

**LIFE OF EMANUEL
SWEDENBORG:
WITH SOME ACCOUNT OF
HIS WRITINGS**

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Life of Emanuel Swedenborg: With Some Account of His Writings by Nathaniel Hobart

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NATHANIEL HOBART

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L I F E
OF
EMANUEL SWEDENBORG:

WITH
SOME ACCOUNT OF HIS WRITINGS.

BY NATHANIEL HOBART.

FOURTH EDITION.

CONTAINING, IN ADDITION,

A LECTURE ON THE MISSION OF SWEDENBORG, BY SAMPSON REED,
AND AN ARTICLE ON THE NEW JERUSALEM CHURCH, PRE-
PARED FOR THE NEW AMERICAN CYCLOPEDIA.

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LIFE OF SWEDENBORG.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

It is but a few years since the writings of Swedenborg have received any general attention in this country, and little comparatively is now known of them except by those who embrace the sentiments which they contain. But an increased interest is daily manifesting itself, and many are anxious to know something of the life as well as the writings of him who is regarded as the herald of the New Church.

There are many, too, who are desirous of knowing something of Swedenborg's writings, but are deterred, by the number of his works, from the undertaking. To such, a brief account of his writings may be useful, and produce a desire to investigate the subject of the New Church doctrines, by a more full examination of his works.

It may, however, be proper to observe, that the same effort is not made by members of the New Jerusalem Church, to disseminate the doctrines which they embrace, as is generally made by the several religious denominations of the day, to disseminate theirs. A true disciple of the New Church will be as anxious that genuine truth should not be profaned, as that it should be universally received. In the present dispensation, the church is to be an internal and not an external church. Its growth will depend not so much on the accession of numbers, as on the state and inward quality of those who embrace its doctrines.

Much external effect might doubtless be produced by resorting to energetic means to disseminate the doctrines; for truth has power in itself, and is felt by all, whether acknowledged or denied. But the greatest danger, perhaps, to which a member of the New Church is exposed, is that of abusing the power which the truths he has professed afford him. The truths of the New Church are unfaithfully dispensed when they are used

indiscriminately to attract the multitude, or to induce men to relinquish their present faith before they are in a state to receive a better. A man can hardly be said to have received genuine spiritual truth, until he has become the willing *servant* of that truth, ready to dispense it, not to increase his own power and influence, but for the sole benefit of others.

That the writings of Swedenborg may be read, and the truths contained in them be in some measure acknowledged, without necessarily producing any good effect, may appear from the following remarks: "There are," says our author, "five classes of those who read my writings. The first reject them entirely, because they are in another persuasion, or because they are in no faith. The second receive them as scientifics, and as objects of mere curiosity. The third receive them intellectually, and are in some measure pleased with them, but whenever they require an application to regulate their lives, they remain where they were before. The fourth receive them in a persuasive manner, and are thereby led, in a certain degree, to amend their lives and perform uses. The fifth receive them with delight, and confirm them in their lives."

From the above it may appear that nothing is really gained to the New Church by merely inducing men to examine the writings of Swedenborg, without regard to the motives by which they are influenced in the investigation. It is nevertheless our duty to put it within the power of others, so far as we are able, to become acquainted with the truth; and the object of the remarks already made, is simply to correct an erroneous impression concerning the efforts made by members of the New Church to disseminate its doctrines.

In the following pages are presented all the leading facts that are now known concerning Swedenborg's life, together with some description of his numerous writings.

CHAPTER I.

ACCOUNT OF THE SWEDENBORG FAMILY—SANDEL'S EULOGY.

JESPER SWEDBERG, the father of EMANUEL SWEDENBORG, was born on the estate of his father, near Fahlun, in Sweden, in 1653. He was for several years attached to the army as a chaplain of a regiment of cavalry, but finally made bishop of Skara, in West Gothland. For many years he superintended

the Swedish mission established in England and America. He was a man of learning and abilities, and of an amiable private character. In 1719 he was ennobled by the name of Swedenborg. This name, however, was adopted only by his descendants; he always retained the name of Swedberg. He died in 1735. From a book published by him in 1709, entitled "Divine Exercises, and Comfortable Conversations with a Sorrowful Soul," and dedicated to his children and grand-children, it appears that he then had three sons and four daughters. The following is the order in which they are named, which is doubtless according to their respective ages: Anna, Emanuel, Eliezer, Hedwig, Catharina, Jesper, Margareta.* The grand-children named are, Ericus Benzelius and Margareta Benzelius. It has been stated that one of the family came to America at the time Jesper Swedberg superintended the Swedish mission established in Philadelphia; and that he finally settled in Canada.

Emanuel Swedberg was born in Stockholm, January 29, 1688.

