

A Swedenborg Anthology



An explanation of words and terms used in
Swedenborg's writings



The Swedenborg Centre
Suite 3, 1 Avon Road
North Ryde NSW 2113
Australia
www.swedenborg.com.au

published in 2017

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***Anthology:** from the Greek 'anthos'
meaning 'flower-gathering' and 'logos'
meaning 'the study of, the word of, etc.'*

Note: A star * beside a word or phrase indicates it has its own heading and explanation elsewhere in this anthology. The back of this anthology contains a selection of references to source numbers in Swedenborg's writings.

Above

The spiritual idea of something being above something else lies in it being deeper, being more important or being closer to the Divine who is the source of life. Swedenborg says that people are created so that we can look upward or above ourselves, and also downwards or below ourselves.

Accommodation

All divine revelation will accommodate itself to the understanding of each mind receiving it, and make adjustment to this receptivity. This means that we will find ideas coming up in us as a result of hearing a truth, and these ideas will be on our level according to our state.

Acknowledgement

This key word is primarily used in relation to the Divine who is and who is to be acknowledged as the source of life. It expresses our relationship with God from whom we exist and on whom we depend for every aspect of our life. All angels continually acknowledge the Divine in their adoration and their dependence on the Divine source.

Actual Evils

Actual evils are choices we consciously make to speak or act against someone, knowing this is wrong. These stand in contrast to hereditary evils* for which we are not responsible. They can also be wrong thoughts or feelings we allow to remain in our mind. The worst kind of actual evils are those we allow, knowing that God tells us to deal with them.

Afterlife

The afterlife is the spiritual world into which all people immediately come after they die. After various adjustments in the world of spirits* each spirit is drawn to his ruling love which forms his love and use in the afterlife which is our eternal home.

Ancient People

The very first people had an open intuitive awareness of everything round them being spiritual and from heaven. They had innocence, they saw angels, they sensed their place in all creation and they lived in this unfolding trust that God is the giver of our lives.

Ancient Wisdom

Ancient wisdom was a knowledge of and appreciation of correspondence* that as above so below, as in heaven, so it is mirrored in forms here in the world. This wisdom became important as a reference point as people became more directly self-conscious.

Angels

Angels are spirits living in the spiritual world who love the Lord and serve other spiritual beings including those in this world. Angels are not a separate creation but were once human and during this stage went through the work of regeneration*. The fundamental purpose of divine creation is to create a heaven of angels from the human race.

Apocalypse

The apocalypse describes the ultimate sorting out of what is good and evil. It is presented in graphic imagery of wars, plagues, earthquakes and destruction. This is descriptive not literal. Spiritually, apocalypse is the process of separating what is good about us from what is evil, which is necessary so that we may live the way we love.

Appearances

In this natural world, things appear to be what they seem to our physical senses. Our senses take this to be the reality. The spiritual dimension sees past the appearance and understands the falsity or the distortion of reality that it presents. In the spiritual world everything appears far more as it really is.

Art

Art, in its widest sense, depicts beautiful things in which spiritual and Divine truths are expressed in a sensory way. Swedenborg sees art as the universal means for us to imitate Divine things, and adds that on our earth it is more important for art to be done than on other earths where spirits are by nature more internal.

Artfulness

Artfulness is pretence and deception, and it is artificial. It is counter to what heaven is, and those who simulate goodness in order to be in heaven inevitably show their true nature for what it is and are cast out. Whatever is done artificially closes the way towards interior things.

As Of Ourselves

This key idea runs throughout Swedenborg. We are recipients of life from the Divine yet our life must seem to us to be our very own so that we have freedom and we use reason in order to live as of ourselves. We are to do this while acknowledging that we receive our life every moment from the Divine.

Atheists

Swedenborg describes those who attribute all things to nature and who therefore do not acknowledge anything to the Divine. This may lead them to be self-centred or critical of spiritual and divine things but it does not exclude them from eventually coming into the life of heaven nor eventually the acknowledgement of the Divine.

Beauty

When outward beauty is seen and felt it is perceived to be beautiful because of its relation to good and truth both in the whole and in every part. Truth presents beauty in its form but it is good in the will which imparts it. Angels in heaven have ineffable beauty because they are forms of love and charity.

Birth (Physical)

Since God creates each new life, each birth lies at the heart of Divine creative love. Swedenborg shows the perfect correspondence between the formation and development of the embryo and the growing newborn child and the provision for later regeneration. The soul with its hereditary good and evil is implanted at conception.

Birth (Spiritual)

When a person reaches adulthood and rationality, he is then able to begin the process of regeneration and personal transformation from being one who is led by self to being one who lives to serve the Divine and his own fellow human beings. This is rebirth or being born a second time.

Blessing

Blessing is the Divine wish that all people are happy to eternity. The means of being blessed is to love to live the ways of God and to practise a life that is based on charity* and faith*. We, in turn, come to bless God for all his goodness to us.

Body

Our physical body serves us to be of use in the physical world. It does not correspond to our spiritual state. Our facial expressions correspond more to our spiritual state. When we leave this life, our spirit operates in a spiritual body which truly matches the kind of person we are internally, and this becomes openly manifest in the spiritual world.

Book of Life

Each person, by living, records all his actions and intentions without exception in his internal memory so that in the initial stages of living after death in the spiritual world these may be brought out for review and choosing. This book of life continues to be 'written in' to all eternity.

Celestial

Swedenborg generally uses this in connection with spiritual* and natural*. The celestial level is that which is most concerned with the Divine and with love. It is the inmost or deepest degree. Swedenborg also compares the celestial (immediately knowing that something is true) and the spiritual which involves understanding how something is true.

Charity

As spiritual beings created by God we are intended to seek the welfare of other people and to treat them as we would want them to treat us. More than this though, we are to consider people to belong to God and to look for what is of God in their life and behaviour. This is being charitable.

Checking ourselves

An important part of spiritual practice is to become aware of our overall state. This includes our trains of thought, our patterns of feelings and the reactions and responses which can dictate to us. This allows us to observe ourselves and where we see need to change we can then begin to work toward this. Swedenborg calls this daily repentance*.

Children in Heaven

When children die as children they immediately go to heaven because they have not reached adult maturity nor begun regeneration*. They have the innocence of children. They are put in the care of angelic spirits who bring them up and who help them to work through their own innate human tendencies. Yet they will always be in heaven.

Choice

While there are many things about us that we do not choose but receive, our personal choices, to intend, to believe, to act, or to choose to turn away from some wrong impulse are within our capability and freedom. In these things we have free will and we are to exercise our free will and take personal responsibility. As we do, we are led by the Divine.

Christ

Jesus Christ is fully God and fully human. His soul was Divine and he took on human life to go through actual temptations* and to overcome them in order to control hell and keep us in spiritual freedom. Jesus Christ is not the Son of God nor a second person in the Godhead, nor is he the atoning sacrifice but the redeeming aspect of God.

Christ's Resurrection

God became human and so he could be tempted. He overcame every temptation by his own conscious act of will. Doing this glorified his human life and made it divine. When Jesus rose from death, he did so with his whole being and even with his whole body. We, by contrast, rise in our spirit but leave our physical body here.

Church

While attending church can be of use and benefit to people, the real church is the spiritual state and life in a person. Swedenborg also uses "church" to describe the various periods in human spiritual evolution, as with the Most Ancient Church, the Ancient Church, The Jewish Church, Christian Church and New Church.

