

Swedenborgianism

also known as *The New Church, the Church of New Jerusalem*.

Founder: Emanuel Swedenborg, born in Stockholm, Sweden in 1688. Died in 1772. Of course, members of this group deny that Emanuel Swedenborg is the author of the religion, but will admit that it draws its primary theology from his writings.

Headquarters: No single headquarters. The North American headquarters is located in Newtonville, MA.

Membership: 25,000 to 50,000 world wide.

Doctrines: Denies the Vicarious Atonement, the Trinity, and deity of the Holy Spirit. It holds to Christ as divine. All religions lead to God, though all are not equally enlightened. One of its goals is to bring the world together under a new religious understanding. It teaches a need for Christianity to undergo a rebirth — according to Swedenborgian interpretations. The Bible is the inspired word of God with two levels: the historical and the deeper spiritual one. Regarding the Trinity, a Swedenborg pastor said, "The Christian trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are aspects of God just as soul, body, and activities are aspects of each one of us." There is no personal devil. Instead, the devil is the personification of human evil. Hell is corrupted human society. The Scriptures are best interpreted through the writings of Swedenborg. Angels go through cycles of purity of character where they are sometimes closer and at other times further from God. Swedenborg stated that the Acts and Epistles were not inspired as are the four Gospels and the Book of Revelation. There is no physical resurrection. After death, a person becomes an angel or an evil spirit. Angels are not supernatural creations of God. Position in the afterlife is based on "the kind of life we have chosen while here on earth." At a person's death, his mind falls asleep for three days in a place called the world of the spirits. Afterwards, he awakens spirits who've died before help him adjust. There is marriage in heaven.

Origins: Emanuel Swedenborg was born on January 29, 1688 (died 1772) in Stockholm. His father was a Lutheran minister. Emanuel was very bright and had an inquisitive mind. He was particularly interested in science and religion. In the former, he was recognized as an expert in geology and he also studied astronomy, cosmology, and physics. In 1744 he was stricken with a severe delirium which seems to have affected his mind for the rest of his life since many trance states were attributed to him as his life progressed. In 1745 he had a vision where loathsome creatures seemed to crawl on the walls of his room. Then a man appeared who claimed to be God. This apparition said that Emanuel was to be the one who would communicate the teachings of the unseen realm to the people of the world. He would be the means by which God would further reveal Himself to the world.

Publications: *Arcana Coelestia*: The Earths in the Universe. The 35 volumes of writings by Swedenborg.

Comments: This is a dangerous mystical non-Christian religion. Its denial of the Trinity and the Holy Spirit, the vicarious atonement, and rejection of Acts and the Pauline epistles clearly set it outside of Christian orthodoxy.

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