

GUIDE TO THE  
THEOLOGICAL WORKS OF  
EMANUEL SWEDENBORG

*in the New Century Edition*



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## EMANUEL SWEDENBORG

Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772) was born Emanuel Swedberg in Stockholm, Sweden, on January 29, 1688. He was the third of the nine children of Jesper Swedberg and Sara Behm. His father, a Lutheran clergyman, later became a celebrated and controversial bishop, whose diocese included the Swedish churches in Pennsylvania and in London, England.

After studying at the University of Uppsala, Emanuel journeyed to England, Holland, France, and Germany to study and work with leading scientists in western Europe. He gained favor with Sweden's King Charles XII, who gave him a salaried position as an overseer of Sweden's mining industry.

Later, Emanuel was ennobled by Queen Ulrika Eleonora, and his last name was changed to Swedenborg. This change in status gave him a seat in the Swedish House of Nobles, where he remained an active participant in the Swedish government throughout his life.

A member of the Swedish Royal Academy of Sciences, he devoted himself to scientific studies and philosophical reflections. After 1734 he redirected his research and publishing to a study of anatomy in search of the interface between the soul and body, making several significant discoveries in physiology.

From 1743 to 1745 he entered a transitional phase that resulted in a shift of his main focus from science to theology. Throughout the rest of his life he maintained that this shift was brought about by Jesus Christ, who appeared to him, called him to a new mission, and opened his perception to a permanent dual consciousness of this life and the life after death.

He devoted the last decades of his life to studying Scripture and publishing eighteen theological titles that draw on the Bible, reasoning, and his own spiritual experiences. These works present a Christian theology with unique perspectives on the nature of God, the spiritual world, the Bible, the human mind, and the path to salvation.

# THE THEOLOGICAL WORKS OF EMANUEL SWEDENBORG

## ☞ *Secrets of Heaven (Arcana Coelestia)*, 1749–1756

*Secrets of Heaven* is a verse-by-verse exposition of Genesis and Exodus, showing the correspondences (connections through symbol between the material and spiritual world) in which, according to Swedenborg's analysis, the Bible is written. Each chapter includes embedded sections describing Swedenborg's spiritual experiences and expounding his theological views.

This book series is Swedenborg's largest and in many ways most challenging title, but it contains abundant points of interest to reward the adventurous reader. In addition to a deep exploration of biblical inner meaning, it presents Swedenborg's transcendent visions of heaven and correspondingly horrific views of hell; his reports on the process of dying and entering life after death; his spiritual anthropology (specifically, his descriptions of the spiritual state of the earliest people); and his views on many other topics, including the correspondences of the organs and systems of the human body, the theory of a higher and more perfect level of memory above our conscious memory, the existence and nature of human life on other planets, the dual nature of visions and dreams, and the nature of the human mind and its developmental stages.

First edition (Latin): [London], 1749–1756. 4,559 pages in 8 vols.

First complete English edition: London, 1783–1806. 12 vols.



## *SECRETS OF HEAVEN, VOLUMES 1–15*

**VOLUME 1:** A verse-by-verse exposition of Genesis 1–8, in which Swedenborg describes the inner meaning of the creation story, the fall of Adam and Eve, and Noah’s deliverance from the flood. He understands the days of creation as an image of the stages of human spiritual transformation; Adam and Eve as symbols for the earliest ancient “church,” a people who eventually fell away from God; and Noah as a symbol of the good individuals who were spared from the evil thinking that flooded human minds during that decline. Interspersed with Swedenborg’s explorations of these narratives are his accounts of stages in the transition to the afterlife. He also describes the nature of the soul after death and the joy experienced in heaven, before concluding with descriptions of hell.

**VOLUME 2:** Provides the inner meaning of Genesis 9–15. Here the rise of a new and major religious culture is symbolized by the story of Noah and his descendants, and the eventual collapse of that culture by the destruction of the tower of Babel. After this point a shift in focus occurs: the inner meaning now concerns the spiritual aspects of Jesus’ life. The literal story continues with Abram’s call to Canaan, symbolizing Jesus’ first realization of his divine purpose. Within this volume Swedenborg also completes his description of hell and addresses the nature of time, space, language, and the Bible in the spiritual world.

