

S W E D E N B O R G

Questions

1. What causative factors can you discover for Swedenborg's disturbance?
2. What does Swedenborg's record of his dreams tell us in regard to his character?
3. What pathological features do you find in Swedenborg in this period of his life? With which of the hospital patients would you compare him?
4. What evaluation would you place upon the solution which resulted? To what extent would you agree with Ralph Waldo Emerson in placing Swedenborg among the outstanding religious geniuses and heroes of the world?
5. What are the chief features of his message?
6. How do you account for his influence over others?

R e f e r e n c e s

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| Tafel | Documents concerning Swedenborg | |
| Boisen | Exploration of the Inner World | pp. 71 ff. |
| Block | Scientist into Seer | Review of Religion, May 1938 |

"I was born at Stockholm, on the 29th of January in the year 1669. My father's name was Jesper Swedberg; who was the Bishop of West-Gothland, and a man of celebrity in his time. He was also elected and enrolled as a member of the English Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts; for he had been appointed by King Charles XII Bishop over the Swedish churches in Pennsylvania, and also over the church in London. In the year 1710 I went abroad. I proceeded first to England, and afterwards to Holland, France and Germany, and returned home in the year 1714. In the year 1716, and also afterwards, I had many conversations with Charles XII, King of Sweden, who greatly favoured me, and the same year offered me an assessorship in the College of Mines, which office I filled until the year 1747, when I resigned it, retaining, however, the official salary during my life. My sole object in tendering my resignation was, that I might have more leisure to devote to the new office to which the Lord had called me. A higher post was then offered me, which I positively declined, lest my heart should be inspired with pride. In the year 1719, I was ennobled by Queen Ulrica Eleanora, and named Swedenborg; and from that time I have taken my seat among the nobles of the rank of knighthood, in the triennial Diet of the Realm. I am a fellow and Member, by invitation, of the Royal Academy of Sciences in Stockholm; but I have never sought admission into any literary society in any place, because I am in angelic society, where such things as relate to heaven and the soul are the only subjects of discourse; while in literary societies the world and the body form the only subjects of discussion. In the year 1734, I published, at Leipsic, the *Regnum Minerale*, in three volumes, folio; and in 1738 I took a journey to Italy, and stayed a year in Venice and Rome.

With respect to my family connections, I had four sisters. One of them was married to Ericus Benzelius, who subsequently became the archbishop of Upsal, and through him I became related to the two succeeding archbishops, who both belonged to the family of Benzelius, and were younger brothers of his. My second sister was married to Lars Benzelstierna who became a provincial governor; but these two are dead. Two bishops, however, who are related to me, are still living; one of them, whose name is Pilenius, and who is Bishop of East-Gothland, officiates now as President of the House of the Clergy in the Diet at Stockholm, in place of the Archbishop, who is an invalid; he married my sister's daughter: the other, named Benzelstierna, is Bishop of Westmanland and Dalecarlia; he is the son of my second sister.

...But all that I have thus far related, I consider of comparatively little importance; for it is far exceeded by the circumstance, that I have been called to a holy office by the Lord Himself, who most mercifully appeared before me, His servant, in the year 1743: when He opened my sight into the

spiritual world, and enabled me to converse with spirits and angels, in which state I have continued up to the present day. From that time I began to print and publish the various arcana that were seen by me or revealed to me, concerning Heaven and Hell, the state of man after death, the true worship of God, the spiritual sense of the Word, besides many other important matters conducive to salvation and wisdom. The only reason of my journeys abroad have been the desire of making myself useful, and of making known the arcana that were entrusted to me. Moreover, I have as much of this world's wealth as I need, and I neither seek nor wish for more."