Communication

Our own spirit is already in association with spirits in the spiritual world and for the sake of equilibrium it is associated with both angels and evil spirits. This is for our freewill to be able to choose. Moreover, in heaven, it is normal for thoughts and affections to be openly shared with everyone there, bringing blessing and happiness by becoming known.

Communication with Spirits

Seeing how much of Swedenborg is about the presence of spirits with us, it is often thought that Swedenborg encourages spiritualism. If God brings about the contact between the spiritual world and us, this is an orderly thing, but if we initiate contact we do not know what kind of spirit may be keen to make contact with us, and this is the caution.

Community

The spiritual world is distinguished into countless communities, both heavenly and hellish, where those who have similar love and faith are together. The more perfect angels in a community are in the centre, those less perfect are round about. The position of a community in relation to another depends on degrees of similarity or difference.

Condemnation

Unlike some mainstream Christianity, there is no external condemnation to hell*. We may condemn ourselves by intentionally choosing to live against the laws of God, yet the will of the Divine is always to raise us up and to seek our fulfilment in the life we choose to live and practice. Swedenborg says that those in hell would not rather be anywhere else.

Conjugal Love

Swedenborg added an 'i' to the legal term 'conjugal' specifically to mean the spiritual in marriage between a man and a woman who base their relationship on the Lord. They look to the Lord to be present in their marriage and they love each other and experience the delights and joys of that because they each and jointly first look to the Divine.

Conscience

While Swedenborg sees some place for 'pangs of conscience' to prompt us, his main drive with conscience is that when we know what is true (conscience = 'with knowing') we are to live by this truth and to make it what we practise in our life.

Consciousness

Like many others, Swedenborg points out that we often live in a sleep-like state where we are not aware of spiritual thoughts or realities. This is not a fault but normal, resulting from living in a world of sense-impressions. We are also intended to have times of spiritual consciousness and to notice what such times as these bring us.

Contentment

While we can become content with our lot in life, be it small or great, spiritual contentment comes from believing that God provides everything we have and need. Our use of what we are given brings us into co-operation with God and establishes heaven's peace and innocence in us.

Correspondence

Correspondence is the relationship between the outer form and its spiritual meaning, and it is according to its use. The spiritual world and the natural world correspond, and forms here exist because their purpose exists there. Sacred text such as the Bible has outward form and inner meaning and the two are in complete correspondence.

Creation

Creation is the activity of Divine love and wisdom in bringing about a created world which appears to be outside the Divine but is in fact continually kept in being by the Divine by means of influx*. The purpose of Divine creation is to create others and to want to be one with them, from love for them.

Degrees

This forms a very key part of Swedenborg's account of reality. Degrees are the distinguishable levels between things such as spirit and body and heaven and earth. He describes degrees as discrete, meaning that there is an alteration in moving from one level to another level. Spiritual thought is discretely different from moral points of view.

The Devil

There is but the one source of all life which is the divine itself. There is no Devil, but there are 'devils' in hell* who have chosen their life's love. When, during deep temptation, there is an influence from the hells on us, this can form the notion or semblance of a personal devil in its assault.

Diversity

There are no two things exactly the same in creation. Diversity exists in divine creation because each created thing is its designated part in the whole. God loves to endlessly create yet another different thing. Swedenborg also describes how heaven is made increasingly perfect through its increasing variety or diversity.

Divine Activity

God's activity is always towards what has been created. There is a perpetual influx*, a flowing in to creation to give life and sustain life. In addition, God's all-knowing of everything about a person means that God, from love and wisdom, is constantly active for their eternal welfare.

The Divine Human

This term is about the connection of what is Divine with what is created and especially to what is human. Since the Divine Itself is beyond human comprehension, we see and know it from its visible forms which are the Word, the person of Jesus, the created world, the human body. These and other things express the Divine Human.

Divine Nature

Two things make the essence of God – love and wisdom, but three things make the essence of God’s love: his loving others outside of himself, his wanting to be one with them, and his blessing of them from himself. It is love that wants those three things – it is wisdom that brings them about.

Doctrine

Swedenborg used ‘doctrine’ quite specifically to mean the organised arrangement of spiritual teachings about the various aspects of reality. The benefit of doctrine is in its sequential coverage of these. In the language of correspondence, a city is an example of doctrine in that it has been constructed and works as an organic whole.

Doubt

Since we are beings experiencing life as our very own, doubt about spiritual realities such as eternal life, the loving kindness of God, or even that God exists, may sometimes arise. Swedenborg suggests that having such doubts is a normal and important part of our regeneration cycles.

Dreams

Swedenborg describes dreams to be a state in which influences from the spiritual world and behind those the divine influence can have access when our rational mind is asleep. The divine monitors this so that only heavenly influences can process what is in our mind, so that all dreams, including nightmares and disturbed sleep, can be used for healing.

Dying

Unlike the body, the spirit of a person does not die. The body passes through dying which is the cessation of its life at which point body and spirit separate. Swedenborg was allowed to go through the experience of dying, as a simulation of it, and spoke of layers being rolled away. There is a short duration after dying where the spirit is close to the body.

Ego

This modern term is not in Swedenborg, but its character gets extensive coverage. It is self-mindfulness and the love of oneself. It takes very many forms, some of which can become known to us and be worked on, and others remain unknown to us. It is important to put ego in the context of our *proprium** which is our sense of us having individual life.

Emotions

Swedenborg does not deal with general human emotions very much and he would link them to the activity of the *proprium** if he did. His focus is always on the central place of our *will** which is the prompting for all our actions and responses. He also refers to our affections and to the importance, for our spirit, of feeling delight.

End, Cause and Effect

This widely-known philosophical set is used spiritually by Swedenborg. Our 'end' is the love of our will because what we love and intend we seek to do and bring about. Our 'cause' is our reason and understanding, bringing us the steps by which we bring about what we love. Our 'effect' is what both of these produce, therefore these three co-exist.

Enlightenment

Perhaps because of his intense awareness of spiritual world influences on us, Swedenborg does not advocate us seeking our own enlightenment on what is true, but instead to acquire it through hearing and obeying what God reveals to us through the Word. This enters our mind and heart at a deeper and more consistent level.

Eternal Life

Swedenborg views eternal life in the spiritual world as the ultimate life. This life is preparatory for it, based on experience, personal choices and also the presence of such things as time and space which are conducive to the work of regeneration but which are of little or no effect in eternity.

Eternal Present

In this life now we are already living in the spiritual world so far as our inner life is concerned, in our intentions and thoughts. We are in association with spirits and angels whose states are similar to our current state. At death, as we transfer fully into the spiritual world, this becomes openly seen; for now it needs to be veiled from us as we live this life.

Eternal Progress

Each created soul is capable of making eternal progress. Yet it is more within the heavenly level that we feel is our home than beyond it in ever higher and higher regions. The divine creates each of us to be in the level of life and use that is required to exist for the divine purpose. Swedenborg says that 'height' is synonymous with 'internal'.

Eternity

Eternity is a word we use to describe the fact of the afterlife. It continues on without any stop to it. However, it is our states, not time, that we will experience in eternity. We will live forever but we will probably never think of it like that but find eternity in the intention and enjoyment of what we are currently doing now, and losing ourselves in doing it.

Evil

Evil is the inversion of what is good. It is basically to receive life from the divine, as all created beings do, yet to turn it primarily towards oneself, making our self the only focus. In the process of doing this, we engender fear, hatred and the love of dominating others. The state of hell* is based on evil and its various manifestations.

