

## Varieties of Photographic Experience: Frederick H. Evans and the Lantern Slide

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## British Art Show 8

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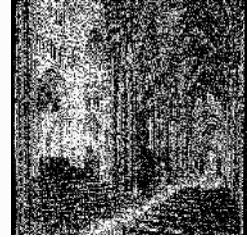
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## Varieties of Photographic Experience: Frederick H. Evans and the Lantern Slide

Article by Kara Fiedorek

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### Abstract

Frederick H. Evans (1853–1943) spent the turn of the twentieth century photographing English and French cathedrals, always using the church to figure a particularly late Victorian alarm at the lost vitality these medieval structures symbolized. This article illuminates his art’s deep religious stakes by exploring the mystical resonances of his stated preference for the lantern slide as a support for his images, a matter that has been long overlooked despite his extensive articles on the topic. Evans’s cathedral photographs are most fully comprehended when his promotion of glass over paper is acknowledged and interpreted through his affiliation to Swedenborgianism.

In an iconic photograph, Frederick H. Evans (1853–1943) frames Lincoln Cathedral in an ethereal, weightless mist above the industrial town below, its spired towers reaching heavenward away from the patchwork of properties in the foreground (1898; fig. 1). In Evans’s words, this general view suggests “the crowning effect” the cathedral gives the East Midlands city, “the grandeur, the atmosphere and sense of quietude, the feeling of past greatness, the aloofness from the current and contemporary”.<sup>1</sup> Evans spent nearly three decades photographing English and French cathedrals, always using the church to figure a particularly late Victorian alarm at the lost vitality these medieval structures symbolized. Cathedrals ameliorated a pervasive sense of religious and cultural enfeeblement felt on both sides of the Atlantic at the turn of the century: Henry Adams wrote in the same years that “Ennui had driven him to Chartres” to learn what that “mass of encrusted architecture meant to its builders”.<sup>2</sup> In defiance of quickening amateur technologies that shaped this nascent “snapshot” era, Evans maintained a slow and deliberate photographic process that brought him into communion with the antiquity and authenticity of ecclesiastical architecture.<sup>3</sup>



Figure 1

Frederick H. Evans, *Lincoln Cathedral from the Castle*, 1898, platinum print, 23.8 × 18.8 cm. George Eastman House, Rochester, NY. Digital image courtesy of George Eastman Museum.

Photography for Evans was akin to a religious practice involving time, labour, and repetition like the multi-generational construction of cathedrals, and he habitually spent weeks studying them and waiting for the moment of revelation. His friend and colleague Alvin Langdon Coburn recalled later that “The visit of Evans to a cathedral town was a solemn Rite. He went there and lived.”<sup>4</sup> As the general view of Lincoln Cathedral’s thin, double-bordered mount and dramatic, high-contrast printing in platinum attests, Evans was not only a perceptive and skilful photographer but also a creative *presenter* of photographs. His innovative framing devices and exhibition designs for the London photographic club the Linked Ring (1892–1910) earned him universal acclaim, while they simultaneously expressed a newly physical notion of experiencing religious architecture through the photograph.<sup>5</sup>

Today Evans holds a significant place in the history of photography for such pristine platinum prints, but this was only part of his contribution to the international campaign for photography as art connected with turn-of-the-century Pictorialism. An under-studied but essential component of his work is the more than one thousand lantern slides he made in the first twenty years of his career, until failing eyesight forced him to stop producing slides in 1902. This abrupt conclusion partially explains the almost total lack of attention to this format in existing scholarship on Evans, which is undoubtedly due in part to a perceived incompatibility between the mass-market associations of slides with the career of a pre-eminent art photographer.<sup>6</sup> However, the process of making photographs of Anglican and Catholic structures *on glass* had an enduring relevance to the way Evans conceived of his elegiac images on similar themes *on paper*. The print of Lincoln Cathedral pictures a faith that was becoming increasingly remote to modern culture, while the lantern slides he made of the cathedral recuperate this same loss in a more directly experiential, bodily, and, as this article will argue, mystical way.

