



Lesson Overview

1. Read

Swedenborg ushered the light of new truth from the Lord into the world. What is his legacy?

2. Investigate

Choose one article to read, pp. 3-6.

3. Discuss

What is the impact of Swedenborg's life on the world, or on your own life? pp. 1-2.

Emanuel Swedenborg

Emanuel Swedenborg was, truly, one of Europe's great minds; and it is to this that we can attribute the success of his mission as a teacher and philosopher of the Spirit.... Spirit needed a vehicle through whom they could open the eyes of men and women to the realities of spiritual communion and communication, without creating a cultural or theological shock. Emanuel Swedenborg was that vehicle. He was an expert in mine engineering, metallurgy, astronomy, physics, zoology, anatomy, and political economics. He was, also, a military engineer. Above and beyond this vista of intellectual accomplishments, Swedenborg was best known as an astute Biblical theologian. *Arthur Conan Doyle*



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Swedenborg's Legacy

FaithBuilder 4 | Lesson 17 | Emanuel Swedenborg

How Has the Last Judgment Impacted the World?

The Lord's coming on earth and the establishment and spread of Christianity changed the world. Christian ideals were used as a basis for civil laws; civilization grew and blossomed. Over time the church placed more emphasis on faith and less on living a good life. As a result, the hells in the spiritual world grew so large that they blocked the light of heaven and it became difficult to see it.

In order to restore the balance between heaven and hell, and the human freedom to choose between doing good and evil the Lord revealed Himself again through His servant, Emanuel Swedenborg. Swedenborg's first work, *Secrets of Heaven*, or *Arcana Coelestia* (1749-1756) was published shortly before he witnessed the last judgment in the spiritual world. In 1758 he published *The Last Judgment*. The subtitle of the book says, "All the predictions in the book of Revelation are at this day fulfilled from things heard and seen."

Today we will look at the question, "Has the Last Judgment Swedenborg witnessed had a visible impact on the world?" or, to put it another way, "What is Swedenborg's legacy?" We will take both a sweeping look at world events and trends since the last judgment, and at a few of the many men and women whose lives and work have been influenced by him, and so have influenced countless others.

Investigate

Choose one article on Swedenborg's Legacy (pp. 3-6) to read. Read the article.

Discuss

Choose questions for discussion.

1. What caught your eye in your reading?
2. What changes have taken place in society since Swedenborg witnessed the Last Judgment in the spiritual world in 1757?
3. In what ways is society better today than it was before 1757?
4. How are the ideas of any one individual important in society? What effect can one person have on the world?
5. What is Swedenborg's legacy in your own life?
6. How could knowing Swedenborg's work as a revelator change the lives of others you know?

7. What *new* religious concepts were revealed by means of Swedenborg's Writings?
8. Most churches with a written legacy were founded by dynamic leaders. Moses (who wrote the Old Testament) was a charismatic leader. When Jesus was on earth, crowds followed Him everywhere. In contrast, Swedenborg was a famous scientist but not a dynamic leader. He spoke with a stutter and did not make public speeches. He gave all credit for his work as a revelator to the Lord (see *True Christian Religion* 779, at right). What impact, if any, has this had on the New Church?
9. How have Swedenborg's ideas transformed world thought?
10. When people learn about the New Church, how important is it for them to learn something about Swedenborg, the revelator?
11. Does learning about Swedenborg's life and his amazingly productive scientific career change the way you think about him as a servant of the Lord? (He gave up a major career in order to devote his life to the new revelation. Compare this with someone like Steve Jobs giving up his work.)

Emanuel Swedenborg 1688-1772 | Biography

Emanuel Swedenborg was born January 29th, 1688 in Stockholm, Sweden. His father was a clergyman and professor of theology. Swedenborg grew up in an intellectual environment and was exposed to academic dialogue from an early age. As a child, he had a hunger for learning. This characteristic would prove to be a lifelong trait. His self-directed program of education led him to master virtually all the known sciences by the time he reached middle age. He held a seat in the Swedish house of Nobles for fifty years, served as the king's engineering advisor, and gained a reputation as one of the foremost intellectual giants of the age.

Despite his expansive scientific exploration, Swedenborg wasn't satisfied with a purely physical approach in his quest to understand the universe. In particular, he wanted to unravel the nature of the soul. Based on his conviction that all matter in the universe is fueled by God's creative life force, he shifted his focus to writing about the relationship between physical life and spiritual life. Soon after starting this work, he began to have vivid dreams and visions of an otherworldly quality. In response, he undertook a meticulous study of the Bible.

