

EMANUEL SWEDENBORG

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On January 29, 1688, two hundred and eighty seven years ago, Emanuel Swedenborg was born in Stockholm, Sweden. On or near that date, the people of the New Church celebrate his birthday. Why do we celebrate the birthday of a man who was born so long ago? We celebrate it because Emanuel Swedenborg was a special “servant of the Lord.” Even from his childhood, he was prepared by the Lord to do a wonderful work. Perhaps you already know what that work was. It was to write those great books known as the Writings of the New Church, or more properly, the Heavenly Doctrine of the New Jerusalem.

These wonderful books are really an opening up of the Word—an opening up of the Old and New Testaments. They are indeed the spiritual meaning within the Word. Swedenborg tells us that what he wrote he received directly from the Lord while he was reading and meditating on the Word. What he wrote is indeed a part of the Word, for Swedenborg was a revelator—even as Moses, Isaiah and Matthew were revelators. You see, a revelator is a person who receives a Divine message from the Lord, and writes it down so that it can be read by anyone.

Swedenborg’s revelation was by far the longest of all revelations—much longer than those of the men whom the Lord used to write the Old and New Testaments. The Writings given through Swedenborg are now published in thirty separate books. You have probably seen some in your home. Each one has its own title. *Heaven and Hell*, *Conjugal Love* and *The True Christian Religion* are the names of three of them. Can you list the names of some of the others? See how long a list you can make. Each one is an additional book of the Word.

You may be interested in knowing that Swedenborg did much of the writing of these books in the study of his home in Stockholm, and in warm weather he wrote in his little summerhouse in his back garden. The lawn of this garden was divided by paths into four parts. The paths met in the center where there was a small pavilion or large trellis in which were seats. On the right there were beautiful fruit trees and rows of vegetables, and on the left there was a rose garden and a large brass wire cage full of song birds. At the center, in the rear of the garden, there was the summerhouse you see in your picture. On the path that led to the right was a curious three—sided building with three double doors facing the garden. Inside was a mirror, and when the doors were opened, there were three gardens reflected in the room. Swedenborg called this his “other garden.” On the left at the rear of the garden was a maze made out of boards. Now a maze is a complicated network of passageways in which it is

very hard to find your way out. Swedenborg had this built to amuse the children who visited him.

Swedenborg loved children and usually had little cakes and sweets in his pockets for them when they visited him. There is one charming story about Swedenborg and a little girl named Greta. Greta knew that Swedenborg could see and talk with the angels. He was able to do this because even while he lived on earth, he was also living in heaven. You see, his spiritual eyes and ears had been opened. But Greta didn't know about needing to have your spiritual eyes opened to see angels. She often begged Swedenborg to show her an angel. One day he finally told her he would. He led her to a curtain, stepped aside and said, "Now you shall see an angel." He pulled the curtain back, and behind it was a mirror. Who did little Greta see?

We have told you something about the man Emanuel Swedenborg. He was a good and useful man who did a special work for the Lord. But still he was just a person like we are. His special work of writing down the Heavenly Doctrines given him from the Lord was a noble use. Now you can picture him in his garden, busily writing down these new truths from the Lord, in his summerhouse. In that summerhouse great things happened. The two worlds, the spiritual world and the natural world, met. They met in the mind of Emanuel Swedenborg—servant of the Lord. This is why we of the New Church like to honor him on his birthday.