Evil suffering

Living in evils involves degrees of suffering but these are brought on by ourselves and are not sent to bring us punishment. Those who live in what is evil are following what they most love and this becomes their idea of heaven, and the opposite is seen to be hell. The suffering seems to be mostly the frustration and anguish of not getting your own way.

Evolution

While creation is the will of God, and in that sense does not evolve, the processes of creation do evolve so that one thing develops from a previous thing. Spiritually, this is the same with what takes place in regeneration as new states emerge out of the choices previously made. Creation and regeneration are parallel.

Externals

Externals are the expression of internals*. Internals are our intentions, loves, and states which, if not externalised, have little or no meaning. Yet externals without any internal can become dead, things of mere habit, and even hypocritical. Swedenborg says that the physical world and our activity in it forms the external plane of the spiritual world.

Faith

Faith is supremely our acknowledgement of God and what we believe this means. Swedenborg is clear that faith must include charity* and that both act together to be complete. For us too, it is helpful to link faith with faithfulness, to God and to what we do. Swedenborg is consistently opposed to faith-alone*: faith without charity and good works.

Faith-alone

Swedenborg's writings are very critical of faith-alone with its assumption based on literal Biblical statements that to believe in the sacrifice of Jesus dying for our sins, and in the atonement of man to God through this, is the one requirement for salvation, without any work on our part to live differently.

Family

The spiritual idea of the family is in the interaction between love and wisdom or good and truth with resulting use being like its child or children. Swedenborg also explains how family relationships – father, mother, brother, son and so on – represent various inner spiritual relationships and dynamics in us.

Fear

Raw fear is a destructive emotion which lies at the opposite end of loving. It is one of hell's most universal states and is the opposite of love. Even so, we are to have a fear of God or rather a fear for God which is a heavenly fear, an awe, a sense of what is sacred and holy and indeed some degree of fear that we might conceivably harm that.

Flow of Life

We best collaborate with the never-ending flow of life from the Divine. Swedenborg likens it to a stream which carries us along in its current and bears us up, adding that those who live within the stream are led by God to all that is good, whatever the appearance may be of the pathways along the way.

Forgiveness

God is forgiving of us because he loves us. Yet God's forgiveness is not a wiping out of our faults as if they did not exist, but putting them to rest so that we may be free from them and begin to live differently. For our part, we are to practise being forgiving generally and not dwell on specific happenings or people that we feel we have to forgive.

Forms in Nature

The natural world with all that is in it forms the mirror of all spiritual realities. Indeed, these exist because of that higher truth and natural forms originate in the spiritual world. Swedenborg describes how, in heaven, a truth is perceived and becomes represented in the world of spirits in a form. In our world it takes a permanent form to instruct our spirit.

Freedom

Human freedom or spiritual freedom to make choices is the gift of God that underpins our humanness. Freedom to act just as we like is not true freedom but is licence. True freedom is essentially to be led by God in all the ways we live, because this releases us from ourselves. “You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.”

Free Will

Our will* is what we intend doing or being. It is the core of our life. We have free will to determine what we will do and it is our personal responsibility to decide this. Swedenborg connects this free will with the work of Jesus Christ overcoming the hells during his life on earth, so that our free will is always maintained and is ours to use and act on.

Future

To the Divine, all things are known. To the divine, the future is the present and the present is eternal. Yet it is not like this to us. We are not permitted to see what the future will be, mainly because if we were to know this, we would misuse that knowledge and try to alter it for our own interests and this would always be contrary to the Divine order.

Generals (also see Particulars)

Swedenborg says that within every particular thing there is something general which is from the Divine influx into the whole of life. Those who are led by the Lord know and experience this; how, for example, all the innumerable delights and joys of heaven together bring an overall sense that to be in heaven is to have joy from the Lord.

Glorification

Swedenborg uses this word in relation to Jesus' life on earth. Glorification is the part of Jesus' development in which the Divine in him is strengthened and brought about. This took place through victories in overcoming his temptations. Parallel to this is 'exinanition' meaning an 'emptying' in which Jesus put away from him his merely human states.

God

God is the source of all life and God creates and maintains creation in existence. God is the divine and personal Being who is love and wisdom and who is all-knowing, all-present and all-powerful. The Divine Itself, being above any revelation of itself to man, is beyond human comprehension. Yet each of us is infinitely and personally loved by God.

Good

Swedenborg uses the word good specifically to mean love in action. This involves use* and the intention on our part to do what is good. We do what is good when the Lord, charity and faith are present in us. Good in Swedenborg's writings is linked closely with truth in a relationship which he calls 'the marriage of good and truth'*.

Good Works

These are about our life and what we do, and in particular what we do for others. Such things should be done without expectation, but done sincerely and well for their own sake, and when done, we are to move on from them. The Lord flows into good works and makes them love in action, and the person doing them receives celestial states in return.

Grace

Being in a state of grace is to feel God's forgiveness for our sins and to feel absolved. It is sometimes described as our unmerited forgiveness. Swedenborg speaks little about grace in this way and far more about the way in which divine influx* brings us into new states of faith and love as we take part in the daily practice of our regeneration.

Guilt

Guilt is an emotion that brings on negative feelings about ourselves. It is one of the emotions that hell makes use of to undermine our faith and trust in God's providence* and his care of us. While we may be guilty of many things simply by being human, we are not to dwell on them. Swedenborg helpfully says that while truth condemns, love is merciful.

Habitations of Angels

In the spiritual world, everything seen there is a representation of the state of the spirits there. This is a universal law. Angels live in magnificent houses which in general and in every detail correspond with the spiritual love and wisdom of those who are living there. The houses are given by God and are recognised by the angels as their home.

Happiness

Swedenborg distinguishes heaven's happiness from worldly happiness. In heaven, all happiness is felt from loving the Lord and being of use, living for the sake of others. It is also true that those in hell are 'happy' being there because the life there matches their self-centred love. If those in hell could be lifted up to heaven, they would feel tormented.

Harmony

Angels are particularly aware of the harmony of everything. They hear this in the harmony of sounds which please; they see this in the scenes around them; they experience this more interiorly in the truths they love, and they understand each and every truth to be collectively part of the divine design.

Hatred of God

Swedenborg talks about those who have a consuming hatred of God because he is the object of adoration of those who love what is good. Such spirits become incensed because they can understand that God exists and that God rules creation. Yet they cannot stand to hear God spoken of and even at the mention of God's name, they become infuriated.

Heaven

Everyone who sincerely lives by what they believe and who loves other people will be in heaven. Heaven is both a place and a state of life in a person. After dying and after being taught about divine life, a person who loves what is heaven is welcomed into heaven, where every spirit acknowledges God and lives to serve others for their sakes.

Hell

God never casts anyone to hell; a person casts him or herself there by having come to love evil, to hate heaven and God, and to knowingly make this their life's love. Those in hell are kept separate from those in heaven, as they would be continually attempting to destroy its order. God's government of hell is always to make it as orderly as possible.

Hereditary Evils

Through our ancestry and parentage we receive tendencies towards self-love. We are not responsible for having these in our nature, but we are required to work on them and manage them. They will always be there with us, but they can be softened. It is important to realise that through heredity we also receive good traits.

Heredity

While we acquire patterns of behaviour from early childhood, our heredity is a much deeper imprint on us than we receive from our parents. It forms part of the groundwork for our regeneration. Swedenborg says that our deepest heredity cannot be changed but that lighter or more external hereditary patterns can be.