A year later in April, 1745, something happened that would change Swedenborg's life forever. He was divinely commissioned to be the means through which God would further reveal Himself to humanity. So began Swedenborg's life as a spiritual revelator. His remaining twenty-seven years on earth was spent in regular contact with the spiritual world. Swedenborg's experiences are recorded in a series of theological publications, referred to by the New Church as the Writings or Heavenly Doctrines. These volumes bring to light the Bible's inner meaning, explain the nature of heaven and hell, teach about heavenly marriages, and provide guidelines for spiritual growth. Through Swedenborg's theological works, we have access to an unprecedented knowledge about God and the workings of the universe. These Writings form the foundation of the New Church and lead thousands of people in the quest to become better human beings.

Swedenborg died on March 29th, 1772. In the centuries since his death, his Writings have influenced progressive thinkers of every generation. He has been called 'The Buddha of the North' by D.T. Suzuki and inspired the likes of Karl Jung, W.B. Yeats, and Helen Keller. In essence, Swedenborg taught that "All religion relates to life, and the life of religion is to do good." He promoted religious tolerance and advocated a useful life as the sincerest form of worship. <http://about.newchurch.org/about/swedenborg/swedenborgs-biography/>

This, the Lord's second coming, is taking place by means of a man, to whom He has shown Himself in person, and whom He has filled with His spirit, so that he may teach the doctrines of the new church which come from the Lord through the Word.

Since the Lord cannot show Himself in person, as has just been demonstrated, and yet He predicted that He would come and found a new church, which is the New Jerusalem, it follows that He will do this by means of a man, who can not only receive intellectually the doctrines of this church, but also publish them in print. I bear true witness that the Lord has shown Himself in the presence of me, His servant, and sent me to perform this function. After this He opened the sight of my spirit, thus admitting me to the spiritual world, and allowing me to see the heavens and the hells, and also to talk with angels and spirits; and this I have now been doing for many years without a break. Equally I assert that from the first day of my calling I have not received any instruction concerning the doctrines of that church from any angel, but only from the Lord, while I was reading the Word. *True Christian Religion* 779

Changes in Childhood in England

Based on “*The Child and “Songs of Innocence”*” by Dr. Jane Williams Hogan, in *The World Transformed*, pp. 177-266. Dan A. Synnestvedt, ed. Bryn Athyn College Press, Bryn Athyn Pa, 2011.

During the final decades before the Last Judgment in 1757, the loss of spiritual enlightenment had its greatest impact on the rejection of innocence—the most interior quality of heaven. Innocence is the essence of love to the Lord, and charity towards the neighbor. Swedenborg stated that, “a sphere of innocence flows into infants, and through them into their parents, and affects them.” (*Married Love* 395)

In 1700 most of England was rural. People lived in villages but as agricultural enclosure and industrialization advanced, towns developed. Many people moved into towns to find work, but at that time towns mainly consisted of narrow unpaved streets with poor sanitation. Infants of the poor were often abandoned by their mothers who needed to work, or who drank gin so they could cope with the horrors of daily life. By the middle of the 18th century, London recorded more infant death than births. Although England was becoming increasingly prosperous, loss of infant life in London peaked between 1727 and 1750. The problem was recognized and so attempts were made to provide for abandoned children. Efforts included establishing orphanages and workhouses, however children there were often treated badly and were viewed mainly as a source of free labor, and not as vulnerable infants needing to be cared for.

Most historians acknowledge that something remarkable happened between 1750 and 1760 that had profound effects on infant mortality rates, law and order, philosophy, social responsibility, human compassion, education and artistic sensibilities, particularly as they related to the treatment of children. The first book on nursing and mothering was published in 1750. The concept of *compassion*—especially for young boys who worked as chimney sweeps—emerged in about 1760. At the same time, interest in “knowledge” increased, and education began to be seen as a better alternative for children than the workhouse. The first children’s book was published in 1744 and by 1761 series’ of children’s books were being distributed. The Gin Act was passed in 1751, limiting the production and sale (and so drinking) of gin. “Professional constables” were first conceived.

People began to look at the ways in which children were treated in workhouses and under the care of parishes. (Deaths of children often went unreported because “caregivers” wanted to continue receiving funds for their care even, after their death.) Between 1757 and 1763 people started to gather workhouse statistics, and by 1762 an Act was passed, requiring tracking of all children in workhouses. When this started, infant deaths decreased for the first time. People began to pay attention to chimney sweeps; to their low pay, the young ages at which they started work (4 years and up), and diseases (such as cancer) they got as a result of their jobs. New attitudes saw the boys as “innocences” in need of support, rather than criminals in the making.