II. Robsahm's Report of Swedenborg's Account of His Revelation.
Vol. I * Doc.5 Pages 35-6

"I was in London and dined rather late at the inn where I was in the habit of dining, and where I had my own room. My thoughts were engaged on the subjects we have been discussing. I was hungry, and ate with good appetite. Towards the close of the meal I noticed a sort of dimness before my eyes: this became denser, and I saw the floor covered with the most horrid crawling reptiles, such as snakes, frogs, and similar creatures. I was amazed; for I was perfectly conscious, and my thoughts were clear. At last the darkness increased still more; but it disappeared all at once, and I then saw a man sitting in a corner of the room; as I was then alone, I was very much frightened at his words, for he said: 'Eat not so much'. All became black again before my eyes, but immediately it cleared away, and I found myself alone in the room.

Such an unexpected terror hastened my return home: I did not let the landlord notice anything; but I considered well what had happened, and could not look upon it as a mere matter of chance, or as if it had been produced by a physical cause.

I went home; and during the night the same man revealed himself to me again, but I was not frightened now. He then said that He was the Lord God, the Creator of the world, and the Redeemer, and that He had chosen me to explain to men the spiritual sense of the Scripture, and that He Himself would explain to me what I should write on this subject; that same night also were opened to me, so that I became thoroughly convinced of their reality, the worlds of spirits, heaven, and hell, and I recognized there many acquaintances of every condition in life. From that day I gave up the study of all worldly science, and laboured in spiritual things, according as the Lord had commanded me to write. Afterwards the Lord opened, daily very often, my bodily eyes, so that, in the middle of the day I could see into the other world, and in a state of perfect wakefulness converse with angels and spirits."

III. Swedenborg's Experience in 1744. Vol. ii Pages 150-200

2. I was in a kitchen-gardne containing many fine beds, one of which I desired to possess; I looked around, however, to see if

there was a way out, and when it seemed to me that I saw one, I thought of another. Some one was there picking away a heap of small vermin, and killing them; he said they were bugs which some one had brought and thrown in, and which infested those who were there. I did not see them, but I saw some other smaller vermin which I let fall into a white linen sheet, (and took) out together with some woman. - This meant the uncleanness which had to be rooted out of me.

3. I went confidently and boldly down a large staircase, at the end of which was a ladder. At the bottom was a hole that went down to a great depth; it was difficult to cross over to the other side, without falling into the hole. On the other side were some persons to whom I reached out my hand to be helped: I awoke. - There is danger of my falling into the abyss, unless, I receive help.

22. Besides while awake, I was in a heavenly ecstasy, which is also indescribable.

I went to bed at nine o'clock, and arose between nine and ten; I had thus been in bed for twelve of thirteen hours. Praise, and honour, and glory be to the Highest; hallowed be His name! Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts!

25. Both in my mind and body I had a sensation of such indescribable delight, that had it been more intense, the body would have been, as it were, dissolved in pure bliss.

This took place in the night between Easter Sunday and Easter Monday, and during the whole night.

27. At ten o'clock I went to bed, and in little more than half an hour afterwards I heard a noise under my head. I then thought that the Tempter was gone. Immediately afterwards a tremor came over me, powerfully affecting me from the head over the whole body, accompanied by some sound; this was repeated several times. I felt that something holy had come over me. I then fell asleep, and about twelve, one, or two o'clock at night a most powerful tremor seized me from head to foot, with a sound like the concourse of many winds. By this sound, which was indescribable, I was shaken, and thrown (from the bed) on my face. While at the moment I was thus thrown down, I became wide awake, and I saw that I had been prostrated. I wondered what all this meant, and then spoke, as if I were awake. I noticed, however, that these words were put into my mouth: "O Thou Almighty Jesus Christ, who of Thy great mercy deignest to come to so great a sinner, make me worthy of this grace!" I lifted up my hands, and prayed, when a hand came and strongly pressed my hands; I then continued my prayer, and said, "O Thou, who hast promised to receive in mercy all sinners, Thou canst not otherwise than keep this Thy Word!" I lay on His bosom and looked at His face to face. It was a countenance with a holy expression, and so that it cannot be described; it was also smiling, and I really believe that His countenance was such during His life upon earth. He addressed me and asked, if I had a certificate of my health? I answered, "O Lord, Thou knowest this better than I; when He said, "Do it then!" - This, as I perceived in my mind signified

"Love me really, or do what thou has promised." O God, impart to me grace for this! I perceived that I could not do this by my own strength. I now awoke in a tremor.