Evans approached the transparent medium in an essentially redemptive manner: he advocated vocally in the photographic press throughout the early 1900s for pictorial photographers to rescue the potentially inartistic lantern slide, by then firmly associated with dry lecturers and spectacular entertainment, for the purposes of making art.<sup>7</sup> More than any other format, transparencies for Evans dramatized enduring connections between photography and divine light, and their centrality to what many viewers have identified as the spiritual presence of light in his photographs merits further attention.<sup>8</sup> If the genesis of the photographic image in light was read in theological terms immediately upon its conception, the lantern slide that visibly operated by a stream of light contributed in salient ways to Evans's broader project of eulogizing sacred architecture.

The significance of religion to nineteenth- and early twentieth-century photography has largely escaped modern viewers, though matters of faith frequently shaped how photographers approached their medium and how contemporary audiences read their images. Despite a strong bias within the literature on Evans towards aesthetics, consistent with the larger tendency to excise social and historical dimensions from the discussion of Pictorialism, the religious motivations and meanings of his photography have been studied in connection with several of his works on paper, especially those that make the link explicit in titles taken from the Church of England's Book of Common Prayer.<sup>9</sup> This article extends and complicates that approach by exploring the mystical resonances of his stated preference for glass as a support, a matter that has been long overlooked despite the fact that he published extensively on the topic.<sup>10</sup> Evans's lantern slides of Lincoln Cathedral, made in 1895 and presented in lectures for photographic societies between 1896 and 1902, offer a unique opportunity to revisit this formative aspect of his practice and its relation to his deeply held mystical beliefs. Evans found theoretical and formal inspiration in the enthusiastic writings of the German mystic Jakob Böhme (1575–1624), who sought to re-absorb belief in guidance by divine impulses into Lutheranism, and principally in the work of the Swedish mystic Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772), who investigated the divine properties of light and seeing and on whom Evans published.<sup>11</sup>

The manner in which Evans's images of cathedrals embody a way of perceiving religious space that is indebted to Christian mysticism is clear in his writings on Swedenborg, which resonate conceptually with his many articles on photography on glass. The physical format in which his slides were exhibited at one representative lecture on the architectural history of Lincoln Cathedral delivered in 1902, likely before a London photographic club, also illuminates this affinity between photography and faith by fostering a sympathetic engagement with projected imagery of the church.<sup>12</sup> Evans's Swedenborgian belief system not only provided a subtext but also shaped the nature of this and similar lectures, probing beyond the realm of newly prevalent photographic reproductions of famous works of art and buildings that simply duplicated their referents. Evans's methods were informed by religious ideas whose ultimate goal was to regain the originary state of unmediated spiritual vision described by Swedenborg: photography on glass was the purest expression of this project.

### **Photography on glass and Swedenborgian influx**

Pronouncements of an ebbing faith were pervasive in Victorian and Edwardian Britain. Already in 1843, Thomas Carlyle raised the alarm about religion's replacement by utilitarian philosophies and scientific progress: "There is no longer any God for us! God's Laws are become a Greatest-Happiness Principle, a Parliamentary Expediency; the Heavens an Astronomical Time-Keeper; a butt for Herschel telescopes to shoot science at."<sup>13</sup> The challenges presented to religious belief

by positivism continued to gain force and energy throughout the century. By 1873, Matthew Arnold wrote that to “re-inthron[e]” the Bible to its former supremacy in English consciousness would be “as impossible as to restore the feudal system, or the belief in witches”.<sup>14</sup> The overarching sense at the turn of the century that orthodox Christianity was discredited, even at an end, gives special poignancy to Evans’s photographs of deserted cathedrals, where pews await worshippers who never arrive (fig. 2). Evans later became known for asking deans to remove the pews for the hours he spent making negatives, revealing his desire to evacuate signs of modern life from his views. For Evans, the furnishings of worship had become superfluous: the buildings themselves provided the genuine religious experience that he sought to capture in his images.<sup>15</sup> In this sense, the emptiness of Evans’s cathedrals rescued these spaces from parochialism and their fraught histories as Catholic structures violently appropriated by Anglicans in the sixteenth century, offering them up to a more universal, potentially agnostic, spectator.<sup>16</sup>



Figure 2

Frederick H. Evans, *South Aisle of Lincoln Cathedral*, 1895\*, lantern slide, 8.5 × 8.5 cm. University of Nottingham. Digital image courtesy of Manuscripts and Special Collections, The University of Nottingham.