Holiness

Swedenborg always sees holiness being mostly present in useful activities of life and not as something separated from life. Worship and adoration of God is holy when it leads on to personal regeneration and actively living one's life from a worship of God. Everything that exists is holy because it is from God.

Human Nature

Our nature by itself is self-centred. We may acquire or learn an ethic of good actions but our basic nature does not begin to be changed until we begin to undertake the work of regeneration. This involves turning from our evils as sins against God, and to begin to live a new life which is based on the commandments of God. This is daily repentance*.

Humour

Heaven's humour is not like humour in the world. It is gentle, light, affectionate and playful; with no wish to deride the other but introduced to lighten life and bring enjoyment through good humour. Swedenborg says that conjugally married partners occasionally tease one another, using such humour, in order to convey their love for their partner.

Ignorance

Swedenborg links ignorance with innocence* in that not knowing that something is evil is to not be accountable. This is how it is with very many people. Regeneration removes such ignorance and brings us into discernment of good and evil and makes us responsible for the choices and actions we practise and live by.

Illness and Disease

Disorderly and harmful activities in our bodies are largely the result of general disorderly spiritual states in the whole human race. This flows in from the hells. They can also be the result of our own disorderly life or predisposition at times. It is conceivable that if the human race became more spiritual that illness and disease would be largely eradicated.

Immortality

We will live for ever in the spiritual world after we die. While our body dies, our spirit is immortal and, without exception, continues to live. The purpose of this immortality is to give us eternal life, to continue to regenerate, to grow in more love for God, and to serve greater and increasing usefulness in the divine purpose of creation.

Imputation

To impute means to ascribe a quality to someone. Christianity has seen this in terms of Christ's sacrifice for us which is imputed to those who have faith. Swedenborg says that if faith is joined to what is good it imputes heaven but if faith is joined to what is evil it imputes hell. Our thoughts impute nothing by themselves; it is our will that imputes to us.

Individuality

We will always retain our individuality and who we truly are in the afterlife. This is because God creates beings who can come to love him in return and be in a reciprocal relationship. In this individuality, we are all different and unique, each of us serving a special use in the whole of heaven's activity.

Infancy

During the first years of our life the Lord plants experiences and memories which pass into our unconscious, which are essential for our later regeneration. They are called 'remains'* by Swedenborg because they remain with us, dormant. In childhood, such remains of both good and truth continue to be laid down. Remains continue to be given us in adult life but the deepest are those of childhood.

Influx

The whole of Swedenborg's theology is based on the teaching that Divine life flows into creation, maintaining it, and into each person on every level keeping them in existence and processing their spiritual states and their regeneration. So important is this principle of influx that, without it, the world of existence cannot be comprehended.

Innocence

Peace* and innocence according to Swedenborg are the two essential qualities that make heaven in us. Innocence is to be without guile or deceit, to be authentic, and to seek to not harm another person. Innocence is also to have complete trust in God to lead us in our life and, with our co-operation, to become angels in heaven.

Instruction

Those who come into the afterlife often come there with false notions about life and about God, derived from misplaced and untrue teaching in this life. This then requires varying levels of instruction as to what is true, or real, so that the nature of heavenly life can be given and with this new understanding, the life of heaven can be entered into and loved.

Integrity

Integrity means to be sincere in everything. It is probably best seen as an ideal for us to strive towards, because even angels acknowledge that they are imperfect and they continue to take part in self-examination and to repent of their evils. Yet, to be angelic implies the wish to live in integrity and with this wish, to do the work involved.

Intelligence

Intelligence is to perceive in our mind whether something is true or not. Spiritually it is to know and understand Divine truths, and to come to have faith in them. Wisdom* lies further, in willing and loving these truths and in living by them. Wisdom is from heaven's light and intelligence is from the world's light illuminated by heaven's light.

Internals

Our internals are our thoughts and intentions and also our understanding about and love for spiritual and divine truths and how these are to be processed by us. Swedenborg also points out that we have internals that we are aware of and those we are unaware of and which the Lord alone knows are there within us.

Islam

Swedenborg reveals that Islam, with its emphasis on there being but one God, is a provision of divine providence to counter the confusion in Christianity over the Trinity and tripersonalism, and in particular, the atoning sacrifice of Jesus to appease a God with whom mankind has a broken relationship. Those in Islam will be in their own heaven.

Israel

Israel signifies our spiritual life and regeneration. Israel, as the chosen people of God, is this spiritual life we enter into, having chosen it ourselves but in reality we are only able to do so because God has chosen us to have it. Israel has no other meaning than this.

Jealousy

While we can feel jealous which is merely a form of envy or suspicion, the phrase 'a jealous God' is about God's zeal* or his longing to save us. God is zealous. Swedenborg says that in marriage there is a good jealousy which is the care and attention and zeal to preserve and uphold the holiness of marriage love between two people.

Jehovah

Swedenborg says that Jehovah was the name for God among the most ancient people, and it is the sacred name meaning 'I am'. This expresses the lordship of God. Swedenborg says that Jehovah refers to the Lord's Internal or love itself which seeks to save everyone, make them eternally happy and to bestow on them everything of itself.

Jesus Christ

God came into this world in the person of Jesus Christ as a man. Jesus was not the son of God but God in his divine human. Jesus took on himself our human nature which allowed him to have temptations which he consciously and consistently overcame and by so doing he overcame the power of hell and redeemed* humanity, and made his human, divine.

Join

A join is when two things are put together to be as one thing. The idea of being joined is very important spiritually because it means being conjoined with God; he with us and we with him; our will and understanding which are to act in conjunction, and the relationship of marriage love called conjugal love*.

Joy

Joy is the good feeling which comes from loving and being useful. It is felt throughout heaven and it has countless ways of being expressed. Most of all, in heaven, it is felt from the joy of loving and serving the Lord. Joy is not a goal for us but a gift to us, and so we are intended to live and act well without seeking a reward, and then find ourselves joyful.

Judgment

God never judges anyone except from what is good; divine mercy and good can never condemn anyone, and if a person takes him or herself to hell, it is because the person has made this choice. We are not able to judge a person about his or her spiritual life because only God knows this, but we can and should judge the moral and civil actions of others.

Justice

God acts from justice in that he acts fairly and from what is right for each person. His justice comes from his mercy. God is justice itself. We may act from justice in upholding what is good, and true, and right. Spiritually, we act justly when we uphold these not from our own understanding but from our reception of God and our understanding of his will.

Kindness

Kindness comes from charity* which is about looking to what is inside a person and not what is on the outside, and about loving what is of the Lord in them. We can be kind and act kindly to other people, but if there is discord or domination, it is kind to end the relationship.

Kingdoms in nature

Swedenborg describes creation by the Lord to be arranged in three kingdoms: mineral, vegetable and animal kingdoms. These describe the growth of spiritual life and regeneration, the mineral kingdom being what is embedded in us first, the vegetable kingdom being the living truths we acquire, the animal kingdom our affections and actions.

Knowledge

Knowing things just from a love of knowing and without the desire to make this useful is a trap for people and can lead them into pride and even deception. After death, when what is not truly ours falls away from us, such people become confused. Yet knowing the essential truths of spiritual life is important because everything else is built upon this.

Last Judgment

The idea of a last judgment has been seen as the time ahead when all things will be judged by God and brought to their proper outcome. For Swedenborg, the last judgment has already happened, involving the re-ordering of the spiritual world* anew so that its influence here is corrected. Part of this is the new provision of truth through Swedenborg.