34. I was also in temptation, where thoughts invaded me which I could not control; my they poured in so powerfully, that all my other thoughts were kept under, and full liberty was given them to resist the power of the Spirit, which leads us in a different direction; the infestation was, indeed, so strong that unless God's grace had been stronger, I must either have succumbed or become mad. During that time I could not direct my thoughts to the contemplation of Christ, whom I had seen for that brief moment. The action of the Spirit and its power so affected me, that I almost lost my senses.

38. ...This last (temptation) was severer than the first, as it went to the innermost, and to resist it I received a stronger evidence of the Spirit; for at times I broke into a perspiration. What then arose in my mind had no longer the effect of condemning me; for I had a strong assurance that I had been forgiven; but the desire came to excuse myself, and make myself free. Very often I burst into tears, not of sorrow, but of inmost joy at our Lord's deigning to be so gracious to so unworthy a sinner; for the sum of all I found to be this, that the only thing needful is to cast one's self in all humility on our Lord's grace, to recognize one's own unworthiness, and to thank God in humility for His grace:

52. This night I slept very tranquilly. At three or four o'clock I awoke and lay awake, but in a kind of a vision. I could look up and be observant whenever I shose, so that I was not otherwise than awake, and yet in the spirit there was an inward gladness which diffused itself over the body. All seemed in a wonderful and transcendent manner to approach and conspire to rise up as it were and nestle in infinitude as a centre, where Love itself was; thence it seemed to extend itself around and thus down again. In this manner it moved in an incomprehensible circle (spire?) whose centre was Love, around and thus hither again; that Love, moved towards and into a mortal body, so that I became filled with it. I likened that inward feeling of gladness to what is felt by a chaste husband who is an actual state of love, and enjoys its supreme delight with his spouse. Such a supreme feeling of bliss was shed over my whole body, and indeed, for a long time, even before the whole time before I fell asleep, and after I awoke for a half, nay for a whole hour. Now, when I was in the spirit and yet awake - for I could lift up my eyes and be awake - and when I came into the same state again, I saw and perceived that that supreme Love was the source of that inmost and real feeling of gladness; and that in proportion as I could be in that Love, in the same proportion I was in a state of bliss; but as soon as I came into another love which did not centre in it, I was beyond its influence.

84. The most singular thing is, that I now represent the inner man, and, as it were, another than myself; that I visit my own thoughts, frighten them, i.e. the things of my memory; that I accuse another. - This shows that matters are changed now; and

that I represent the inner man, who is opposed to another (i.e. the external man). For I prayed to God that I might not be my own, but that God might please to let me be His.

112. I had depressing dreams about dogs that were said to be my countrymen, and which licked my neck, but without biting; besides other dreams. In the morning awful thoughts haunted me, just as on the preceding day, viz. that the Evil One had taken possession of me; yet with the consolation that he was without, and that I would soon be relieved. While I had the most damnable thoughts, the worst that possibly could be, Jesus Christ was presented vividly before my internal sight; and the operation of the Holy Spirit came over me, from which I knew that the devil was gone. On the following day also I was in a state of infestation, in conflicting thoughts, and in strife. In the afternoon I was mostly in a tranquil state, and thought of God, though engaged in worldly things. I was then travelling to Leyden.

139. On the twentieth I was to go to the Lord's Supper in the Swedish church, after I had had many pernicious thoughts, from which I perceived that my body is in a continual state of rebellion; this was also represented to me by scum, which was to be skimmed off. On Sunday morning it came very clearly from the Spirit into my lips, that this, (i.e. the Holy Supper) is the manna which descends from heaven.