Growing up in London in the 1850s and 1860s during the period of feverish church building and restoration that followed the Oxford Movement, Evans saw firsthand that a society losing its interest in religious tradition continued to invest in the physical authority of churches, even as churchgoing itself declined. The historian Clive Field estimates that by the Edwardian era, only one quarter of adults, largely women, attended mass on any given Sunday.<sup>17</sup> Evans blamed ecclesiastical institutions for the absence of a “vital religious sense” among the people: “It must be that the Churches and their ministers have lost hold, by their manifest unrelatedness to daily life, their unreality, the impossibility of making their doctrines real and valid in practice.”<sup>18</sup> There is a pointed irony in the fact that Evans’s lectures on Lincoln Cathedral and similar structures brought his early twentieth-century audiences—exactly those who went to church less frequently—into a long and meaningful encounter with a cathedral, forcing them to linger on

something that was becoming increasingly alien in lived experience. Given that slide presentations require an audience, the presumably occupied chairs of the secular lecture space symbolically substituted for the vacant pews on view.

Already accustomed to the rise of secularism to some extent, Evans's late Victorian and Edwardian contemporaries often looked nostalgically upon religion and religious subjects. In his seminal *Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902), William James was less eager to throw the baby out with the bathwater than some of his forebears, recognizing that religion "adds to life an enchantment which is not rationally or logically deducible from anything else".<sup>19</sup> If religion was to survive, it had to be a modern, everyday kind, one that was more flexible than what Emerson called the "withered traditional church yielding dry catechisms".<sup>20</sup> Herein lay the attraction of the eighteenth-century Swedish mystic Emanuel Swedenborg, whose voluminous, anti-creedal writings on the permeability of the natural and spiritual worlds made Evans "all the more impatient with the official pulpit".<sup>21</sup> Although Swedenborg never commanded a huge popular following in the "market situation" of religious volunteerism that emerged in industrial England, he intrigued many artistic and intellectual luminaries in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, including Blake, Coleridge, Emerson, and Henry James, Sr.<sup>22</sup> Evans primarily encountered Swedenborg through James (whom he considered "perhaps the most acute and profound theological thinker of his century") and even more thoroughly through the scholar and homeopathic physician James John Garth Wilkinson (1812–1899).<sup>23</sup> Evans wrote to Wilkinson that his English translations and several volumes on Swedenborg from the 1840s to 1890s were "celestial food" for the photographer.<sup>24</sup>

Where Swedenborg offered a fundamental "fullness of message", Evans valued Wilkinson's interpretation of his mystical writings for "the perfect picture-making effect of so many of the sentences". Evans corresponded with Wilkinson in 1886 and wrote his biography to celebrate the centenary of his birth in 1912, which is essentially a short book on Swedenborg. Part of these letters details a publication Evans proposed that would include selections from Wilkinson's writings, which he considered "emphatically the public medicine now most needed", to gain Wilkinson and Swedenborgian thought a larger popular following. Evans wanted to title this *Christian Verities for Daily Life Being Passages from the Writings of James John Garth Wilkinson*, and to organize it around Swedenborgian themes such as Divine Influx, the Second Coming, Incarnation, and Justification by Faith Alone, including those excerpts from Wilkinson "most valuable and in most urgent need for the awakening and teaching of this recalcitrant age". In his mid-seventies at the time, Wilkinson politely declined and the anthology never materialized. However, from his studies of the Swedish mystic through the English author, Evans formulated an informal "workaday Gospel" and a conviction that "the practical religious sense, a living for and in communion with the invisible, must be made to invade, to permeate the business life".<sup>25</sup> Swedenborgian theories of vision infused his own professional life as a photographer and form a critical subtext to his photographs, especially those on glass.

