

**LIFE OF EMANUEL
SWEDENBORG. TOGETHER WITH
A BRIEF SYNOPSIS OF HIS
WRITINGS, BOTH PHILOSOPHICAL
AND THEOLOGICAL**

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Life of Emanuel Swedenborg. Together with a Brief Synopsis of His Writings, Both Philosophical and Theological by William White & B. F. Barrett

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WILLIAM WHITE & B. F. BARRETT

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A BRIEF SYNOPSIS OF HIS WRITINGS, BOTH PHILO-
SOPHICAL AND THEOLOGICAL.

BY WILLIAM WHITE.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION
BY B. F. BARRETT.



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PREFACE.

DURING the few past years many biographies of Swedenborg have been offered to the public. Dr. Tafel, of Tubingen, in 1839, collected into one volume the testimonies of Swedenborg's personal friends, his letters, and various documents relating to him which were scattered through many volumes. This "Book of Documents" was translated into English, and edited by the Rev. J. H. Smithson, of Manchester, in 1841; and was again reprinted in America and re-edited by Professor Bush, of New York, in 1847. From this "Book of Documents," all the biographies which have appeared, have been more or less indebted. Nathaniel Hobart, of Boston, arranged these documents into a connected biographical form, interspersed with judicious remarks of his own, and published it as a "Life of Swedenborg." This "Life" has passed through three editions, and well deserves the success it has attained. In 1849, Elihu Rich published, in London, "A Biographical Sketch of Emanuel Swedenborg." The edition was exhausted in the course of a few months, and the work has not since been reprinted. In the same year, J. J. G. Wilkinson produced his "Emanuel Swedenborg: a Biography," a work which, alike for its artistic excellence as a biography, and the originality and poetic beauty

of its thought, has, I believe, no equal in the English language. The comparative silence of our literary critics, in reference to this work, proves that any one who cares to appreciate what is best in the world, had better not be content to trust solely to *their* eyes. From the quotations I have made in the course of the following narrative, the reader will be able to appreciate a few of the good things contained in this Biography by Wilkinson. In 1854, Edwin Paxton Hood published "Swedenborg: A Biography and an Exposition," a work which has been the means of introducing Swedenborg to a large circle hitherto almost ignorant of his existence. In the same year, Woodbury M. Fernald published, in Boston, Mass., "A Compendium of the Theological and Spiritual Writings of Swedenborg," to which an excellent life of the Author was prefixed, compiled in great part from previous biographies. In other forms, many sketches of the life of Swedenborg have been published. The Rev. O. P. Hiller gives an excellent little biography in his volume of "Gems from Swedenborg." Emerson tells the story of his life, in his own way, in "Representative Men;" and a Lecture by George Dawson, on Swedenborg, is now circulating, as a tract, by thousands throughout the land. All these things evidence a growing interest in the greatest teacher of modern times.

The present work does not enter into competition with anything that has before been written. It pretends to nothing but simplicity, and would be ranked as a hand-book, a guide, a directory. If it should lead any to form an acquaintance with the writings of "the most unknown man in the world," as Mr. Fernald calls Swedenborg, and I may add, the most abused man in the world, my end will be gained. I believe the day is not far distant when it will be the greatest reproach of these times

that the works of Swedenborg lay in our midst, and only a few men cared for them. Happily this number is steadily increasing; and, by and by, we may expect a general acknowledgment of the fact, that Swedenborg was, without exception, the most gifted and extraordinary man that has ever lived.

36 BLOOMSBURY SQUARE, LONDON, *January, 1856.*

INTRODUCTION.

It is difficult to paint in language the grandest scenes in nature. To him who essays it, words seem powerless and wholly unequal to the task of conveying an adequate description. Any one who has stood by the side of Niagara, and listened to its deafening roar, and felt the grandeur and inspiration of the scene, is never quite satisfied with any written or oral description of that mighty cataract. And the reason is plain. It is not in the power of language, however skilfully employed, to kindle such emotions in the soul as are awakened by the scene itself.

The case is similar in regard to all great geniuses, and especially great authors. It is not easy to describe the loftiest human souls, or adequately to paint their characters in words. And those who are most familiar with their writings, are usually least satisfied with their biographies however vigorously or gracefully written. It is with the most gifted thinkers and writers as with the great Author of the volume of nature; they are best seen and understood in their works. And in any biographies wherein it is attempted to show us such men apart from, or outside of, their writings, it can hardly be otherwise than that they should appear considerably dwarfed. We miss those grand and symmetrical features which reveal themselves on every page of their