Leading

The Lord is leading us continually for our salvation. He does this in many ways, most of which are not known to us. When we have been regenerated* we are led by the Lord by means of good and less so by truth. Everyone in heaven is led in this way, by the Lord's good. If we keep being led by truth, our thought leads us rather than our will.

Life

Swedenborg talks about us being recipients of life from God who alone is life, and adds that if we think we are our own life then we are claiming to be God. Swedenborg's constant point about life is that when we think and then will something, such as to live by the commandments of God, we actually do that; we live it and put it into practice.

Life after Death

In experiencing the spiritual world, Swedenborg met very many spirits with whom he talked and discussed meaningful things. Some of these were known to him when they were in this life. Without exception, it seems that whatever lay in their heart during their life in the world, it was this which became manifest when they entered either heaven or hell.

Light

Swedenborg says that spiritual light or seeing and understanding what is true comes to us from the Lord. In receiving the Lord in ourselves, we come into divine light. This is how it is in heaven too, where everything is filled with light. Even so, heaven's light also comes from what is good, because every truth has what is good at its core.

Lord

The word Lord, instead of God, describes the sovereignty of God over all things in heaven and on earth. For us, addressing God as Lord acknowledges his sovereignty over us and that we are dependent upon him for all that we are and have in our existence. It is important that we relate to the Lord as our Lord, more than as God, because it is personal.

Loss

We go through temptation* but it can be one of two kinds, a natural temptation and a spiritual one. A natural temptation might be to act dishonestly in some way, but because of the fear of the loss of our reputation, we do not do it. A spiritual temptation such as to give in to some bad thought, leads to fearing the loss of faith and charity, and thus salvation.

Love

Love is our life and love is our whole being. We intend doing what we love, and we do it. After death we will follow what we love in a natural and spontaneous way. Genuine love is loving others beyond ourselves and wanting to be one with them. This is the nature of Divine love which creates and maintains the whole of existence and our whole life.

Love and Wisdom

God is infinitely loving and infinitely wise. God's wisdom is in knowing how we are best loved according to our state and our reception or not of God's love for us. Love and wisdom are distinct but they are not separate. God's wisdom is in knowing all things perfectly, being present in everything and being powerful to act and bring things about.

Love of Country

Swedenborg describes how our neighbour is to be seen on several widening levels. One of the highest is our love of our country. This is a spiritual love rather than a patriotic feeling. In loving our country we want its welfare and safety and we keep its laws and find our way of contributing to its provisions by being a useful person in it and to it.

Male and Female

Generally speaking, it is more of a male approach to perceive things from understanding them and it is more of a feminine approach to perceive things from loving them. Our understanding generalises and sees concepts in ideas. Our love sees their place and value and wants to bring them to fruition and use.

Man

Swedenborg suggests that everything that is created has been so created to lead to the creation of people. People can conceive about God, reason about existence and be able to choose the life that leads to heaven. This is the divine purpose, to create beings who can respond to the divine.

Marriage

The marriage of a husband and wife is the correspondence of the spiritual 'marriage of good and truth'* which is the basis of human regeneration. In a loving marriage, each partner gives to and receives from the other. The husband represents both truth and good and the wife also, yet the nature of each partner's good and truth is different and distinct.

Marriage of Good and Truth

Swedenborg uses this phrase extensively, that the relationship between good and truth operates like a marriage. Everything in creation is a form of this marriage. The relationship is not static but dynamic. Good leads us to search for truth, and truths stand independently of our changes of state, so that we can see them and then bring them into good in life.

Matter

There is nothing which is outside divine influx and creation. Matter or physical substance, appears inert but is an active part of the divine creation, the densest level of divine life. God creates all things from out of himself. In the spiritual world there is the appearance of matter but this is not physical but spiritual substance. Swedenborg saw that matter is ultimately energy, not material.

Memory

We have two memories, an external and an internal memory. Our external memory is for life in this world, but at the same time we are developing our internal memory which is built up from affections and thoughts and is for life in the spiritual world. In that world we will gradually put aside our external memory but when needed it can be brought back.

Mercy

This is the essence of God's love, for everything God does is always done from divine mercy. The Lord has mercy on all people in whatever situation they are in and his whole action on their behalf is out of mercy for them. His mercy is especially for those in spiritual temptations and who believe it is from the Lord's mercy alone that they are saved.

Merit

Merit means doing good for the sake of a reward for doing it. If this is happening, it is a natural wish not a spiritual one. It is to do good but not from the Lord but from oneself. As all good and truth are from the Lord and none to people, it means that all merit belongs to the Lord who saves those who do good from him.

Mind

Our mind works on several levels but is always directed from what is higher. The natural mind is in things known and also imagined and in natural affections. The rational mind is interior and has knowledge of moral and spiritual things and also an affection for these. This flows into the natural mind, views things there with sight, and judges and concludes.

Mindfulness

The word that Swedenborg uses for this is our conscience*. This is our mind being aware of what it understands to be true and good and thereby acting accordingly. Practising this will lead us into greater conscious mindfulness.

Miracles

Swedenborg tells us that miracles are not allowed in this time of freedom and reason because miracles compel people to believe and take away a person's freedom. This could also lead to profanation* if a person believed and later rejected the belief. All our reformation and regeneration takes place in us being in freedom.

Morality

We are intended to live a moral life which is one of careful and good activity in our dealings. In living such a life, we lay the foundation for becoming more spiritual because the divine commandments are those of a moral life which is now acknowledged to be coming from God and not only from ourselves and society.

Motivation

All motivation comes from a love for what is wished to be done. One of Swedenborg's approaches to help this is in saying that while we should not be compelled to act, at certain times we should be prepared to compel ourselves. The purpose of this is to arouse the will into a new endeavour. In reality, all motivation and endeavour is from our will.

Mutual Love

Those who are in heaven have mutual love to each other and it is this which makes angels as it were one united group. Mutual love comes into being when a person withdraws from loving themselves and as they do this, that person receives heavenly love which is mutual love, and this is the wish to serve all others.

Nationality

Swedenborg describes the characteristics of various nations and how each nation appears to show a quality. Some of these are European countries. In addition to this, Swedenborg says Africans have a celestial mind which is open to the Lord and heaven, and they are receptive of truths because they immediately love what is true.

Nature

The natural world with everything in it is full of correspondences to our spiritual life, especially to the patterns and work of regeneration. Swedenborg takes the three kingdoms of nature – mineral, vegetable and animal – and shows that their general correspondence is interrelated, being knowledge leading to truth which then leads to affection and use.

Neighbour

Our neighbour according to Swedenborg is the Lord himself. When we love other people, we are to love what is of the Lord in them rather than just the person. This is true of everything that Swedenborg describes as our neighbour: the society in which we live, the country we are part of, the religion we endorse, and the kingdom of heaven.

Newly-Arrived Spirits

When we die we first come into the world of spirits*. The purpose of this is to make the transition from this life to eternal life. It is a gradual but inescapable process in which our first state is to live from our external life. As our true state emerges, the second state is to live openly from our internals. The third state is for instruction and preparation for heaven.

Newness

Being made new is at the heart of spiritual life. Regeneration itself is to do with everything which makes us a new person, through examining ourselves and turning from previous loves and thoughts, through seeing new truths which create a new will in us which comes from the Lord. This new will is then to lead us to take up a completely new life.

