academy of the New Church expressed interest in the project. It desired copies from the negatives to be produced and made an offer of some financial support. The association commenced the work in 1924. Progress was rapid and the work was completed in three years. It was determined to do some additional photostating of manuscripts that Tafel had originally done, because he had edited them and thus had rearranged the order of the original.

Dr. Acton spent time in Sweden during this period, examining the manuscripts; he also received valuable assistance from Cyriel Odhner

who was again sent to Sweden to do research on some of Swedenborg's manuscripts and to find more documents related to his life and work. In 1930, Dr. Acton reported on the work with a few brief words; he said, "the whole program which was undertaken by the SSA in May of 1924, is now complete. In six years we have photostated over 7,500 manuscript pages contained in over 5,700 photostated pages" (Acton, 1930, 241).

This work brought to a close one phase of the work associated with Swedenborg studies. This work took place over a span of sixty years and fills fifty-eight large volumes. As Lennart Alfelt said in 1969, however, "... their love and work will be realized only when we in our scholarship and publishing return to the originals they have made available to us" (Alfelt, 1969, 143).

Cyriel Odhner Sigstedt

More, however, needs to be said about the completion of the documents project and its fruits, as well as some of the additional translation and publications efforts of Dr. Acton. Alfred Stroh's health and the return of Cyriel Odhner to Bryn Athyn at the outbreak of the First World War brought to a halt the Documents project. It lay dormant for ten years. In 1924 the Reverend Reginald Brown took an interest in the material already collected and arranged it in binders. It comprised six folio volumes, and since that time they have been referred to as the "Green Books." In doing this work, it was discovered that there were approximately 600 documents for which no original copy had been obtained. It was estimated that as many as 1,907 pages needed to be copied or photographed. Many of these documents were not even available in translation.

Cyriel Odhner, even though employed teaching in the elementary school, was drawn to complete this work. But, she wondered, as we so often do, where were the funds to make it happen? She wrote series of articles about the work in *New Church Life* and made a presentation about the need to a variety of groups. In the end, she was able to secure the bulk of the necessary funding from the Academy, but other groups also contributed.

Miss Odhner arrived in Stockholm in August of 1925. As the work proceeded, it constantly expanded and one lead led to another and unex-

pected but useful material came to light. She was ably assisted by Swedish librarians, who were delighted to show her the sources they had available. Eventually she collected between 3,000 and 4,000 pages of transcripts and photostats of documents.

One task she engaged in was to look through the sixty folio volumes of manuscripts from the Board of Mines, where Swedenborg was appointed an Extraordinary Assessor by King Karl XII. Swedenborg took his seat in 1724 and resigned in 1747. Miss Odhner examined every volume, page by page, in order to find and copy every item of business in which he had been involved. As a result, to her delight she took on a new appreciation of Swedenborg's training and use. Examining his activities in his primary occupation of almost a quarter of a century, she discovered that he was essentially engaged in the work of a "lawyer" administrating justice (Sigstedt, 1955, 399).

At the end of the year, Cyriel returned once again to Bryn Athyn with her treasure of documents—more than she or anyone had imagined. The collecting completed, no hands or funds were found for almost twenty years to properly arrange them all into additional Green Books, and to put in order the *Chronological List*. In 1943 the Lord's New Church stepped forward and provided the funding for Cyriel O. Sigstedt "to make a typewritten copy of the List in five sets." Additional Green Books were filled and today the set contains twelve volumes (Sigstedt, 1955, 400).

In 1948, Signe Toksvig, published her study of Swedenborg with Yale University Press. Her work was made possible, in part, through the use of all the documents faithfully collected over a period of one hundred and seventy-six years, many of which were now stored in the Swedenborgiana Collection at the Academy. Dr. Toksvig's book was not a comprehensive biography of Swedenborg, focusing as it did on Swedenborg's psychic abilities, and thus, she suggested to Cyriel that she write a biography of Swedenborg, and so her *Swedenborg Epic* was conceived. It was published five short years later in 1953. As Cyriel said, "All during my work on the documents there had been, at the back of my mind, the outline of an unseen figure—the future biographer whose interests I was serving. Little did I surmise that this body of material so scrupulously arranged was to be used by me" (Sigstedt, 1955, 400).