Following these improvements, New Churchmen James Buchanan and Samuel Wilderspin introduced education for young children in Britain. Buchanan worked for factory owner Robert Owen and started the first program for infants in 1816. Wilderspin established Infant Schools in poor areas of London in 1820. Since Swedenborg focused on the innocence of infants, Wilderspin deliberately included the nurturing of innocence into his curriculum, believing that moral behaviors were more important than academic learning. By 1870, education was made available for all children in Britain, regardless of their income.

The Antislavery Movement

Based on “*The Antislavery Movement*” by Brian D. Henderson, in *The World Transformed*, pp. 321-359. Dan A. Synnestvedt, ed. Bryn Athyn College Press, Bryn Athyn Pa, 2011.

For more than 1000 years from Ancient Egypt, Babylon, and Assyria to classical Greece and Rome, to Medieval Europe, in India, China and the Muslim world—the condition of slaves remained virtually unchanged. Human slaves were legal property to be bought and sold, required to work for the benefit of their masters.

Despite slavery's wide acceptance and long history, its legal status was brought to an end within relatively few years. Antislavery movements arose almost simultaneously in Britain, France, and North America in the second half of the eighteenth century. Within 50 years, slavery was legally abolished in Europe, its possessions and its former colonies.

Historians have considered why this changed happened when it did. Why didn't the changes appear in earlier, or later? While historians struggle to come to terms with the timings of these changes, the New Church offers explanations in terms of the Last Judgment and its effects in the natural world. At the same time people who read the Writings for the New Church became inspired to play an important role in the fight against slavery and the slave trade.

During the first half of the 1700s slavery was largely unchallenged. Although some believed that slavery should not exist in an ideal world, people did not act to end it because it was seen as essential to the economy. Unable to see how society could function without it, people justified it by through scientific reasoning, property rights and its importance to the colonial empire.

The forces that ended slavery were born out of religion. Quakers and others began to emphasize the idea that humankind was created with free will, with the ability to choose between good and evil. They argued that people could only become morally perfected through free choice, which was destroyed by slavery.

Most historians point to events in England in the 1780s as marking a turning point in the history of slavery, and to an organized movement started by the Quakers, who were a well organized religious group. In 1757 the Quakers started excluding people involved in slavery from membership. By the 1770s they started printing and distributing the first antislavery pamphlets. In 1783 English Quakers formed a committee to “agitate against slavery and the slave trade.” They sent articles to newspapers and distributed pamphlets widely. They also sent the first of many petitions to the House of Commons calling for an end to the slave trade.

Four years later, in 1787, the Quaker antislavery organization welcomed non-Quakers and soon the Society for the Abolition of Slavery was formed. The group united members of various religious sects, members of literary and philosophical societies, academics and other intellectuals. This group worked tirelessly to abolish slavery, which was finally accomplished in England in 1807, and in the British colonies in 1833.

Although Swedenborg does not mention slavery in the Writings, a significant number of his early followers found the Writings the “inspiration for their attack upon it”. Carl Wadström was introduced to the Writings around 1778. He gathered a group of men specifically to discuss the merits of the African nation, which are described in the Writings—and which directly contradict views being held at that time by pro-slavery supporters. Some four years before the Quakers, Wadström and others determined to eliminate the African slave trade and establish a society on the west coast of Africa that was founded on “true Christian principles.” Wadström visited African slaving sites and testified about them to the House of Commons in London. His evidence was used by others in successfully abolishing slavery.

George Inness 1825 - 1894 | American Artist

George Inness was born in Newburgh, New York. His family moved to Newark, New Jersey, when he was about five years old. In his teens he worked as a map engraver in New York City, and attracted the attention of French landscape painter Régis François Gignoux, with whom he subsequently studied. He also attended classes at the National Academy of Design, and studied the work of Hudson River School artists Thomas Cole and Asher Durand. He debuted his work at the National Academy in 1844.

Inness opened his first studio in New York in 1848. In 1849, he married Delia Miller, who died a few months later. The next year he married Elizabeth Abigail Hart, with whom he had six children. In 1851 a patron named Ogden Haggerty sponsored a trip to Europe to paint and study. He spent fifteen months in Rome, studying landscapes by Claude Lorraine and Nicolas Poussin. He also rented a studio there above that of painter William Page, who likely introduced the artist to Swedenborgianism. In 1853 he was elected into the National Academy of Design as an Associate member and became a full Academician in 1868.

During trips to Paris in the early 1850s, Inness came under the influence of artists working in the Barbizon school of France. Inness quickly became the leading American exponent of Barbizon-style painting, which he developed into a highly personal style. In the mid-1850s, Inness was commissioned to create paintings which documented the progress of the railroad's growth in early Industrial America.