Old Age

Swedenborg describes old age as a time when we come into the innocence of wisdom which comes from a long experience of life and regeneration. It is based on trust in God and a gentleness of spirit. Those who die old and worn out with age will return to the prime state of their life in the spiritual world, and to grow old in heaven is to grow young.

Opposites

Things that are in opposition to each other such as heaven and hell or the love of self and the love of God and of our neighbour show that what is opposite serves its appointed place and use. As we turn from some evil because we see it as a sin against God we will then become open to the good that is the opposite of the evil we discovered in ourselves.

Order

The establishment of an order within creation runs through Swedenborg's coverage of divine activity. There are many orderly laws of providence by which the Divine governs all things and which the Divine cannot transgress. A good example of order is our awakening after death and the processes by which we are led to become spirits in the spiritual world.

Other People

While charity* and the neighbour* focus on other people, Swedenborg specifically describes how each person is under the Lord's love and wisdom in their regeneration, how each person is created to serve a particular use in the divine design, and how the love of dominion over others is one of the worst forms of hellish influence.

Other Worlds

There are three instances in Swedenborg's spiritual writings where he describes the qualities of living beings on other planets. Some are planets in our own solar system, others are those beyond. A universal point to them all is that while they vary in their qualities, they all have a knowledge of the one God of heaven and they worship God.

Particulars (also see Generals)

Swedenborg says that each thing known or understood or acted on is something specific and particular. These are vessels* into which Divine influx comes in order to include them and arrange them in the general whole. Each particular thing makes no difference, provided that it looks to one end which is to love the Lord and the neighbour as oneself.

Partners

Each person is intended by God to be with a partner in an eternal soul-mate relationship. We are still male or female in the spiritual world and to be joined to a soul-mate is to become complete. Swedenborg describes how such pairs appear from a distance to appear as one angel while closer up they can be seen as two who are mutually together.

Peace

Truly spiritual peace becomes part of our being when we develop other spiritual practices such as trust in life and in the Divine, love towards other people and an understanding that individually we are part of a greater design. Such things bring us peace which Swedenborg says is at the very heart of heaven and along with innocence, makes heaven.

Perception

The most ancient people had a spiritual perception of their existence and environment. Swedenborg says that perception is an intuitive knowledge that something is true and good and that this comes from the Lord who is with the person. Those who do not have perception can be governed by their conscience which involves personal reflection.

Perfection

In our regeneration we find new areas in ourselves that need to be worked on and brought under control. This will be the case for all eternity and therefore regeneration continues for ever as we are continually made more perfect. Angels understand this, how, without the Lord's help, they would fall back into their proprium*, or a life viewed only from oneself.

Personal Growth

In describing the process of regeneration Swedenborg says that the Divine regenerates us, not ourselves. Our part in the regeneration process is to live according to the divine will, and as we do this, we become able to be regenerated, and we will experience our own personal growth, feeling that this is our doing but acknowledging it is from the Divine.

Personality

God creates each person to have their designated place in the spiritual world. Each one of us is a unique personality. We have this personal identity, Swedenborg says, mainly by means of our heredity* and, through the work of regeneration, we will develop our personality towards what God intends us to become and for which he has created us.

Power

All angels know and understand that all the power they have to do anything is not from themselves but from the Lord alone. If they were to come to believe that they themselves have power they would immediately become powerless. We are only able to turn away from evils by means of the Lord's power on our behalf, for which we are to ask.

Prayer

Prayer is in essence talking with God. Swedenborg describes this producing a response from God into our thought as an answer to what is being prayed about, bringing revelation and also hope and confidence. Those who pray merely piously or in desperation give prayers that are not heard by God because their prayer is not from their hearts.

Presence

The Divine is all-present in everything. God is present with every person, angel and spirit in whatever state they are. When we respond to the Divine and acknowledge its presence with us, presence becomes closer conjunction, and the Divine, from being received, can work with us more directly and powerfully.

Profanation

To profane something is to abuse it in an opposite and wrong way. Sacred objects are profaned when they are misused. Swedenborg especially uses the word profanation to mean a deliberate and known misuse of spiritual truths and their good. He warns against the dangers of such profanation and describes the various levels of their severity.

Proofs

Swedenborg says that it is according to divine order that proof about what is true is not allowed to us. If it could be finally proven, we would take credit for this and that would be contrary to order. A spiritual person confirms in himself or herself that something is true and is then meant to live according to that personal confirmation.

Proprium

This term was coined by Swedenborg to mean our sense of having our own life. In this sense it is simply a neutral word for what is our ownness. Yet, because of this, we can become led by the illusion of our life being ours, and then proprium becomes a problem. Swedenborg says that through regeneration we can come into a truly heavenly proprium.

Providence

Providence is the way in which the Lord constantly governs everything. It is there in every moment of life and in every circumstance. We cannot put ourselves outside divine providence which seeks in countless unknown ways to bring us into heaven. Providence will continually work to lead us toward this, but even so, we are unaware of its activity.

Psychic Powers

Because we are spiritual beings we are open to some of the more direct experiences of spiritual life. These include sensing another person's state and having insights which take us at times into a visionary state. Swedenborg emphasises the importance of our personal freedom and the disorder and possible harm from dabbling with too much psychic activity.

Quality

Swedenborg uses the word 'quality' to mean whatever is within a person. For example, he says that each person has their understanding of the Lord according to their own quality. He also describes how in the spiritual world our inner quality becomes openly seen and recognised through such things as our voice tone, our facial expression, and our sphere.

Quiescence

When we become a spiritual person our natural desires and evil tendencies are not taken away as if they had never existed. They are only removed and made quiescent or dormant so that they no longer disturb us. Yet they are preserved so that when there is the need for us to view aspects of ourselves for some purpose, they can be re-presented to us.

Rationality

Our human ability to reason is important in developing our understanding of spiritual truth. It forms the bridge between natural concerns and spiritual understanding, and is important in our regeneration. Even so, mere reasoning from our human perspective about what is true can lead us to mock the idea of God and spiritual life being from God.

Redemption

To 'redeem' something is to buy it back. Redemption is specifically the work of the Lord during his life on earth to undertake the work of overcoming the hells so that their power became limited and controlled. This provides us with spiritual freedom. Our salvation* becomes possible because we are redeemed, and we work on changing our life.

Re-formation

This is a further part of our regeneration in which our mind needs to acquire a completely new and different understanding of life being from God, and so be re-formed. While re-formation is taking place, we tend to see this as knowledge, yet the seeds of real regeneration and of willing what we know, require this period of being re-formed.

Regeneration

Since our first state in life is to love what is evil because we love ourselves, regeneration is the whole process of transforming this to become the love of what is good and true, the love of serving, the love of others, and supremely, the love of God. Regeneration is not a linear pattern but a spiral one, as we come to see further areas in us to be regenerated.

Relationships

As individual people we are involved in relationships with other people. Everything about spiritual life, our beliefs and our will to live the life which God invites us to live, is focused on taking care in our relationships and managing them from our spiritual understanding. This applies to close relationships, forming friendships and dealing with people generally.

Religion

Swedenborg says that all religion is to do with life and a religious life is in doing what is good. Religion is the worship of God and it involves the discipline of living by the teaching of the religion we have. Everyone who follows their religion and lives by its truths is able to be received into heaven after death.

Remains

What Swedenborg calls 'remains' are states in our life, of what is good and what is true, which are given to us or planted, especially in the first years of our lives. These are like seeds in our minds and they remain with us, even though we may be unaware of them. They are crucial for our work in regeneration and without them it would be all up with us.