Alfred Acton

Alfred Acton's work did not end when he returned from Sweden. He continued to translate Swedenborg's scientific works, and in 1931 he published *A Philosopher's Note Book*—the work was underwritten by the Swedenborg Scientific Association, and it contained invaluable notes written by the Editor. In 1948 he published the first of the two volume work, *The Letters and Memorials of Emanuel Swedenborg*. The second volume was published in 1955, just one year before his death at the age of eighty-nine. In addition to his translations already mentioned, in his capacity as the Literary Editor for the SSA, he translated *Ontology, Generation, Psychologia, The Cerebrum* (two volumes and a volume of plates), *The Mechanical Inventions of Emanuel Swedenborg, A New System of Reckoning*, and with Norbert H. Rogers, *Rational Psychology*. This list does not include his original works, or his translations of Swedenborg's theological works.

It should be mentioned that throughout a significant portion of the time he was the editor of the *The New Philosophy*, a position that he held from 1909–1953 (a time period of forty-four years), he was also a faculty member at the Academy. In 1936 he was elevated to the third degree of the priesthood in the General Church. He served the General Church and the Academy for more than fifty years. During the second half of the 1940s, Bishop Acton was the visiting minister for General Church members in the Washington, D.C. area. Church services were held in a ballet school on 16th Street. I was fortunate to attend those services as a young child.

The brief memorial of Alfred Acton written by the Editor of *The New Philosophy*, Edward F. Allen, and published in a delayed April edition in 1956, in speaking of his translations wrote,

The value of these translations was enhanced by his judicious editing, and in certain instances by scholarly prefaces. The intense study that went into this literary work gave Dr. Acton prodigious knowledge of, and profound insight into, Swedenborg's thought; and the fruit thereof was made available to students through his pen. (Allen, 1956, 59)

He closed his reflection of the work of Dr. Acton by saying,

We indeed owe an incalculable debt to Bishop Acton. If he ever thought about it at all, we feel certain that he would desire repayment in only one form—increased interest in and devotion to the uses of the Swedenborg Scientific Association, not as an end in themselves, but that the study of Swedenborg’s philosophy might enable us to enter more interiorly into the truths of the Writings. (Allen, 1956, 59)

Cyriel O. Sigstedt no doubt attended the memorial service of her fellow laborer in the field of Swedenborgiana. Only three years later she, too, was briefly memorialized in the pages of *The New Philosophy*. For a brief period during my first year at the Girls School, just prior to her death, I was privileged to personally know “Aunt” Cyriel. I cleaned for the Sigstedt’s in their lovely “Swedish” home on Rose Lane. The memorial is found in the July 1959 issue. It said,

Cyriel Odhner Sigstedt responded to a need that has been apparent since before the Association was founded. An organization devoted to the study of one man’s works owes a debt of eternal gratitude to that man’s biographer. *The Swedenborg Epic* so far exceeds anything done before it in its completeness and its warmly affirmative treatment that no serious student of Swedenborg can afford to overlook it. And the zeal that produced that opus also led the author to perform other tasks for the Association that are important in their own right—documentations and interpretations that give new continuity and meaning to the historical details of Swedenborg’s life. (*The New Philosophy*, 1959, 72)

SWEDENBORG STUDIES 2002

Truly I have portrayed individuals with “shoulders of giants”—and with the deaths of Dr. Acton and Cyriel O. Sigstedt the era of giants passed. The huge and vital task which that generation of New Church scholars had set for itself was accomplished. This was made clear in an article by Donald Fitzpatrick, Jr. entitled “The Uses of the *The New Philosophy*,” published in July of 1960. It was a response to a letter concerning the

“plight of the Association’s Journal.” The question he addressed was, “Is the *New Philosophy*, or should it be, a New Church philosophical journal?” (Fitzpatrick, 1960, 192). Most of the work of the first great use of the association appeared to be complete. That is “the preservation, translation, and publication of the scientific and philosophical works of Emanuel Swedenborg.” That left the journal to be filled with articles focused on “the promotion of the principles taught in Swedenborg’s works” (Doering, 1932, 84). This of course required knowing the principles articulated in the scientific and philosophical works.