In terms of his photography, Evans looked to Swedenborg especially for a philosophy of perception, an extrasensory form of sight, and a spiritual context for artistic form, rather than a creed. Swedenborg represented a self-consciously modern, enlightened form of Christian thought, one that was more accommodating to the materialism and scientific progress of the late nineteenth century.<sup>26</sup> He rejected the idea that a large spatial, temporal, or metaphysical gap exists between this world and that of the dead; inspired by Romans 1:20 ("For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made"), he believed that nature was created to clothe the spiritual. As Henry James, Sr., put

it: “nature for Swedenborg is not a being but a seeming (it is apparitional, phenomenal); it is a shadow, not substance.”<sup>27</sup> The Mystic’s hypothesis of our constant nexus with an invisible world, where a person is successful according to the measure of his or her obedience to inspiration from beyond, resonated with Evans’s approach to photography from the beginning. Evans started his career in photography by making photomicrographs as lantern slides for his friend George Smith in 1883 (fig. 3); he won an award for these from the Royal Photographic Society in 1887, at a time when he was deeply engaged in Swedenborgian thought and corresponding with Wilkinson.<sup>28</sup> As the image of a cross-section of a sea urchin’s spine suggests, the camera immediately became a tool of making visible an invisible world and extending the range of human vision—a religiously rooted precursor to the New Vision photography emerging after the First World War. According to categories proposed by James Coates’s *Photographing the Invisible* (1911), an interest in the “material invisible” (such as X-rays or photomicrographs) gave way to one in the “immaterial invisible” (which Coates equates with the psychic but could also be more generally metaphysical) for Evans as he moved from scientific to architectural views.<sup>29</sup> Throughout, the light-sensitivity of the gelatin bromide emulsion on his glass negatives provided a model of sensitivity to unseen or interior forces, generally referred to as “influx” by Swedenborg.<sup>30</sup>

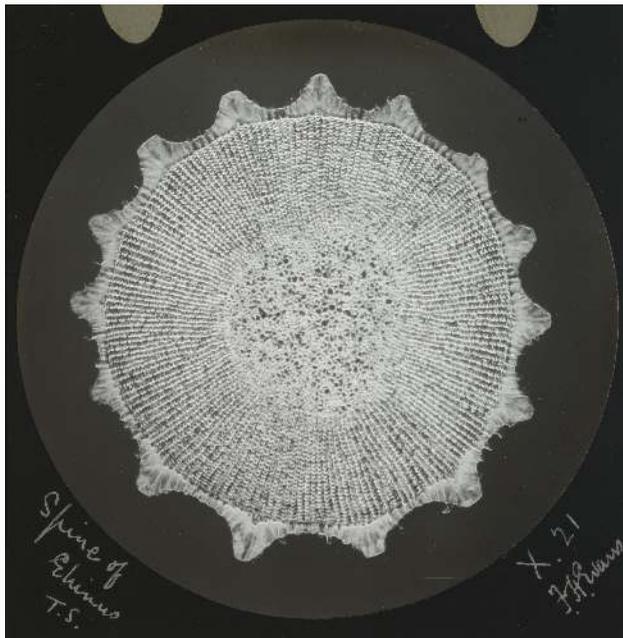


Figure 3

Frederick H. Evans, *Spine of Echinus, T.S. x21*, 1886, lantern slide, 7.1 × 7.1 cm. J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles. Digital image courtesy of Digital image courtesy of the Getty’s Open Content Program.

Evans’s descriptions of the ontology of photography and Swedenborgian perception are closely related. Where photography “only recalls; it does not create”, an attuned individual might discern the spiritual significance of the visible world as outlined in Swedenborg’s theory of correspondences:<sup>31</sup>

*A genius is one who is abnormally sensitive and open to influx; has a finer receptivity. Man makes nothing of himself; . . . We only form, give body and appearance to what already*

*exists latently, or is given us from other-where.*<sup>32</sup>

Evans's religiously inflected photography was a uniquely powerful medium for insisting upon those *latent* presences beyond the reach of the naked eye and for educating one's senses in detecting the living reality underlying the surfaces of things. A better understanding of his religious beliefs gives new meaning to his demonstrated interest in printing his photographs of cathedrals as lantern slides beginning in the mid-1880s. In a Swedenborgian epistemology where the material and celestial worlds are contiguous and in constant communication, Evans felt this veil to be at its thinnest in the sacred spaces of cathedrals: the glass transparency materialized this permeability.