**VOLUME 3:** Describes how Genesis 16–21 is an account of the early stages of Jesus’ inward development. Ishmael symbolizes the state of Jesus’ young mind; God’s communications with Abram—now “Abraham”—symbolize the first interactions between Jesus’ human side and his divine side; and the promised birth of Isaac to Sarah symbolizes the emergence of Jesus’ divine self. Swedenborg additionally addresses visions and dreams, marriages in the spiritual world, and the true nature of the Last Judgment—the last a theme that continues in several subsequent volumes.

**VOLUME 4:** Explores the stories of Genesis 22–26, which on the surface recount God’s testing of Abraham and the generational shift that occurs as Sarah and Abraham die, Isaac and Rebekah marry, and Jacob and Esau are born. The intricacies of this narrative are interpreted as the processes Jesus went through inwardly as he united his human and divine natures and established a new religious culture on earth. Much of this volume also explores the concepts of correspondence and representation as underlying realities present in the natural and spiritual worlds and in the Bible.

**VOLUME 5:** Continues with the inner meaning of Jacob's story found in Genesis 27–30. Jacob's flight to his uncle Laban's house, where he initially labors for the right to marry, weds Leah and Rachel, and eventually rises to great prosperity, parallels the stage of Jesus' transformation in which his earthly self (represented by Jacob) had to climb from attachment to shallow truth (Leah) to a love of deep truth (Rachel) so that his earthly self could become fully divine. Within each chapter Swedenborg also addresses the decline of the Christian church and unfolds his foundational premise that heaven, as a whole and in detail, is in God's image and can therefore be called the "universal human."

**VOLUME 6:** Interprets the inner narrative of Genesis 31–35, in which Jacob leaves Laban's house, wrestles with God, and reunites with Esau. These acts are each symbolic of the inner separations, struggles, and unifications that Jesus accomplished on his path to divinity. Swedenborg continues to explore two themes found in previous volumes: the Last Judgment as the ending of an old church and the beginning of a new church, and the correlation between human individuals and the "universal human."

**VOLUME 7:** Joseph's story begins in the chapters covered in this volume (Genesis 36–40). The literal narrative describes how after dreaming of greatness Joseph is sold into slavery by his jealous brothers and wrongfully imprisoned. The inner narrative describes the trials and opposition endured by the Lord's divine humanity, which is represented by Joseph. In this volume Swedenborg also interprets a number of parables in Matthew, relating their meaning to the Lord's Second Coming. His exploration of the correspondences of the various parts and functions of the body is also continued.

**VOLUME 8:** The explication of the deeper meaning behind Joseph's story continues with Genesis 41–44. Joseph's rise to power in Egypt and the aid he gives his brothers during the famine is understood as symbolizing the strengthening of Jesus' inner self and the benefit it provided to his outer self during his process of glorification. Swedenborg also completes his survey of the correspondence of the human body with some attention to the correspondence of disease. He then begins a new theme in which he describes the influence that the spiritual world has on human beings through angels and spirits.

**VOLUME 9:** The exposition of the Book of Genesis ends in this volume with an explanation of the inner meaning of Genesis 45–50. Joseph’s reunion with his family and then the eventual death of both Jacob and Joseph mark the end of the patriarchs as representations of Jesus’ path to glorification and the beginning of a depiction of the individual path toward spirituality, as modeled by the epic wanderings of Jacob’s descendants. Swedenborg also returns to the theme of the manner in which the spiritual world influences human beings, including the effect it has on the will and intellect, the soul, and the inner and outer selves.