Much had changed both in the world and in the church since Dr. Frank Sewell had sent out his call to form the association. The scientific momentum of the world had accelerated, and it appeared that the church no longer saw Swedenborg’s science per se, as the essential science, underpinning the theology of the Writings. Over the years, fewer and fewer students in the church studied Swedenborg’s philosophy and science, and surprisingly, as far as I know, a course on Swedenborg’s life and times has been offered only once outside of the Theological School course in church history.

When Don Fitzpatrick ended his article affirming that indeed the *The New Philosophy* was a philosophical journal, he pointed to its possible use as a journal where the principles of Swedenborg’s philosophy could be studied and connected to the different vocations and callings of the membership. The journal could become a forum of discussions about a philosophy of business, of law, or medicine, for example. Editors are always looking for contributions and then as now articles of this type would of course be welcome by the journal.

It should also be pointed out that even though the editorship has been in the hands of General Church members, since Alfred Acton’s tenure the board is not composed exclusively of General Church members. And, in fact, over the last twenty years an increasing number of the contributors, almost one third of them, are not members of any New Church body at all. They are individuals with an independent interest in Swedenborg. Twenty percent of all contributors since 1981, or over half of those with an independent interest in Swedenborg, became aware of the *The New Philosophy* through the Swedenborg Symposium in 1988, or they participated in the

Swedenborg Seminar at the American Academy of Religion or entrusted manuscripts to me in my travels abroad.

This speaks well to the openness of the *The New Philosophy* and its editor, Erland Brock, to new contributors. It also speaks well to the sustained interest and involvement of outside scholars in Swedenborg studies, since important symposia on Swedenborg took place in many parts of the world during the 300th anniversary of his birth in 1988. This sustained involvement is quite different than what occurred after the International Congress in 1910 and the celebration of the 250th anniversary of Swedenborg's birth in 1938. In defense of those events, it must be mentioned that only a few years after both took place, the Western world was shaken by major world wars. One might even say the reverse was true after 1988 with the collapse of the "iron curtain" the very next year, and the opening of former Eastern block countries and Russia itself to communication with the West.

According to the Swedenborg Library Director, Carroll Odhner, in recent years a broad range of scholars from the United States and different parts of the world with an interest in Swedenborg, have been increasingly drawn to the special collections of the Swedenborg Library for information.

Along with a widening interest in Swedenborg, his life and his thought, have come new questions about his character. The insanity issue has died down for the present, but in its place questions have been raised about whether he was a Masonic spy, was in the pay of the King of France, and whether he participated in exotic sexual rites with Moravians or other shadowy esoteric figures in London. As absurd and outrageous as these allegations may appear to us, they and others like them, have appeared in the recent work of established scholars. Given the framework of documentation in which these challenges are set, they are not as easily put to rest as one would wish they could be. Painstaking research is required, involving access to documents located all across Europe. Creative use of our own Swedenborgiana resources is also useful. In any case, the audience that must be convinced that such charges are ungrounded are other scholars and potential newcomers exposed to the literature in which these claims are pressed.

When attempting to refute these or other charges, credibility as a trusted and impeccable scholar is absolutely essential to mitigate the suspicion of blind partisanship or parochialism in one's argument or presentation. Credibility also requires the building of relationships and connections with the scholarly world, so that personal character can also play a role when one wants one's own scholarly perspective to be taken seriously. Building these relationship is, of course, personal, but in the long run it needs to become institutionalized.

The wonderful thing about institutionalization is that it makes the personal permanent. The giants I have spoken about this evening made incredible contributions to the life of the New Church and to our aspirations to grow and prosper. They provided us with powerful tools, perhaps so powerful that we thought the work was done. We could rest because of their hard labor. But on every level of their work more needs to be done. The *Index Biblicus* has never had a proper Latin edition, let alone a useable translation into English. It is also clear from the New Century Edition project undertaken by the Swedenborg Foundation that fresh translation remains a vital use for the church.

Documentation and easy access to it are also vital uses. Without question the need for new documentation will always arise, in part because new questions get asked. In my own research forays in Sweden, I have spent considerable time investigating the type of house Swedenborg lived in as a small child. This work has led me in a variety of directions and has reopened the question whether or not Jesper Swedberg and his family lived at the parish house in Vingåker in 1792. I need this information for a new biography I am writing about Swedenborg. I could give you many other examples.