Though it displays some of the same affinities, this extrasensory perception differs significantly from the popular phenomenon of spirit photography, where double-exposed prints brought portrait sitters into communion with the spectral image of the recently departed. While the photographic press generally considered spirit photographers "barefaced impostors", the late Victorian British public countenanced the veracity of their images far more than in the United States and France, so that they particularly riled a purist like Evans.<sup>33</sup> As a self-described "red-hot enthusiast" for pure photography, Evans adamantly opposed any such multiple exposures and believed that only a process of perceiving the subject slowly and over successive encounters, not in the spectacle of a séance or a commercial studio, could yield meaningful correspondences.<sup>34</sup> He considered spirit photographs "easy puerilities" that told only of the psychic needs of humans, not heavenly communications.<sup>35</sup> As someone sympathetic to Christian mysticism, he believed visions were spontaneously given by the grace of God, rather than purposefully summoned as for spiritualists.<sup>36</sup>

Swedenborg reported experiencing what his late nineteenth-century readers, most notably William James, called "photisms", or flashes of light, during his moments of deepest insight.<sup>37</sup> For Evans, camera technology had very specific mystical associations given the opening of the lens to allow for influx, the plate's receptivity to immaterial forces, and the final image's augmentation of the reality of the unseen. As Evans told one interviewer: "I myself cannot paint or draw; but I have Vision, and photography lets me put down what I see."<sup>38</sup> Swedenborg described the state of communication in the "Most Ancient Church" as an "internal respiration" of perceptions.<sup>39</sup> Given his presumption of a direct and untroubled transfer from his perception as a viewing subject to the final print or slide, it is easy to imagine how Evans regarded photography as the fulfilment of Swedenborg's encouragement to relearn an immediate, direct, and involuntary vision that was not reliant on representation but was more akin to breathing. Evans's glass slides reclaimed some sense of unmediated contact with the infinite that overcame the seeming remoteness of the experience of cathedrals. The lantern slide that transmitted light, physically moving rays between seemingly separate spheres at the border of which the photographic glass stood as both dividing and uniting line, was in profound sympathy with his religious perspective.

### **Magic lanterns as religious experience**

In parsing the connection between Evans's photography on glass and Swedenborgian mysticism, it is worth thinking in broader terms about the experience of the magic lantern show around 1900 and how it structured the reception of the photographic image.<sup>40</sup> In *Swann's Way* (1913), Marcel Proust marvelled at the miraculous vividness of the magic lantern that distracted him from his childhood fits of bad temper:

*After the fashion of the master-builders and glass-painters of Gothic days, it substituted for the opaqueness of my walls an impalpable iridescence, supernatural phenomena of many colours, in which legends were depicted as on a shifting and transitory window . . . The body of Golo himself, being of the same supernatural substance as his steed's, overcame every material obstacle—everything that seemed to bar his way—by taking it as an ossature and absorbing it into himself: even the door-knob—on which, adapting themselves at once, his red cloak or his pale face, still as noble and as melancholy, floated invincibly—would never betray the least concern at this transvertebration. And, indeed, I found plenty of charm in these bright projections, which seemed to emanate from a Merovingian past and shed around me the reflections of such ancient history.<sup>41</sup>*

Conjoining iconography from the Early Middle Ages and the projected image, Proust characterizes the magic lantern as a vehicle that moves the experience of a stained glass window into new sites and contexts, namely, his bedroom. It is safe to say, however, that Proust was not talking about photographs when he describes colourful imagery from this medieval legend, because Proust generally considered photographs banal, utilitarian, and vulgar.<sup>42</sup> His account of this transubstantiative experience raises an important problem for understanding the context in which Evans produced his lantern slides: in Walter Benjamin's era of mechanical reproduction, had photography robbed the magic lantern of its magic?<sup>43</sup>

