

SWEDENBORG'S WRITINGS ELECTED TO UNESCO'S *MEMORY OF THE WORLD*



United Nations Educational,
Scientific and Cultural Organization

by Ragnar Boyesen

Two Swedish writers who have influenced the world's culture, Emanuel Swedenborg and Astrid Lindgren, were honored at a special seminar on November 8th, 2005, in Stockholm, Sweden.

The seminar was arranged by the Swedish UNESCO Council to inform the public of the two unique libraries selected by UNESCO for its Memory of the World International Register. As a cultural arm of the United Nations, UNESCO strives to document and preserve cultural treasures throughout the world.

This seminar marked the recognition of the importance of Emanuel Swedenborg's archives and that of the renowned author of children's books, Astrid Lindgren.

On behalf of the Swedish Royal Academy of Sciences, Professor Dr. Inge Jonsson, who originally proposed the Swedenborg archive for nomination, received a framed UNESCO memorial of acceptance. A brass plaque having The Memory of the World designation will be placed at the Royal Academy of Sciences, which cares for the more than twenty thousand pages of Swedenborg's original manuscripts.

Eva Hermansson, representing the Swedish UNESCO Council, explained that the international effort to create The Memory of the World Register started in 1997 as the prominent part of the familiar UNESCO World Heritage List. To date the register consists of 121 international collections of material of value to humanity from 57 countries on all continents. Selection of each library or museum is considered a unique honor to its parent country.

Sweden's national archivist, Jan Dahlin, described the selecting process.

At first, the committee supposed that Swedenborg's influence was important only in northern Europe!

When the advertising for this seminar was being prepared, he explained,

an error was discovered in the heading of the program. It had UNESCO's unique register down as "*Memory of the Word.*" (Perhaps in more ways than one this mistake indicates an underlying dignity which is gently nudging the world to realize its importance.)

To explain the shifting fortunes of the collection of Swedenborg's manuscripts, Dr. Jonsson gave an inspiring account of its history. He outlined Swedenborg's development and described the document collection donated by the family after his death. A whole chest of documents was carted to the Royal Academy of Sciences where Swedenborg had been a member.

Efforts to have all the manuscripts collected and photolithographed were begun. This was first undertaken by the

Rev. Dr. Rudolf Tafel who was employed 1869-1870 to investigate, coordinate, and see the manuscript collection through this process. Production of 110 sets of 40 separate volumes, 500 pages each, was underwritten from America at a total cost of \$45,000. The copying and binding were done in Tubingen, Germany and the volumes were later donated to major libraries in Europe. Funds for this noble effort ran out after one-fourth of the collection was completed.

Late in the 1880's, however, the final reproduction in 18 handsome volumes by a new photo-type process took place in Stockholm. It was financed by friends of the New Church in America and completed under the able direction of the Rev. Alfred Stroh.

Dr. Jonsson concluded his talk by remarking that no one becomes a prophet in his own country. Obtaining all the information relating to this manuscript collection was seen as a project for the future.

Some readers may wish to view the information on Swedenborg on the UNESCO web page: <http://portal.unesco.org>.

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[Emphases added by Candace Frazee.]



Pages of Emanuel Swedenborg's original dream notes.



UNESCO—the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization was founded on 16 November 1945. UNESCO has launched the *Memory of the World Programme* to guard against collective amnesia calling upon the preservation of the valuable archive holdings and library collections all over the world ensuring their wide dissemination. Documentary heritage reflects the diversity of languages, peoples, and cultures. It is the mirror of the world and its memory. But this memory is fragile. Every day, irreplaceable parts of this memory disappear for ever.

Sweden—Emanuel Swedenborg Collection

Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) is one of the internationally best known of Swedish writers. After a successful career as a scientist and a technician he went through a religious crisis in the 1740's, which ended in a revelation commanding him to devote the rest of his life to interpreting the Holy Scripture and reporting what he had seen and heard in the world of spirits and angels.

In obedience to this divine task, he spent his last twenty-five years writing a great number of books, in which he attempted restoring the internal sense of the Biblical Word, as he understood it. After his death in 1772, his manuscripts, some 20,000 pages, were donated by his heirs to the Royal Academy of Sciences in Stockholm, of which Swedenborg was a member.



It is one of the biggest existing collections of manuscripts from the 18th century, and besides one of the very few in modern times that has served as the basis for a new Christian church. Swedenborg's message has found many receivers all over the world, and at least some of them look upon his manuscripts as relics. Because of their holy status many of the papers were also reproduced in a photolithographic edition as early as around 1870 by American and British Swedenborg congregations, and the technique was then used for the first time on a large scale. There are still quite a few Swedenborg societies and churches extant, particularly in the United States and the United Kingdom. Some of these are translating and publishing his writings in new editions.



Dear **SILA** Readers,

I absolutely cannot contain my excitement that Swedenborg's Theological Writings and all his other manuscripts—scientific, political, letters, diaries—are designated as so precious to the world, that they are now listed with the United Nations as something to be preserved and protected for centuries to come!! What an honour and a forethinking move on UNESCO's part that the world is not even truly aware of yet.

I think it great *and appropriate* that the program to announce Swedenborg's works registered by UNESCO had the "wrong title" on it because the "wrong title" is absolutely correct as Rev. Ragnar Boyesen pointed out in his article! Swedenborg's Writings **ARE The Memory of the Word**. He *did* give us the internal meaning of God's Word!

Remember, Swedenborg told us that there is no such thing as an accident. This "error" reminded me of the "error" that *Life* magazine made when they picked *The 100 Most Important Events and People of the Past 1000 Years* (1998). They picked Swedish botanist, Carl Linnaeus as #100, but printed Swedenborg's photo instead of Linnaeus's "in error"!

There are no accidents! Swedenborg *is* one of the most influential persons in history and what he wrote on paper *is and will* be studied for thousands of years to come.

If you are one of the few that have discovered Swedenborg's Writings and because of them are consciously thinking and living as a *new* Christian, it is your duty to preserve and protect his books, and to share them with others because someone did that before you... *for you!*

Thinking of you,

Candace

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