In this quest last summer, I came across a delightful Swedish poem about Swedenborg's summer house, which I translated and would like to share with you. It is called "Lusthuset" and was written by Hjalmar Gullberg.

I am a summer house that one passes by.
I stood on Södermalm in my master's garden.
His angels filled me with harmony.
And the world of spirits was content in my care.

A powerful investigator, a great prophet
has had my simple cabin for his home.
Sitting here he saw the splendors of heaven,
here was created a New Jerusalem.

Around the spirit which has moved, I was a shell.
Now I stand abandoned with my sorrow.
But I was filled with harp and cymbal,
When God came to visit with Swedenborg.
(*Nordiska Museets och Skansens Årsbok*, 1940, 15)

When doing research, little finds like this are infinitely rewarding and enrich our appreciation of how profoundly Swedenborg's work has touched so many.

Inaccessible documents are almost like having no documents at all. The Green Books have never been published like the Tafel documents, and therefore have not been nearly as widely used. But in fact they contain thousands of documents to Tafel's hundreds. Tafel also took the time to research each document and provided context for the reader in which to view it. This has certainly not been done for all the documents contained in the Green Books. Tafel also translated all the documents in his collection, and this has not been done for the Green Books.

Despite this work that obviously needs to be done, I wish to report that the Green Books are currently being scanned, and that at some time in the relatively near future they may be either on the Web via the Swedenborg Library, or they may be offered for sale on CDs for computer use. But the Index for the Green Books has either just been posted on the Web or it will be in a matter of days. This is truly a wonderful accomplishment; it will make public knowledge of what is in the Green Books something that will immediately increase their use, even in their current state.

An additional project of importance is to review and write summaries of all the books we hold in the Swedenborgiana Collection that were listed as part of Swedenborg's library. The books are in a variety of different languages, and thus their contents are not easily accessible to research. Research I was doing in the past year required me to investigate a claim another scholar had made about the nature of material contained in a

travel journal Swedenborg owned. An outline of the contents of the book would have made my work much easier, and it would not have permitted the other scholar to make false claims about its contents.

While these issues of scholarship may seem arcane and far from the heart of what matters in the church, I do not think so. They provide the tools that protect the integrity of his claims. Swedenborg's character matters, and knowledge of his life and work ground his character. In addition, there are fascinating questions about how he worked, how he thought, and what we can learn about our own journey, through his. He, too, is a giant upon whose shoulders we stand. Meeting him is a warm and humbling experience, most humbling perhaps not because he was chosen for such an awesome task, but that he was willing to undergo such profound changes in order that he might be equal to the call.

Protecting the integrity of Swedenborg's claims ought not be left to chance. That is, it ought not be left to individual interest and whim. The task is much larger than the capability of any single person. It ought to be developed and cultivated, so that the means do not die when an individual dies. Instituting a program of Swedenborg Studies could do just that. If such a program were open to all qualified scholars, the credibility of our institution would be enhanced and we would have ready-made opportunities to build cooperative relationships with many other academic institutions. Joint projects could be developed, student exchanges could take place, and visiting professorships here and elsewhere could enable us to have a more significant profile in the world. There is no doubt that challenges will continue to occur, even as we reduce our marginality. However, they will have less impact because others will be sufficiently knowledgeable to be able to come to our defense, and because we have developed on-going relationships with them, they will be willing to do so. Institutionalizing Swedenborg Studies will allow us to remain standing on the shoulders of giants. □

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THE LISTENING THREADS

The Formal Cosmology of Emanuel Swedenborg

Norman Newton

In the Foreword, Prof. Inge Jonsson says: "The author has chosen to analyze a very difficult problem, complex mainly from the inner side of the texts, and so he may not have much to offer those who want to learn something new of Swedenborg's possible sources. Nevertheless, I am confident that many scholars who are not members of the New Church will find his book as instructive in other respects as I have done. On the following pages the reader will meet the impressive result of an experiment in close reading of extraordinarily complicated texts. Personally I am grateful for still another way in which Swedenborg has now come to me" (p. Xv).

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