* The following is an extract from an unpublished biography of Jesper Swedberg, written by himself, dated April, 1729.

"My Sons, and their Names.

"24. Moreover, I kept myself humble, and entreated no sponsors of rank, as is commonly the case (to stand for my children); and I shall give the reasons why I called my sons, Emanuel, Eliezer, and Jesper, and none, according to custom, after their grandfathers, or any person of the family; (Albrecht the eldest, of whom I have just spoken, was born during my travels in foreign parts, and his mother named him after her father.) I do not find in the whole Bible a single example, in which children have received the names of their parents or forefathers. I will only mention the patriarch Jacob, and king David; the former had holy, celebrated, glorious ancestors, extensively known, and he had twelve sons, of whom not one was called Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob. King David had also many sons, not one of whom he called Jesse, or David. Solomon had also many sons, none of whom he called David, Jesse, or Solomon; and amongst his numerous descendants there were many kings and princes, and not one was called Solomon or David. This good custom, however, had, before the time of Christ, given way as is evident from the history of John the Baptist, whom at first they wished to name after his father Zechariah, (Luke i. 58,) which is a noble and significant name,—*memoria Domini*, that is, remembrance of the Lord, in order that he might be constantly mindful of the Lord.

"25. Hereby however, I by no means presume to blame or to disapprove of those who call their children after their own names; yet I hope and expect, that nobody will blame my manner (of naming children), since I have the Bible and the examples of many saints on my side; and I have the full conviction that only such names should be given to children as awaken the fear of God in them, and keep them mindful of propriety and virtue; and not, as many inconsiderate parents do who give improper names to their children, such as Björe, Ulf, Thorheel, after the heathen god Thor, and do not think of the answer which the reasonable Abigail gave to king David concerning her husband Nabal, 'Let not my Lord, I pray thee, set his heart against this man of Belial, even Nabal: for as his name is, so is he; Nabal¹ is his name, and

¹ 'Nabal,' in Hebrew, signifies folly.

This name he retained until 1719, when, being ennobled, he took the name of Swedenborg.

The most complete single account of his life, written by one who knew him, is contained in Sandel's Eulogy, which we will here present at the outset, that it may serve as a general outline to be filled up by the various particular accounts which follow.

'EULOGIUM ON EMANUEL SWEDENBORG: *Pronounced in the Great Hall of the House of Nobles, in the name of the Royal Academy of Sciences of Stockholm, October 7, 1772: by M. Samuel Sandel, Counsellor of the Royal Board of Mines, Knight of the Polar Star, and Member of the said Academy.*

'Gentlemen! Permit me to entertain you this day upon a subject, which is not of an abstracted or remote nature, but is intended to revive the agreeable remembrance of a man celebrated for his virtues and his knowledge, one of the oldest members of this Academy, and one whom we all knew and loved.

fully is with him.' (1 Sam. xxv. 25.) Emanuel, my son's name, signifies 'God with us,'—a name which should constantly remind him of the nearness of God, and of that interior, holy, and mysterious connexion, in which, through faith, we stand with our good and gracious God. And blessed be the Lord's name! God has to this hour indeed been with him; and may God be farther with him, until he is eternally united with Him in His kingdom!¹ Eliexer signifies 'God is my help;' and he has been graciously and friendly helped by God. He was a pious child, made good progress, and was called home by a happy death in the 25th year of his age. The youngest son was called Jesper merely on this account, because he was born on the same day, and in the same hour, as myself, who first saw the light of the world on the 28th of August, 1653. If the name Jesper be written 'Jesper' (he will write it), has corresponded to the deed; for I can scarcely believe that any body in Sweden has written so much as I have done; since, I think, ten carts could scarcely carry away what I have written and printed at my own expense, and yet there is much, yea, nearly as much not printed. And my son Jesper had the same inclination, for he wrote much, and with pleasure.

"28. I am a Sunday-child (that is, born on a Sunday), and the mother, my late wife, was also a Sunday-child, and all my children are Sunday-children, except Katharine, who was born at Upsal on the 3d day of Easter. I have kept my sons to that (profession) to which God has given them inclination and liking; and I have not brought up one to the clerical office, although many parents do this inconsiderately, and in a manner not justifiable, by which the Christian Church, and also the (clerical) order suffer not a little, and is brought into contempt. I have never had my daughters in Stockholm, where many reside in order to learn fine manners, but where also they learn much that is worldly and injurious to the soul."

¹ Emanuel Swedenborg was forty years of age when this was written by his father, and it is plain, we think, that the cause of the old bishop's gratitude and praise to God on account of his son, was, that he had led a pious and useful life, thus confirming what is elsewhere said of Emanuel Swedenborg, that his life was a life of extraordinary diligence and usefulness, and of unfeigned piety.—ED. INF. RKP.