140. I could not control myself so entirely as not to have carnal desires; yet without any intention of causing their ultimatum. Yet it seemed to me in my dream that my having accompanied Prof. Oehleisch to sundry places was not so altogether against the Divine Providence; as about it I did not receive an admonition, as about other of my doings. It however happened, as had been represented to me in a dream some days before, that I was in one day twice in danger of my life; so that if God had not protected me, I should have lost my life in two places.

IV. What Swedenborg Thought of Himself. Vol. ii Page 137

The aim of Swedenborg's life, and thus the purpose of the experiences recorded in the following pages, are stated by him in his work entitled the "True Christian Religion" in these words:

"The Lord's Second Advent is made by a man before whom He has manifested Himself in person, and whom He has filled with His Spirit to teach the doctrines of the New Church by the Word from Himself. This is meant in the Apocalypse by the New Heaven and the New Earth, and the New Jerusalem descending thence".

That he himself is the man by whose instrumentality the Lord should effect His Second Coming, is declared by Swedenborg in the following passage: "As the Lord cannot (now) manifest Himself in person, and yet foretold that He would come again, and establish a New Church, which is the New Jerusalem, it follows that He would do this by a man, who could not only receive the doctrines of that church in his understanding, but also publish them by the press. I testify in truth that the Lord manifested Himself before me, His Servant; that he commissioned me to do this work, and afterwards opened the sight of my spirit, and so let me into the

spiritual world, permitting me to see the heavens and the hells, and also to converse with angels and spirits, and this now continually for many years; and, likewise, that from the first day of my call to this office, I have never received anything relating to the doctrines of that church from any angel, but from the Lord alone while I was reading the Word".

V. "The Opening of Swedenborg's Spiritual Sight" Vol.ii, Page 144

"I was elevated into the light of heaven interiorly by degrees, and in proportion as I was elevated, my understanding was elevated, so that I gradually was enabled to perceive things which at first I did not perceive, and finally such things as it had been impossible for me to comprehend." (From "Heaven and Hell")

"Before my mind was opened, so that I could converse with spirits, and thus be persuaded by living experience, there existed with me for several years such evidences, that I now wonder I could remain all the while unconvinced of the Lord's government by means of spirits. During several years, not only had I dreams by which I was informed concerning one things on which I was writing; but I experienced also, while writing, changes of state, there being a certain extraordinary light in the things which were written. Afterwards I had many visions with closed eyes, and light was given me in a miraculous manner. There was also an influx from spirits, as manifest to the sense as if it had been in the senses of the body; there were infestations in various ways by evil spirits, when I was in temptations; and afterwards when writing anything to which the spirits had an aversion I was almost possessed by them, so as to feel something like a tremor. Fiery lights were seen, and conversations heard in the early morning, besides many other things; until at last a spirit spoke a few words to me, when I was greatly astonished at his perceiving my thoughts. I was afterwards, when I was greatly astonished that I could converse with spirits; as the spirits were that I should wonder.

VI. Concerning Internal Respiration Vol. ii Page 143

"Man has an internal and an external respiration; his external respiration is from the world, but the internal from heaven. When man dies, external respiration ceases, but internal respiration, which is tacit and imperceptible during the life in the body, continues. This respiration is altogether according to the affection of truth, thus according to the life of one's faith. Those, however, who are in no faith, which is the case with those in hell, derive their respiration, not from the interior, but from the exterior; they thus breathe in a contrary way, wherefore on approaching an angelic society where respiration from the interior prevails, they begin to be suffocated, and become as if dead; they therefore cast themselves down into their hell, where they again receive their former respiration which is opposed to the respiration of heaven." (From Arcana Coelestia)

"The man of the Most Ancient Church had an internal respiration, thus one which agreed with, and was similar to, the respiration of the angels."