Remorse

This is a false idea involved with repentance*. Remorse is an anguish felt about past errors and it comes from pangs of conscience about such things. The difficulty is that such moments do not involve actual change but only realisation and regret which eventually passes. It does not lead to genuine repentance and the beginning of a truly new life.

Repentance

Swedenborg closely links repentance with our regeneration and our need to regularly examine ourselves and recognise aspects in our life which we now see are against God's wish and from which we need to be freed. We are to seek God's help in doing this, which we do as if by ourselves, and we are to begin to live a new life as the result of this activity.

Representatives (also see Significatives and Correspondences)

Water is a perfect correspondence of truth in the way that water is. Something is a representative rather than a correspondence when it serves and represents a use or position. So, a king represents the Lord's kingship and kingdom whether he is a good or evil king. It is like this with all representative things.

Resurrection of the Body

Swedenborg gives extensive treatment to our resurrection after we die and says that our spirit is gradually withdrawn from our physical body, separating the two. Our spirit will live in the spiritual world for ever. This is completely different from the religious teaching that our physical body will eventually be resurrected and live in the kingdom which is to come.

Resurrection of Jesus

Seen historically, the resurrection of Jesus is the inevitable outcome of Divine work in overcoming evil and the influence of the hells at that time. Jesus, being Divine yet also being human, accomplished this to the point of physical death. Divine life is perfect love which itself cannot die. Jesus' resurrection was in his physical body now made divine.

Reunion in Heaven

Heaven is the eternal state in which our love has complete fulfilment. This being so, those we love are part of us, and after we die, we will be reunited. However, such reunion can only be mutual and from heavenly love, and if in heaven, we find discord between us, then we will each go our separate ways. Where there is genuine mutual love, there is reunion.

Revelation

One of the things the Divine must do, and does, is to reveal what is true. This, for us, is the Word or Scripture, the coming of God as Jesus Christ, and the created universe. God also reveals himself to us individually, through things we understand, feel and experience. Swedenborg adds that there is a universal flow into human minds that there is a God.

Reward

The paradox about reward is that while we are to do good without expecting some reward from doing it, we are rewarded. Swedenborg uses words such as affection and delight in this context. When we do what is good from our affection for it and from the delight in doing so, these become our reward. This is clearly different from seeking merit.

Rituals

The purpose of all ritual is to express spiritual truth in a recognisable visible form. In this way, ritual serves an important use. Even so, because a ritual is an external representation, there is the possibility of itself being thought to be holy, rather than it pointing us towards our internal understanding of what is holy and of God.

Ruling Love

Each of us, while we live in the world, develops a ruling love or a love which is ruling everything about us. We cannot know what this is. This love is either heavenly or hellish. Swedenborg makes it very clear that after we die and we are in the spiritual world, our ruling love, developed here, will be what we follow and are driven by.

Salvation

The origin of the word salvation is to do with being rescued. The spiritual idea of this is that we are brought out of our various negative states by the Lord, our Saviour. This is not a once-only experience but an ongoing one. God seeks to save us and bring us into the life which leads to heaven, and finally to heaven itself. All angels acknowledge this.

Second Coming of Christ

Traditional Christianity looks, in various ways, to a time when Christ will come again and fulfil the literal statements of scripture. Swedenborg says that the second coming of Christ is a spiritual coming, to people individually and to a new spiritual awareness in this world. He says that his writings form a primary part of this general second coming.

The Self

The nature of the self is that we are each created by God to fulfil some intended part of the Divine purpose. We did not exist before our physical birth, and we will exist to eternity being the person whom we are, altering only the quality of our self through the work of regeneration.

Self-examination

In order for us to be able to change the way we are, we must become involved in careful self-examination. This is to help us become aware of ways in which our loves and our life are not in line with the will of God. Swedenborg says that such self-examination should be undertaken regularly and that a detailed search should only be done occasionally.

Sexuality

We will continue to be male and female in the afterlife and to take part in sexual activity as well. This is because of the correspondence of the two sexes being the 'marriage of good and truth'*. Part of sexual activity in this life is for the sake of procreation, while in the afterlife it is for the shared experience of love and of giving of oneself to the other.

Significatives (also see Representatives and Correspondences)

Swedenborg says that in the scriptures each word signifies something. This is especially the case with names of people, names of places and in the use of numbers, each of which has its own signification. This is different from correspondences in which all things about it are part of the full correspondence. When something signifies, it is appointed to do so.

Singulars (also see Universals)

Swedenborg says that Divine Providence is universal but it is working in the most singular things of thought and life. The Lord does not only have a universal care but a singular care for all. He also says that with scripture, every word and general idea contains a thousand singular things and that each of them illustrates the universal truth of it.

Sleep

While we sleep we relinquish our control of our mind and spirit. This enables spirits with whom we are associated to restore our mind and spirit and bring it into divine order. Because during sleep we are unconscious, Swedenborg also says that sleep represents the state of being unaware of spiritual things in being immersed in worldly concerns.

Space

There is no set space in the spiritual world, but there is the sense of spaciousness as here. This comes from the way in which we are attracted to and drawn by people and situations we either feel an affinity with or a distancing from. Both heaven and hell appear spacious and limitless, and each of them is for ever able to receive those who choose to be there.

Spheres

In this life, we can become conscious of the sphere that emanates outwardly from other people. This can be a general sphere or a particular one at a certain time. In the spiritual world, with the loss of physical life, this becomes enhanced and angels are capable of recognising the true state of a person in various ways as they encounter them.

Spirit

Our spirit is our true self within our physical body. It is eternal and it is the source of all our thoughts, our will, our feelings and our states of life. It has its own form which is our spiritual body that we are creating during this life. We will exist in this spiritual body after death, manifesting openly who we are and viewing the beauty or deformity of others.

Spirits

We are in association with spirits who exist in the spiritual world. We will eventually become one too. Swedenborg writes extensively about this association and says that we each have two angels and two evil spirits with us for the sake of equilibrium, and that as we change our loves and affections we become associated with other spirits.

Symbolism

This world in which we live is full of symbolism which Swedenborg describes as representations and correspondences*. This world is a mirror of spiritual realities and processes. In addition Swedenborg says that sacred text, dreams and mythologies are full of symbolic representations and that even the expressions we say tend to as well.

Temptation

Swedenborg describes temptations or temptation combats as an assault or an attack on what we spiritually have come to love. This is a divine permission, the purpose of which is for us to choose and be strengthened in our spiritual life. Yet all temptations involve some kind of attraction to them. Spiritual temptation offers us allurements to give it all up.

Thankfulness

Spiritually, all thankfulness or gratitude should be given to God who alone is good and who is the source of all the good we may do. A thankful life is part of a heavenly way of life and all angels feel joy and humility in giving their thanks to God. Swedenborg describes how angels become concerned when they are directly thanked. This goes against the grain.

Thought

We have many if not continual thoughts of various kinds and on different levels. While our thoughts appear to us to originate in us, Swedenborg says that both our thoughts and feelings come from us being in association with spirits of various kinds who pass on to us their loves and affections. We have the responsibility to choose between these thoughts.

Three States after Death

In describing the journey of the human spirit immediately after death, Swedenborg uses the model of there being three states or phases. The first is the short-lived sense of similarity to life in the world, along with external life. Fairly rapidly, our true internal states manifest. This is the second state. The third state after this is to be instructed for heaven.

