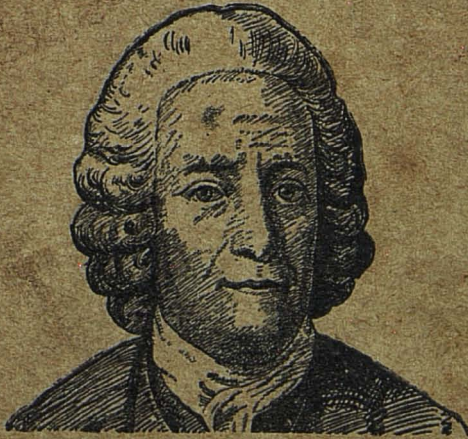


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சு. ச. அண்ணல்தம்பையர்  
நூலகம்

# BRIEF ACCOUNT OF A WONDERFUL MAN

*This address was broadcast by the Swedenborg Society,  
London to celebrate the 250th Anniversary of  
Swedenborg's Birth.*

January 29, 1688—1938



EMANUEL SWEDENBORG

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# New Revelation

THROUGH

Emanuel Swedenborg

Read the Holy Books of this New Revelation that reconciles modern scientific discoveries with the Truths of Religion, makes it easy to understand the most difficult problems of Religion and Philosophy that baffled human intellect so long and reveals an Universal Religion and Philosophy, adapted to this Age of Reason. The late lamented Mr. T. V. Seshagiri Aiyar, Ex-Judge of the Madras High Court, in the course of the review of my book, *Swedenborg & Saiva Siddhanta* wrote about "The possibility it suggests for inaugurating a Cosmopolitan Religious Movement." Many eminent Saiva Siddhanta scholars and others and Magazines like *Siddhantam*, *Bharata Lharma*, *Hindu Sathanam* and *The Hindu Organ* also bear testimony.

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தூய தமிழ்க் காவலா  
கு. மு. அண்ணல்தங்கே  
நூலகம்



EMANUEL SWEDENBORG

G. M. Annalchango,  
Vellore

29-1-40

## Brief Account of a Wonderful Man.

### 250th Anniversary of Swedenborg's Birth

January 29th 1688-1938.

I should not be surprised if some of you who are listening have read one or more of Swedenborg's remarkable books. Interest in them has been growing slowly but surely, the best sort of tribute to their value. But, probably, to most of you, Swedenborg is little more than a name and you may be wondering why the modern world should be interested in the 250th Anniversary of his birth. Well, in the *first place*, he lived a unique life, one of the simplest and happiest lives that could fall to the lot of anyone. He was a profound thinker and writer, thoroughly versed in all branches of human knowledge. His unpublished manuscripts almost equal in extent the books he published, and *they* are of surprising size and quantity. But he did his work quietly and unobtrusively. There was nothing contentious or combative about him. What he wrote, he gave to the world to be accepted by anyone whose reason led him to do so. In the *second place*, his genius was unusually well-balanced. Like most of us today, he believed wholeheartedly in the value of scientific fact and experimental research as the basis for sound thinking. But he believed equally wholeheartedly in the validity of human reason. He knew that just as our senses are adapted for apprehending the facts themselves, so our reasoning faculties are adapted to the apprehension of the causes and purposes behind facts. Swedenborg's common-sense reasoning about even the profoundest things in life is one of his most outstanding characteristics. With it all, he was essentially religious. He saw that the only true philosophy is one that recognises an Infinite Cause, a Divine centre of all things. Most

modern philosophers admit that this is the most satisfactory hypothesis in regard to the existence of mind and matter that has so far been put forward. In the *third place*, he made a most astounding claim. He claimed that at the age of 56, he was admitted into full consciousness of the next world, so that he was as alive to its phenomena and in as intimate intercourse with its inhabitants, as a man is in regard to this world and his fellow-creatures, and that he continued this two-fold life till he died at the age of 84. Some of you will immediately think of modern spiritualism. But his case was entirely different. He was no medium. He himself talked and discussed with spirits and angels. His own rational mind was as active and as critical of what he experienced as an ordinary rational man is of what he experiences in this world. Swedenberg states that while other people in the past had had visions, and communications from the other world, no one had ever experienced the peculiar two-fold consciousness into which he was brought and in which he was kept continually. It was Divinely vouchsafed to him for a Divine purpose. A new age was coming upon the world when greater freedom and a more intellectual outlook was to develop in the race, and for that purpose a New Revelation was necessary. He was the instrument of that Revelation.