As opposed to painting, the prosaic exactitude offered by the camera might seem to undermine Evans's unspoken goal of attaining a higher visionary state. Misty landscapes by the American painter George Inness (1825–1894) have been taken as the pre-eminent expression of Swedenborgian faith in nineteenth-century art, predicated on the idea that spiritual sight is opened when physical sight is compromised.<sup>44</sup> When it came to colour theory, Evans's interpretation of Swedenborg's tenets in a monochrome medium was necessarily looser than Inness's version, where hues held specific spiritual qualities. For Inness, photographic detail offered no gain in meaning: "The memory is the daguerreotype shop of the soul which treasures all God creates through eye and touch. What we painters have to learn is to keep this shop closed in the presence of nature: to see, and not to think we see."<sup>45</sup> Inness apprehended what he called "the reality of the unseen" through a wilful blindness, while Evans sought the same through a cultivated hyper-vision.<sup>46</sup> To be sure, photography's perceived illusionism and pervasiveness in modern culture aligned it more closely with the core of Swedenborgian thought in terms of a descent of religion into everyday life—what Henry James, Sr., called "no longer a Sunday but a week-day divinity, a working God".<sup>47</sup> At the same time as photography provided a desirable vernacular, its presentation in the lantern slide, which relied on light piercing through the solid medium of glass, could evocatively penetrate beyond the surfaces of the visible world.

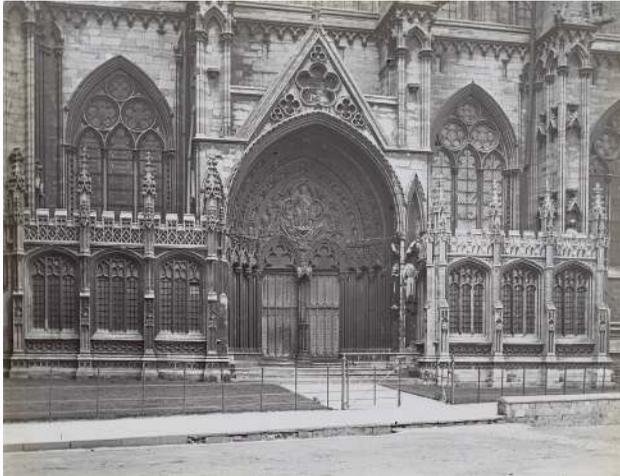


Figure 4

Frederick H. Evans, *Southeast Porch of Lincoln Cathedral, chapels*, circa 1895, lantern slide, 8 × 8 cm. Center for Creative Photography, Tucson, AZ. Digital image courtesy of Center for Creative Photography, Tucson.

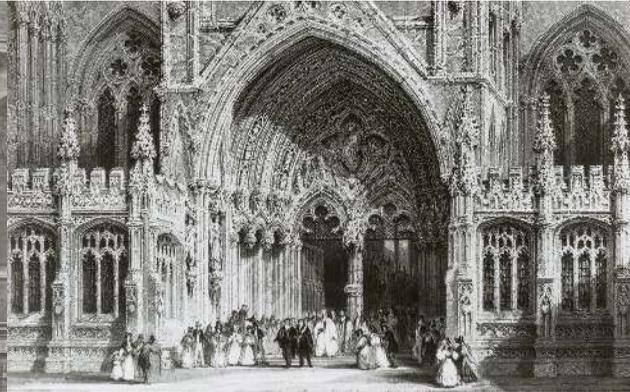


Figure 5

Frederick H. Evans, *Southeast Porch, from an old engraving*, circa 1895, lantern slide, 8 × 8 cm. Center for Creative Photography, Tucson, AZ. Digital image courtesy of Center for Creative Photography, Tucson.

Even before being projected, the fact that lantern slides constituted a positive version of the glass negative—still used by many “serious” photographers like Evans as against the newly available roll film immediately embraced by amateurs—invested the format with primal, auratic qualities. When projected, Evans seems to have thought that photographic transparencies were magical precisely for their ability to viscerally transport the viewer into the scene at hand (figs. 4 and 5). He included other media like an “old” engraving in his lecture on Lincoln Cathedral in 1902 to reinforce this point that photography was more “valuable” and “truthful”. Only when the cathedral itself presented obstacles to photographs (i.e. lack of scaffolding) did he make recourse to lithographs, preferring the “absolute fac-simile photography alone can give”.<sup>48</sup> In this vein, Evans was exceedingly “obstinate” about ideal viewing conditions.<sup>49</sup> A low point of sight made the scene most natural, “so alive and real as to yield the notion that all one has to do is to get up and to walk into the picture before one”, a complementary vehicle for his photographs whose “chief aim” was to “give the irresistible feeling that one *is* in an interior, and that it is fully of light and space”.<sup>50</sup> In principle, the image became coextensive with the interior in which it was projected, so that the photograph was less a discrete picture than an immersive environment dramatically illuminating the darkened space of viewing and suffusing with light any architectural interruptions like Proust’s door-knob. The projected image united the depicted architectural space with the actual architectural space of the lecture hall so that the enlarged photograph even sacralized the presumably non-religious site of the lecture. For instance, the inclusion of walls on either side of one slide pre-empts the lines of a hall and invites the viewer into the meeting-room at the far end, eliding the pictured church and the audience’s space of viewing (fig. 6). As Proust’s magic lantern flooded his childhood bedroom with a medieval legend, the lantern slide brought the Gothic cathedral into a present-tense space.