**VOLUME 10:** The explanation of the biblical inner meaning resumes with Exodus 1–8, chapters that include the enslavement of the Israelites in Egypt and Moses’ negotiations with Pharaoh for their freedom. The Israelites represent people who, because they have access to divine truth, or divine law—represented by Moses—undergo spiritual trials. Swedenborg also begins two new themes in this volume. Each chapter opens with a discussion of the true nature of neighborly love and closes with his accounts of interactions with spirits from other planets. He commences here with Mercury, Venus, and Mars.

**VOLUME 11:** In this exposition of Exodus 9–15, the plagues that Jehovah brings upon Egypt are analyzed as representing the punishment of spirits who have opposed people on their path to spirituality; Pharaoh’s repeatedly retracted release of the Israelites stands for the rejection of truth by evil people; and the dramatic exodus from Egypt depicts the Lord’s deliverance of those who are spiritual. Accompanying that exegesis is further discussion of the concept of neighborly love, now in relation to such themes as selfishness, faith, and religious devotion. Also included are further reports on spirits from other planets—here Mars and Jupiter.

**VOLUME 12:** The narrative of the Israelites’ journey continues in Exodus 16–21. Jehovah miraculously provides the Israelites with quail, manna, and water in the wilderness just as he provides consoling and enriching good and truth to those who undergo spiritual battles while on the path toward a spiritual life. Jehovah appears to Moses on Mt. Sinai and delivers the Ten Commandments to him just as the Lord delivers divine truth to those who are becoming spiritual. The theme of neighborly love here is extended to include the individual’s transformation into a spiritual person through repentance, temptation, and regeneration. Swedenborg also completes his description of spirits from Jupiter and Saturn.

**VOLUME 13:** Explains Exodus 22–24 and the deeper spiritual truth that is symbolized by the laws given by Jehovah, through Moses, to the Israelites; namely, the various and nuanced ways in which people should not, but inevitably do, set themselves in opposition to faith, neighborly love, and partnership with the Lord. In this volume the topic of neighborly love is further extended to a discussion of the concept of conscience and of charity’s vital relationship to faith. The ethnography of the spirits from other worlds continues with an account of spirits from the Moon and then turns to a report on spirits from planets outside the solar system. Here Swedenborg also addresses the question of why the Lord was born on Earth rather than on another planet.

**VOLUME 14:** In this volume Swedenborg explains Exodus 25–29, including the meaning behind Jehovah’s further laws for the Israelites, the detailed instructions for the building of the ark and the tabernacle, and the establishment of the priesthood; these particulars symbolize the details of the heavenly realities that exist in the glorified Lord and aspects of how he is to be truly worshiped. Swedenborg also addresses such theological questions as the forgiveness of sin, human freedom, and the inner and outer selves. In the topical sections appended to the chapters, spirits from two planets outside our solar system are described.

**VOLUME 15:** *Secrets of Heaven* comes to a close with Swedenborg’s explanation of the inner meaning of the final chapters of Exodus, chapters 30–40. This volume sketches the symbolism behind the rebellious worship of the golden calf, Moses’ destruction of the two tablets, and Jehovah’s subsequent reissuing of them. In Swedenborg’s exegesis, these events indicate that by rejecting worship of the true God, the Israelites consigned themselves to a shallow form of religion. They were allowed, however, to remain a “church,” though in name only, so that God could maintain a spiritual connection to humanity through them. In this final volume Swedenborg also addresses love in marriage, the necessity of divine revelation, baptism and the Holy Supper, divine providence, civil and ecclesiastical leadership, and finally, the vital importance of acknowledging and worshiping one God. The reports concerning spirits from planets outside our solar system are also brought to a conclusion.