His work of the 1860s and 1870s tended toward the panoramic and picturesque, topped by cloud-laden and threatening skies, and included views of his native country, as well as scenes inspired by numerous travels overseas, especially to Italy and France. In terms of composition, precision of drawing, and the emotive use of color, his paintings placed Inness among the best and most successful landscape painters in America.

Eventually Inness' art showed the influence of the theology of Emanuel Swedenborg. Of particular interest to Inness was the notion that everything in nature had a correspondential relationship with something spiritual and so received an "influx" from God in order to continually exist. Another influence upon Inness' thinking was William James, a Swedenborgian philosopher. Inness was inspired by James' idea of consciousness as a "stream of thought", as well as his ideas concerning how mystical experience shapes one's perspective toward nature.

Inness was the subject of a major retrospective in 1884, organized by the American Art Association, which brought him acclaim in the United States. He earned international fame when he received a gold medal at the 1889 Paris Exposition.

In the last decade of his life, this mystical component manifested in his art through a more abstracted handling of shapes, softened edges, and saturated color, a profound and dramatic juxtaposition of sky and earth, an emphasis on the intimate landscape view, and an increasingly personal, spontaneous, and often violent handling of paint.

In a published interview, Inness maintained that "The true use of art is, first, to cultivate the artist's own spiritual nature." His abiding interest in spiritual and emotional considerations did not preclude Inness from undertaking a scientific study of color, nor a mathematical, structural approach to composition: "The poetic quality is not obtained by eschewing any truths of fact or of Nature...Poetry is the vision of reality."

Inness died in 1894 at Bridge of Allan in Scotland. According to his son, he was viewing the sunset, when he *threw up his hands into the air and exclaimed, "My God! oh, how beautiful!"*, fell to the ground, and died minutes later. A public funeral for Inness was held at the National Academy of Design, and a memorial exhibition was conducted at the Fine Arts Building in New York City.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Inness#cite_note-Columbus_Museum_of_Art_p.6-4

Helen Keller 1880 - 1968 | Author, Activist, Lecturer

The story of Helen Keller is one of the most inspiring of our times. Blind and deaf from the age of nineteen months, she was wild and unruly in her childhood. The devoted efforts of her teacher Anne Sullivan opened the world to her and gave her the capacity to develop and express her extraordinary intelligence. In defiance of tremendous odds, she learned to read, write, type, and speak, and in 1904 she graduated with honors from Radcliffe College.

Keller was introduced to the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg by John Hitz, a longtime friend who was a member of the Church of the Holy City in Washington, DC. As she began to read Swedenborg's *Heaven and Hell*, she remarked, "my heart gave a joyous leap." She went on to write *My Religion*, her spiritual autobiography, in 1927 when she was 47 years old. It describes the spiritual odyssey that brought her to Swedenborgianism and endowed her with the inner resources to triumph over her handicaps and live a life of selfless service. The book was written as a tribute to Emanuel Swedenborg whom Helen regarded as "one of the noblest champions true Christianity has ever known." In it she openly declares that "the teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg have been my light, and a staff in my hand and by his vision splendid I am attended on my way."

The original book was loosely put together and hastily printed, however it sold well and has remained in print ever since. In 1994, Ray Silverman, a Swedenborgian minister, revised and edited *My Religion* and re-titled it *Light in My Darkness*. A second edition of *Light in My Darkness* was published in 2000 which included an article that was originally published in *Guideposts Magazine* in 1956—when Helen was 76 years old. The article is significant in that it establishes the fact that Helen Keller was a lifelong Swedenborgian. In this article she writes, "Since my seventeenth year, I have tried to live according to the teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg. By 'church' he did not mean an ecclesiastical organization, but a spiritual fellowship of thoughtful men and women who spend their lives for a service to mankind that outlasts them. He called it a civilization that was to be born of a healthy, universal religion—goodwill, mutual understanding, service from each to all, regardless of dogma or ritual."

Also included in the 2000 edition is a quote from Helen's last published book, *Teacher* (1955). In it she speaks of her undimmed enthusiasm for Swedenborg's teachings. She does this by first quoting the American poet, Walt Whitman who wrote: "O Spirit, as a runner strips/ Upon a windy afternoon/ Be unencumbered of what troubles you--/ Arise with grace / And greatly go, with the wind upon your face." Helen then adds, "In that state of exhilaration I had accepted the teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg, had drunk in his interpretation of the Bible, fearless, reverent, yet as unconfined as the sun, the clouds, the sea."

Helen remained a devoted member of the Church of the Holy City and on one occasion preached from its pulpit. Her extensive study of Swedenborg's works gave her the sustaining power of faith that energized and shone through the great work of her life.

Taken from: <http://www.swedenborg.org/FamousSwedenborgians/HelenKeller.aspx> and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Light_in_My_Darkness