Time

Time, like space*, is different in the spiritual world. Our measured time is non-existent, but there is the experience of sequences which each succeed one after the other forming a continuum. Yet, as here, the speed of these sequences is dependent on our love and delight at the time, or otherwise. Angels understand 'for ever' to be moment after moment.

Truth

Truth, or what is true, is a way of describing what is ultimately real. Spiritual truth, then, is centred on the Divine because everything comes from the Divine itself. In this sense, truth is the form of divine love and also how this love proceeds. For us, truth can be just the learning of spiritually-based teachings or, better, our receptivity to them as divine truths.

Understanding

This, in Swedenborg, is nearly always linked with our will*. Specifically, our understanding is our will given some form so that we may see it and consider it. Spiritually, our understanding of what is true is about things that are to do with faith* and our understanding of good is about things that are to do with love and charity*.

Universe

The created universe exists, Swedenborg says, as a means for the creating earths in which there may be created beings. God's love and wisdom are shown in the universe as in an image, but the universe is not God, but from God. Nothing in the universe exists in itself. Since the universe corresponds with everything in man, man is a kind of universe.

Unity

We have unity when our words and actions are in full agreement with our thoughts and our intentions and come from them. With the Divine, Swedenborg says that since the Divine is Love and Wisdom, everything from the Divine is 'distinctly one' because while love and wisdom are two things, they are united, love being of wisdom and wisdom being of love.

Universals (also see Singulars)

Swedenborg says that while it is true that the Lord governs all things universally, this has no meaning without the idea that the Lord governs each singular thing. He also says that every person who is living a spiritually-based life has the same shared universal aspects working within them, so that these are universally present in and among such people.

Usefulness

Being a useful person lies at the heart of all of Swedenborg's spiritual writing. He says, for example, that the kingdom of heaven is a kingdom of use. Everything that is created, including us, is in existence to serve an intended use and when we look towards the use that we can engage in we are grounding our life in a full and spiritual way.

Values

The ethical level of life in terms of right and wrong and what is important and unimportant is part of spiritual life. In regeneration we come to see that personal values and their subsequent decisions on our part are given to us by the Lord and that we are to form our values from our beliefs and even more from our complete dependence on the Lord.

Vastation

This original word in Swedenborg's writings comes from 'devastation' which means a full falling apart. Swedenborg uses vastation to mean both the way in which any false religion must come to an end before a new one can be born, and personally, when we are brought to feel despair about ourselves and in turning to God, we are then given comfort and help.

Vessels of Life

We, like all created things, are receptacles of life. We receive our life from the Lord; we do not live from ourselves, even though it appears to us that we do. This appearance is necessary for us so that we feel that we live in freedom. Swedenborg also uses the word 'vessels' to mean the specific things in our spirit and mind which receive Divine influx*.

Violation

Swedenborg uses violation in several ways: those who violate the Word are those who confirm its apparent truths to be genuine truths and who separate truth from good, and good from truth. He also applies violation to all forms of disorder and perversion that go against the principles of love in marriage, from adulteries to pure lusts.

Visions

A vision is an opening of one's inner sight to be able to see what is normally unable to be seen. These can be extraordinary. Spiritually, Swedenborg says that our inner sight is able to be opened up to see what is true, and that we gain perception of deep things and come into various kinds of personal revelation.

Wars

Wars originate from the love of dominion and from cruelty, which are diametrically opposed to charity*. They are permitted because mankind must live in freedom, and yet they are also under providence* in terms of their outcome. Spiritually 'war' is about our personal work in confronting what is within ourselves that is against the things of God.

Will

Our will is what we intend doing or being. It is our whole life and it is our affection about what we love. Swedenborg warns against making our will something abstract and separate from our life but to see it as our actual substance which is made for us to receive life from the Lord. In much of Swedenborg, our will is set alongside our understanding.

Wisdom

Wisdom essentially is about seeing what is true from a love for what is good. Learning and coming to know things introduce us into wisdom and into life. Swedenborg compares wisdom with intelligence which is not concerned with a love for what is good but with what is true because it is seen to be true. Wisdom perceives, and wills, and then does it.

Word of God

On one level, the Word of God is the Bible, which has within its text all its spiritual meanings. Swedenborg takes this further, saying that the Lord in fact is the Word, because he is divine truth and good which are in the Word and are the Word. When we live obediently to the Word we are part of the Lord's whole being.

Work

In life, work is everything we do and say and bring into activity. Spiritually, work is the activity of our love of what is good and useful and brought into activity from our understanding of what is true. These become saving good works when they come from faith. Work is also about the work of regeneration when we monitor and check our state.

World

There is the natural world and the spiritual world. The natural world exists from the spiritual world and everything in it has correspondence*. We live in this world so that we may come to live in the spiritual world to eternity. We depend on ideas that are to do with worldly things or which are analogous to them, in order to be able to think about spiritual things.

World of Spirits

When we die, we initially come into the world of spirits where our ruling love* will emerge openly and be manifest. In this way, and always according to divine order, we are prepared for coming into heaven or hell. The world of spirits is also part of the connection which exists from the Divine through the heavens and finally to us in this world now.

Worship

There are those who worship the Lord by meeting together to do so. Swedenborg says that this is helpful. His emphasis on worship is that it is more to do with living and practising our faith and our spiritual life in the way we live and take up the responsibilities which life brings to us. We then become someone who worships the Lord continually.

Youth

During our youth we learn about things and become rational and so we mature. This is preparation for becoming spiritual and receptive of Divine life. Swedenborg describes the stages of life from infancy through to old age and how they are analogous to the path of regeneration. He also says that in the spiritual world we return into our time of youth.

Zeal

Our love to do what is good because it is from the Lord is the source of our zeal or heartfelt wish to bring this into effect. Negative zeal is where we override the views and wishes of other people and demand that they agree with us. Divine zeal – which is the genuine meaning of ‘a jealous God ‘ – is the Lord’s wish to bring all people into heaven.

Related references in Swedenborg's writings

Title Abbreviations

AC	Arcana Caelestia
AE	Apocalypse Explained
AR	Apocalypse Revealed
C	Charity
CL	Conjugal Love
CLJ	Continuation of Last Judgment
Div Wisdom	Divine Love and Divine Wisdom
DLW	Divine Love and Wisdom
DP	Divine Providence
EU	Earths in the Universe
HH	Heaven and Hell
Life	Doctrine of Life
LJ	Last Judgment
Lord	Doctrine of the Lord
NJ	New Jerusalem
SS	Sacred Scripture
TCR	True Christian Religion

References

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This booklet contains helpful summaries of a selection of significant concepts and terms used by Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) in his theological writings.

These items have been lovingly crafted by Julian Duckworth whose aim was to remain brief yet remain true to the original ideas as expressed by Swedenborg.

These summaries have been sourced from numerous Swedenborg works. In order to retain simplicity of presentation and brevity, reference numbers to source materials are listed at the end of the anthology.

For source material references and in-depth study of these ideas, please consult Swedenborg's complete spiritual writings, which can be searched online, e.g. by using the very useful *New Christian Bible Study* website at <http://newchristianbiblestudy.org> or by referring to the extensive cross-reference contained in *The Swedenborg Concordance* (1888) by John Faulkner Potts.

Many other fine works are also available to aid further investigation such as the *Swedenborg Explorer's Guidebook* by Jonathan S. Rose and William Ross Woofenden (2008).