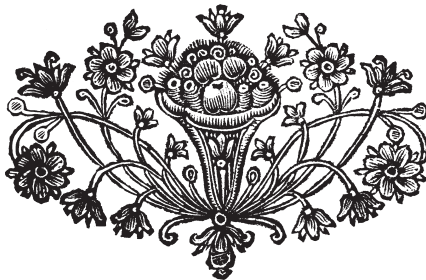


## ☞ *Heaven and Hell*, 1758

*Heaven and Hell* is Swedenborg's most popular book and his most full report of his experiences in the other world. In it he describes heaven, hell, and the world of spirits that lies between them, and he recounts in detail the process of passing from life to afterlife, as well as the subsequent experiences of the soul. He counters certain traditional views by maintaining that angels (and devils) are not a separately created genderless race but people (both male and female) who once lived in the physical world. These spirits end up either in heaven or in hell depending upon the lives they have led and the choices they have made on earth. Infants and children of any and all religious backgrounds—atheistic, agnostic, non-Christian, or Christian—enter heaven and grow up to young adult age after death, while adults maintain or regain a state of healthful youth. Swedenborg colors his account with abundant details concerning the nature of the spiritual world—having to do not only with angels and their powers, their language, their homes and clothing, but also with the circumstances of devils and evil spirits.

In many respects, *Heaven and Hell* is “the place to start” for those who wish to become acquainted with Swedenborg's rich account of the afterlife. Over the years this volume has been much sought also by readers who have an interest in near-death experiences or who seek consolation for the loss of a loved one.

First edition (Latin): London, 1758. 272 pages. First English edition: London, 1778





## ☞ *The Shorter Works of 1758*

### *New Jerusalem (New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Teachings)*

Here Swedenborg outlines his theology in twenty-three brief chapters on major Christian topics such as love, faith, regeneration, the inner self and outer self, and the nature of the Bible. Each chapter ends with what is in effect an index to that topic as it appears in his much larger study *Secrets of Heaven*.

First edition (Latin): London, 1758. 156 pages. First English edition: London, 1780

### *Last Judgment*

This work on the “end times” asserts that the Last Judgment foretold in the Bible does not involve the end of the physical world. Rather, the Last Judgment was an event of tremendous upheaval in the spiritual world, a nonmaterial apocalypse which has already occurred and which Swedenborg himself witnessed.

First edition (Latin): London, 1758. 55 pages. First English edition: London, 1788

### *White Horse*

This brief work is divided into two parts. The first presents the inner meaning of the white horse mentioned in chapter 19 of the Book of Revelation. The second is effectively an index to passages concerning the Bible and its inner meaning in Swedenborg’s much larger work *Secrets of Heaven*. This book is a good short introduction to Swedenborg’s principle of correspondences between the spiritual and physical worlds, as well as to his unique view of the nature of the Bible.

First edition (Latin): London, 1758. 23 pages. First English edition: London, 1788

### *Other Planets (Earths in the Universe)*

Building on the eighteenth-century fascination with the possibility of life on other worlds and with traveler’s tales of other cultures, it describes life on other planets in our solar system and elsewhere in the universe. Swedenborg undertook this work specifically to demonstrate that Jesus is God not just of Planet Earth but also of the universe as a whole.

First edition (Latin): London, 1758. 72 pages. First English edition: London, 1787

## ☞ *The Shorter Works of 1763*

### *The Lord (Doctrine of the Lord)*

Provides biblical support for Swedenborg's position on certain fundamental points of Christian theology, particularly the nature of the Trinity and unity within God, the role Jesus plays in those mysteries, and the specific meaning that Jesus' death on the cross has in relation to human sin.

First edition (Latin): Amsterdam, 1763. 64 pages. First English edition: London, 1784

### *Sacred Scripture (Doctrine of Sacred Scripture)*

This work is the most accessible statement of Swedenborg's position on the Bible. His method of interpretation involves reference to an inner and an outer meaning that relate through symbolic connections that Swedenborg calls "correspondences."

First edition (Latin): Amsterdam, 1763. 54 pages. First English edition: London, 1786

### *Life (Doctrine of Life)*

Swedenborg expounds on what exactly repentance is and how the individual needs to practice it in order to be transformed and ultimately join in community with heaven. He argues that restraint from evil for worldly reasons is not effective in transforming us.

