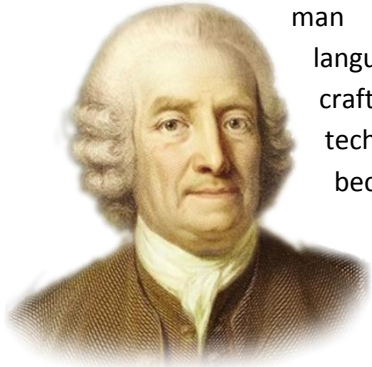


Swedenborg 1688-1772

The Scientist

Emanuel Swedenborg studied the major fields of human knowledge and became renowned throughout Europe as a gifted scientist. He was a very practical

man who spoke many languages and lodged with craftsmen to learn their techniques. He quickly became experienced in many jobs and worked primarily overseeing the country's mining operations. He assisted the king of Sweden and became a member of the Swedish parliament.



He wrote about his observations and deductions on what was useful to humankind, like metallurgy, magnetism and biology. He dealt with practical problems and was inventive. He is credited as creating the first rational design of an aeroplane that can fly (there's a model of it in the Smithsonian Institute). He built improved versions of several new instruments of his day, such as the microscope and telescope, and he designed a musical instrument and published a magazine on inventions. He also visited famous scientists and astronomers like the Royal Society members Sir Edmond Halley and John Flamsteed.

While Isaac Newton thought of atoms as tiny solid objects which could only be set in motion from outside forces, Swedenborg proposed that atoms consist of highly dynamic spinning components. This was 200 years before quantum physics confirmed it.

Quest to Understand the Nature of the Soul

Despite his long string of achievements, abilities and uses, Swedenborg's growing preoccupation was finding, understanding and demonstrating the existence of a soul. He considered our body to be an expression of the soul and felt the body might hold vital clues to the soul's structure. As he was not someone to do things by halves, he began a thorough study of anatomy, which led to his discovery of the function of the pituitary gland, the communication between brain hemispheres and other previously unknown body and brain functions.

Yet all this learning still provided no conclusive evidence of the soul. He tried another route and explored psychology (not yet a separate discipline in his day), using himself as his laboratory, noting and analysing his dreams and the states between sleeping and waking. This was a period of intense psychological growth for him. Although very good as preparation, the psychological approach was not leading to satisfactory answers on the nature of the soul. Finally, he tried yet another approach by perfecting his Hebrew to see what the Bible had to say about the soul.

A Momentous Transformative Experience

Swedenborg's life abruptly altered in his search for the nature of the soul. The change came when visiting London in 1745. He experienced a stirring psychic vision in which he encountered the Divine Creator offering him the ability to experience and explore the afterworld first-hand and interact with the people there so that its truth could become better known.

The True Nature of the Creator

During his travels through the various regions of the spirit world he gained a greater insight into the true nature of the Creator – a kind and loving God.



The Afterlife

Swedenborg was now given an 'access all areas' pass lasting several decades. He used his skills as a renowned science author to serve as science reporter of the spiritual world. While fully alive in our world he could simultaneously experience the spiritual world and interact with its people. Guided by its Architect, Swedenborg diligently documented the detail of the realities of the spiritual world.

"I have been permitted to speak with almost all whom I had ever known in the life of the body; with some for hours, with others for weeks and months, and with others for years, and this principally in order that I might have proof, and that I might testify it." Swedenborg, Heaven and Hell 437

Swedenborg conversed with many people in the afterlife, including Aristotle, Isaac Newton, and Martin Luther.

Swedenborg's accounts are vast in detail and profound in quality. His accounts remained consistent and coherent across decades of exploring. He published anonymously until he could no longer do so due to his spreading fame. Swedenborg's writing influenced many bright minds who came after him, such as Carl Jung, fuelling their own significant contributions to society.

Eyewitness Account to Places in the Afterlife

The difficulty with the Spiritual World is that there are not many extensive descriptions available to us of what exactly we can expect to find or do there. Some sources would be the *Egyptian Book of the Dead* and the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*.

A witness to a scene is able to convey what was seen to others, which can help make that event feel more real and believable to those who were not present. People who have had Near Death Experiences could be regarded as afterlife eyewitnesses. Swedenborg's writings provide a very detailed and complete, rationally consistent and useful description of the spirit world and how our life on earth affects our place in the afterlife. It is rare to find an eyewitness to the afterlife, but all the more valuable since this comes from one of the few men in history with an estimated IQ in excess of 200 and whose work is appreciated by many people that followed.

Revealer of Deeper Meanings

He also received the task of revealing the deeper meaning of the Bible during his 1745 encounter with the Divine.

"He had chosen me to explain to people the spiritual sense of Scripture, and that He Himself would explain to me what I should write on this subject." Swedenborg, *Journal of dreams*

He found his new experiences helped describe their inner meanings. This work led him to a rediscovery of the language of correspondences which connects the spiritual world with the natural world. Correspondences enabled ancient peoples to see spiritual meanings in the world around them and can significantly assist us in our spiritual growth.

Harmonises Science and Religion

Within his mind developed a harmony between his scientific understanding and his spiritual understanding so that his outlook is wholistic and provides a framework of meaning to our lives.

Swedenborg's Dynamic Life

His life provides many indications of living an abundant life. He worked on himself to overcome the weaknesses he saw through self-observation and self-examination. He was willing to undergo many hardships in his quest for truth. He was able to bridge the gulf between Religion and Science in his day. And he described a Christianity that made sense in which Jesus Christ shows us the way to our heavenly home.

Swedenborg's Writings

Swedenborg wrote 30 theological publications during his lifetime. Although he wrote in Latin his works have been translated into modern day language and are readily available.



If you would like to know more about Swedenborg there are many helpful resources available online. Here are 4:

Swedenborg Foundation: www.swedenborg.com

Swedenborg Assoc of Aust www.swedenborg.com.au

Videos: www.youtube.com/user/offTheLeftEye

Bible: <http://newchristianbiblestudy.org/>

Swedenborg's most popular work is *Heaven and Hell* – Things Heard and Seen in heaven.

The *Arcana Caelestia* is a 12 volume description of the deeper meanings of Genesis and Exodus.

There are excellent introductions to Swedenborg's works and ideas. Dr Wilson Van Dusen's books are highly recommended as a starting point.

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