That was his claim and a very astonishing one, you must admit. And the strange thing is that Swedenborg did not attempt to make disciples, nor to found any Church or any secret community. He made no profit out of his books. He sought no fame. He merely wrote and published for all the world, what are called his "theological writings", in which the New Revelation is expounded from every point of view, with reasons and proofs in full. Everything else in his life is overshadowed by this claim. If it is true, it is a wonderful thing. If it is illusory, there must be some explanation. But his books are so different from what you would expect, that no

explanation has been found. Even modern psychology cannot explain it. Swedenborg was unique.

Let me give you a few more facts about his life. He was the son of a Swedish Lutheran Minister. The family was associated with the important Mining Industry of Sweden, and was well-connected. Swedenborg had an excellent education at Upsala University, went abroad for 5 years for further study—England, France, Holland, Germany—and after his return home, was given a post by Charles XII in the Royal Board of Mines. His bent was practical. He learnt many crafts for his own edification, he showed great aptitude for mathematics, physics and engineering. Also for commerce, currency, industry and anything conducing to the welfare of his country. He believed in being of use to humanity. But his interests extended to all sciences, geology, astronomy, chemistry, anatomy, psychology. There was hardly any side of life that he did not enter into with zest. He wrote a number of treatises, small and large, on a great variety of subjects. He started the first scientific periodical in Sweden. He wrote the first Algebra in Swedish. He made many suggestions for improving the Mining Industry, and in the big 3-volumed work on Mineralogy which he published later is a complete description of all the copper and iron mines in North and Central Europe. To compile this, he made other journeys abroad, and became a well-travelled man, able to converse in several languages. A member of the Swedish House of Nobles, he took an active part in general deliberations, though he kept himself free from all political parties. After publishing his Mining work which contained also a careful and reasoned hypothesis about the creation of matter and the origin of the sun and planets, he turned his special attention to the study of the human body and brain, feeling sure that he could derive from it a knowledge of the nature and functioning of the soul. He published one large work and part of another on this subject, and left a large quantity of unpublished manuscripts.

I have not time to detail how these various books he published show him to have been far ahead of his own times, and, by careful analysis and induction, to have anticipated many important conclusions that later experiment and research have verified. His theory of matter is only one instance out of many. We think the discovery that the atom can be broken down, and is composed of protons and electrons which are of a different order from the atom itself is a new discovery of this century. The experimental proof of it certainly is new. But Swedenborg's reasoned theory, while expressed in different terms, was in essence the same. Likewise with his account of the origin of the planets from the solar ocean. Also with his treatment of the senses and the brain as the physical basis for the mind. And so with many other things. Swedenborg was really a modern, who lived 200 years ago. But he wrote in Latin. Many of his manuscripts have only been translated and published within recent years. Some have never yet been translated. And one reason why many of you have so little knowledge of this great man, is that until everything of his has been published and a careful and unbiassed study of his work undertaken, full justice cannot be done to him. His genius cannot yet be accorded the fame that it deserves.

In addition to the question of his genius, there is his astounding claim. It is such an extraordinary claim, that people just turn away from it without investigating it. And I am not surprised. There have been so many "false prophets" with fanciful, and generally very superficial panaceas, that sensible people are shy of even looking into such a claim. But the profound and reasoned philosophies contained in Swedenborg's books are the reverse of superficial. It was while he was writing his second book on the soul, that his spiritual experiences began. They began with remarkable dreams which grew in frequency and intensity, followed by various kinds of instructive vision. He learnt that he was to undertake a new work and that all his past



life had been a preparation for it. After one special vision in which he was Divinely instructed about the work he was to do and in which he was promised Divine Illustration, he found himself in direct consciousness of the other world, able to see and hear the things in that world, to talk with good and bad spirits, and to understand how different and yet how similar life there is to life here. His descriptions and explanations are full of beauty, reasonable, satisfying, but many of them seem strange and unexpected at first. But they are all very simply told, just as concise and lucid and concrete as his descriptions of the human body had been. They require a far more careful study than they have ever received, for they throw a great deal of light on every kind of psychological experience.