First edition (Latin): Amsterdam, 1763. 36 pages. First English edition: Plymouth, [1772]

### *Faith (Doctrine of Faith)*

This work is opposed to the concept that we are saved by faith alone. Swedenborg discusses the relationship between knowledge and faith, making a case for the idea that faith cannot be true unless it is joined with charity and becomes a faith in action.

First edition (Latin): Amsterdam, 1763. 23 pages. First English edition: Manchester, [1792]

### *Supplements (Continuation Concerning the Last Judgment)*

This short book contains later additions to two of Swedenborg's previous works: a brief supplement to the work titled *Last Judgment*, and a longer supplement to the work *Heaven and Hell*.

First edition (Latin): Amsterdam, 1763. 28 pages. First English edition: London, 1791

## ☞ *Divine Love and Wisdom*, 1763

The most purely philosophical title of the later theological works, *Divine Love and Wisdom* is also the one with the strongest affinities to modern secular discourse—specifically, it develops theological concepts for the most part without reference to the Bible. In addition to discussing the nature of God, it also examines what might be called the philosophy of creation, as well as the relationship between the physical and spiritual worlds. One of its unusual features is an extended exploration of the way the heart and lungs in the human body relate symbolically to the faculties of love and wisdom in the heart and mind.

First edition (Latin): Amsterdam, 1763. 151 pages. First English edition: London, 1788

## ☞ *Divine Providence*, 1764

This work contains Swedenborg’s solution to the “Problem of Evil”—that is, to the question of how one is to reconcile the notion of a loving God with the existence of evil, hardship, and suffering. It is also something of a “self-help” book, showing what the individual needs to do in order to change inwardly. As a part of its general presentation of the action of divine providence, it includes a nuanced discussion of freedom of the will and arguments against two traditional Christian notions: that some people are predestined to hell and that it is possible to be saved instantly.

First edition (Latin): Amsterdam, 1764. 214 pages. First English edition: London, 1790



## ☞ *Revelation Unveiled (Apocalypse Revealed), 1766*

This work is an exegesis of every verse in the Book of Revelation, relating its key images to other passages in Scripture. It focuses on what Swedenborg saw as the fall of the Christianity of his time (the eighteenth century) and the predicted eventual rise of a new Christianity thereafter. Although argued in a rather terse style, its central reading is spiritual, unlike many if not most other views of the Book of Revelation, which relate the text merely to world events, whether long past, present, or still to come. It is the first of Swedenborg's works to include at the end of every chapter lengthy narrative accounts (or "memorable occurrences") of the author's spiritual experiences. These accounts often include his blunt declarations of the fate of various kinds of Christians (including lofty church officials) in the afterlife.

First edition (Latin): Amsterdam, 1766. 629 pages. First English edition: Manchester, 1791. 2 vols.

### ***REVELATION UNVEILED, VOLUMES 1–2***

**VOLUME 1:** An exegesis of Revelation 1–11 in which John's apocalyptic visions are interpreted as prophetic descriptions of what was to unfold (and by the time of writing had unfolded) spiritually in the Christian church. The central message is that false belief was corrupting the church, necessitating the establishment of a new spiritual paradigm. The letters to the seven churches symbolize a call to reformation for all Christians; the terrifying horsemen, locusts, and earthquake foretell the impending Judgment in the spiritual world on false Christian theology and its adherents; and the bitter booklet eaten by John depicts the church's resistance to information concerning God's true nature.

**VOLUME 2:** Covers the second half of Revelation, chapters 12–22, and explains the events there as symbolizing various stages in the coming Judgment in the spiritual world and the creation of a new church. After the Judgment is complete, the resplendent Jerusalem descends and God promises to come again. This final vision depicts the arrival of a new church in which individuals will be able to receive enlightenment from God in a new way. Swedenborg ends the accounts of his spiritual experiences, and the volume, with a description of angels and spirits in conversation about the true nature of God.

