

## SWEDENBORG'S PREPARATION

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In the month of January, New Churchmen celebrate Swedenborg's birthday. As most of you know, Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) wrote the Writings of the New Church. He was inspired by the Lord to write them. This means that he was really told by the Lord what to write. "Inspire" means to breathe into. And this is what the Lord did. He "breathed" the spirit of truth into Swedenborg's mind in such a way that what Swedenborg wrote was not his own ideas or words, but the Lord's. You can see this pictured in the picture of Swedenborg that you have been sent.

This does not quite mean that Swedenborg was just a human pen in the Lord's hands. We can say this of those who wrote the Old and New Testaments—but we can't really say this of Swedenborg. His "inspiration" was different. It was different because he *understood* what he wrote. This was not always true of those who wrote the Old and New Testaments.

Now the Writings of the New Church contain many new and wonderful truths. Some of these teachings are deep, and we have to be taught how to understand them. But Swedenborg understood them all. This was not just because he was an unusually clever man, which he was. It was also because he was specially prepared by the Lord for his great work. His mind was strengthened and developed by the Lord.

How did the Lord do this? For one thing, the Lord gave him great curiosity. Let us see how this curiosity helped lead Swedenborg to his final work of writing the Heavenly Doctrines of the New Church.

Even while he was still a young child, Swedenborg loved to talk about religious teachings with his father who was a minister. He also talked with other ministers who visited his father. They were all amazed at how well he understood things. As he grew older, he learned many things at school, and was a very good student. He especially loved science. He had his love of science for many years, and loved to try to discover new scientific facts. This was because of his curious mind.

As a young man he studied under some famous scientists, and discovered some new scientific inventions. He invented plans for a glider, submarine and machine gun, and many other things that had never been thought of before. He loved new ideas. As he grew older, he studied other sciences and made important discoveries in mathematics, chemistry, mechanics, geology, astronomy and many other fields of science. He was especially famous in metallurgy—the study of metals. He discovered a new and far better way of

making steel, and wrote a textbook on metal that was used in many parts of Europe for over seventy years.

Later he was the first scientist who taught that the planets of a solar system had, at the first, spun off from their sun. Still later he entered into anatomy—the study of the human body. In this field of science he made many discoveries. He discovered that certain parts of the brain govern certain parts of the body. He discovered that the spinal fluid circulates. He learned that the brain moves with the lungs and also discovered the cortex or cells of the brain.

All of these wonderful discoveries were made by Swedenborg, because the Lord gave him a mind that was curious about almost everything. When he or others did not understand something, he always asked “why” or “how”. He was not satisfied until he truly understood a thing. Now, to understand what you are taught by someone else is not so hard, but to discover something new that no one has ever known before is very hard. It takes a great deal of patient study, and then a great deal of thinking and figuring out. That is just what Swedenborg loved to do.

Because of this, the Lord was able to lead Swedenborg not only in his study of science—but later in his life into a completely new study—a study of the hidden, internal, spiritual meaning of the WORD. No one had ever been allowed to enter into such a study before. Swedenborg became the man through whom the Lord could tell us of this wonderful inner meaning of His WORD.

Because of his curious mind, Swedenborg could be led by the Lord to ask what the stories of the Old and New Testaments really meant. Swedenborg had always been religious, but at the age of fifty-four or fifty-five he began to turn his mind more and more towards religion and began reading the WORD a great deal. Of course, he was led to do this by the Lord, because of the great work He had planned for Swedenborg to do. When Swedenborg was fifty-five, his spiritual eyes were opened, and the Lord appeared to him several times. The Lord called him to the great task of making known the spiritual sense of the WORD.

Swedenborg then began a great study of the WORD which had never been done before. This lasted for about four years (although he continued studying the WORD for the rest of his life). During these four years he wrote a large index to the Bible and wrote a long explanation of what much of the Old Testament meant. He gave up his regular work and devoted himself completely to this study.

When he was sixty years old, his preparation was finished. He began writing the new revelation. For the next twenty-four years he wrote the Writings, The Heavenly Doctrine of the New Jerusalem. Swedenborg tells us how he was inspired to write the Writings. The Lord, by means of Swedenborg’s study of the

WORD, was able to open to him the spiritual meaning within the WORD. So it was that Swedenborg wrote down what the Lord revealed to him *while he was reading the Word* (See TCR 779).

You can then picture Swedenborg sitting at his desk with the Word opened—reading it and being inspired by the Lord to write down its spiritual meaning in the books of the Writings. For twenty-four long years he did this, and during that time he wrote thirty volumes which we call the Writings of the New Church. Within those books a great “ocean” of new truth is given to the world—truth which leads to a truly religious and spiritual way of life.

We of the New Church have the great privilege of being able to learn these new truths and to spread them to others. As you grow older, you will be able to go to the Writings yourself and learn these truths and become faithful New Churchmen. True New Churchmen everywhere are very grateful to the Lord for having prepared and led Swedenborg’s great mind to do this wonderful work. Throughout his life Swedenborg was led—through the study of science to the study of the Word.

We have spoken of Swedenborg’s curiosity and his love of understanding difficult things. The Lord used this curiosity to lead Swedenborg to the WORD and to discover its spiritual meaning—understand it and write it down. This quality of curiosity is a very useful thing to have. Don’t be afraid to be curious about religious things. Ask questions and think things out. Be eager to go to the WORD and learn more and more. Look forward to the day when you can go to the Writings and learn from them. If you do this, then you, too, will be like Swedenborg, in a way, and the Lord will lead you also to an understanding of His holy WORD.