Swedenborg certainly believed in the reality of his experiences and of the "commission" he had received. How did he set about it? How would *you* have set about it? *He told no one.* He avoided all publicity. He retired from the Board of Mines on half pay; he abandoned his own philosophical work and quietly set himself to a new and tremendous task. He spent several years learning from his constant intercourse with the other world all that he could about the life there. His culture and scientific training and his wide practical experience enabled him to observe, and analyse what he saw and heard, and under the illustration that was promised to him, he could avoid being deceived by malicious spirits, to apprehend the constitution and order of the next world, and to understand its phenomena. Also, during these same years, he began an intensive and comparative study of the Bible, perfecting himself in Hebrew and Greek for the purpose. Again, by the promised illustration, he was enabled to perceive in it a spiritual sense that had, it is true, been thought to exist, but for which no key had ever yet been discovered. He found the key in the connection between the spiritual and natural worlds. Only when this double preparation was completed, did he begin to write and publish the many

theological works that are associated with his name, culminating in a last comprehensive work entitled *The True Christian Religion*, written when he was 82 years of age. He published these various works in England and Holland, travelling from Sweden several times for the purpose. Finally, in 1772 after foretelling the day of his death several weeks in advance, he passed into the spiritual world on that very day while in London. What did the people who knew him think of him? They all testify to his lovable and friendly character, his wide knowledge and erudition, his practical ability and his blameless life. Many eminent and notable men since his day, including Balzac, Emerson, Coleridge, Carlyle, Coventry Patmore have spoken of him in the highest terms. Such phrases as "the sanest intellect our age has seen", "the greatest man that has lived on this planet" have been used about him. His books are clear and straight-forward in expression, profound in character, yet not above the understanding of any ordinary man or woman. But as they involve a new and comprehensive faith, and as faith is an individual matter, they are naturally for individual acceptance. They present a view of life that, if you accept it, makes life a very worthwhile thing. Today people are everywhere looking for a new religious philosophy. One has certainly been provided in Swedenborg's works. If his claim is valid, it was Divinely provided. This can be said that nothing that has been discovered since his day has discredited its reasonableness. His description of Heaven and Hell is more comprehensive and profound than anything so far arrived at by spiritism. His explanations of Christian Doctrine remove all the ambiguities and difficulties with which it has been encumbered. His statements of the nature of the Divine Being and of creation are both simple and profound at the same time. His books present an analysis of human psychology in all its aspects, that penetrates below the surface-mechanisms and even below the unconscious urges that present-day writers speak of. His spiritual history of mankind gives a new reading to comparative religion. His books touch on so many things—memory,

mental development, heredity, freewill, Divine Providence, marriage, disease, difference between men and animals, inspiration, that only a constant study of them will reveal their universality and the astonishing harmony that runs through them all. But can we believe his testimony? That is the problem that Swedenborg presents to every reader.

His books are published cheaply enough by several institutions for that purpose, and several have been translated into a number of languages, so that anyone who wishes can read one and judge for himself. "Heavenly Doctrine" has been republished in 20 different languages to celebrate this Anniversary.

Whether you think his writings are a New Revelation, or whether you think that in some unexplained way - and it will need some explaining - they are a product of his own mind, Swedenborg lived an unique life; he was a miracle of human effort and industry; he was a profound and original thinker; and the spirit of all his writings is the spirit of love and usefulness. In contrast with some of the rather depressing pronouncements of to-day, his is a philosophy of enlightened faith, hope and charity. Perhaps I should not say his, for he maintained that they were Divinely given him and that he was only an instrument. His books are being read more eagerly and more widely than ever before. And that is why it has been thought fitting to celebrate his 250th anniversary by broadcasting a short account of his life and work, so that everyone may have some acquaintance with the record of most remarkable and lovable man.

G. M. Annalathangal,  
Vellore

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