## ☞ *Marriage Love (Conjugal Love)*, 1768

*Marriage Love* is perhaps Swedenborg's most controversial work. Following up his consistently maintained theological stance that angels are not a separately created race of genderless beings, Swedenborg avers that gender characteristics inhere in spiritual substance and thus survive death. In contrast to most Christian thinkers, he asserts not only that there are marriages in heaven, but that such unions involve supremely pleasurable sexual experiences. Here marriage is linked to the deep substructure of the universe by correspondence (Swedenborg's system of interaction between the spiritual and the material) and achieves a preeminence rarely accorded it today. For example, in Swedenborg's view, chastity is an attribute that can be possessed to a greater degree by the married than by the celibate.

Idealistic in placing a premium on monogamy and sexual abstinence before marriage, the work also takes a realistic look at the dark aspects of human sexuality. Though its eighteenth-century perspective naturally provides challenges for the twenty-first century reader, *Marriage Love* is in many respects a powerful advocate of the equality of the sexes and of the possibility of lasting, and even ever-increasing, love between married partners.

First edition (Latin): Amsterdam, 1768. 328 pages. First English edition: London, 1790



## ☞ *Survey (Brief Exposition)*, 1769

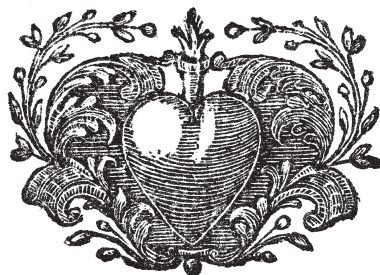
In this precursor to his longer work *True Christianity*, Swedenborg takes direct issue with many existing doctrines in both Protestant and Roman Catholic Christianity, going so far as to claim that little actually distinguishes these two main branches. The work seems to have been designed to provoke controversy; as a contemporary of Swedenborg's wrote to him about this work: "It seems . . . that you are seeking adversaries."

First edition (Latin): Amsterdam, 1769. 67 pages. First English edition: London, 1769

## ☞ *Soul-Body Interaction* (*Intercourse between the Soul and Body*), 1769

In this brief philosophical work, Swedenborg weighs in on the contemporary debate about the relationship between the soul and the body in humankind—a debate that continues to our time in the form of the mind-body question, the philosophical discussion of the action of mind on body and the constitution of consciousness. Swedenborg attacks the problem by defining the nature of, and differences between, the physical and the spiritual worlds, and by positing a causative inflow (or influx) that moves through the spiritual world into the world of physical matter.

First edition (Latin): London, 1769. 23 pages. First English edition: London, 1770



## ☞ *True Christianity (True Christian Religion)*, 1771

In the fourteen chapters of this work, Swedenborg presents his theological views against the backdrop of, and in contrast to, key concepts in Protestant Christianity, such as the nature of God and of the Trinity; how and why Jesus redeemed the human race; the nature of the Bible; the multilayered meanings of the Ten Commandments; how faith and good works contribute to salvation; the true nature and purpose of baptism and Holy Supper (Communion); and the Last Judgment, the Second Coming, and the descent of the New Jerusalem. It includes Swedenborg's most extended and practice-oriented discussion of how to undertake effective repentance from sin. The tone of the work is often blunt and confrontational and, when it resorts to reducing opposing arguments to absurdity, devastatingly biting and witty. It is recommended for those with a particular interest in exploring Swedenborg's theological views and seeing the biblical support he offers for them. It also includes extensive accounts of Swedenborg's spiritual experiences.

First edition (Latin): Amsterdam, 1771. 542 pages. First English edition: London, 1781. 2 vols.

### *TRUE CHRISTIANITY, VOLUMES 1–2*

**VOLUME 1:** Provides unique answers to humankind's perennial questions about the nature of God and about Jesus—not only what his purpose was and how he fulfilled it, but why his life and death are still relevant to us now.

**VOLUME 2:** Covers topics such as freedom of choice, repentance, the transformation of a person's inner being during spiritual awakening, the rites of baptism and the Holy Supper (Communion), and the Second Coming of the Lord.



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