Figure 6

Frederick H. Evans, *Chapter House at Lincoln Cathedral*, 1895, lantern slide, 8.5 × 8.5 cm. University of Nottingham. Digital image courtesy of Manuscripts and Special Collections, The University of Nottingham.

The insistent immediacy of Evans's photographic lantern lectures was compounded by the enduring connections between both divine providence and light, specifically in the form of a lantern, and between divine agency and photography as *light-writing*. William Holman Hunt's sensationally popular *The Light of the World* (1853) provided a model for images of lanternists as Christ-like wayfarers bearing the message of light to a public in need of salvation. Since the official announcement of photography's invention in 1839, the light of Heaven, the blessed sun, the Eternal eye, and even God himself had consistently been invoked as the true authors of a photograph.<sup>51</sup> Magic lanterns were one technology in a wider network of popular entertainment including the diorama and panorama; though they were by no means exclusively religious, they were seized upon to illustrate the edifying potential of the lecture format and the symbolic valences of light. Indeed, the magic lantern was warmly embraced by religious organizations by the 1890s, from evangelical and missionary groups to temperance societies and Sunday schools, as well as famous American reformers associated with the Social Gospel movement like Jacob Riis, who described his magic lantern lectures on tenement conditions as "fit topics for any sermon".<sup>52</sup> There are even accounts of lantern slide observances in British churches, for example a Good Friday lantern service held in 1902 at St Mary's Church in Torquay, a seaside town in Devon.<sup>53</sup> This rich cultural nexus between light, photography, Christianity, and the magic lantern suggests how the realist view of the photograph as an unmediated duplication of nature gained pronounced religious dimensions in the slide show.

Relative to paper, Evans thought transparencies had a "more potent, more magic power of suggestion".<sup>54</sup> There is a tragic appropriateness to the fact that these images, so invested in engendering a keener vision, should eventually lead to the deterioration of Evans's eyesight,

leading him to work almost exclusively in platinum prints. On the topic of glass versus paper, Evans wrote:

*Photography is an art-method that relies on a presentment of the image given in planes, enveloped in atmosphere, real, and not suggested or simulated by lines or washes; and that fully to exploit these, the final base of the image should be as nearly transparent as the original vehicle, air replaced by glass, so that when one sees the final shaping of our picture, it shall be as nearly free and intangible as any recalling of the original can hope or expect to get. Glass, not paper, I submit, gives the perfect expression of the perfect photograph.*<sup>55</sup>

The ambition here is nothing short of the modernist desire to transcend the material objecthood of the work of art, to etherealize the photograph by making it transient, weightless, and transparent. As Proust would make more explicit a few years later, a sympathetic attraction emerges with the medieval stained glass window, which was an important precedent for this use of transmitted light through glass to dematerialize space. Evans preferred this temporary projection of images onto walls to their chemical absorption into paper, which he felt presented an “arbitrary stoppage” of the image.<sup>56</sup> This helps explain why his lantern slides tend to be more frontal and less oblique than the prints for which he is famous, beyond their straightforwardly instructive purpose. For example, the slide of the Chapter House at Lincoln enfolds the viewer in its space in contrast to the teasing recession and withheld gratification of one of Evans’s well-known prints, *Ely Cathedral: View into Nave* (1900; fig. 7). Evans incorporated a more dynamic sensation of passage or trajectory into the print to compensate for what he understood to be its “stoppage” of the experience. The lantern slide’s conveyance of “innumerable planes inseparably connected”, on the other hand, instantiates a Swedenborgian understanding of nature as having no end but rather an ascent from thing to thing; paper could not accommodate this sense of infinity and flux as effectively.<sup>57</sup>

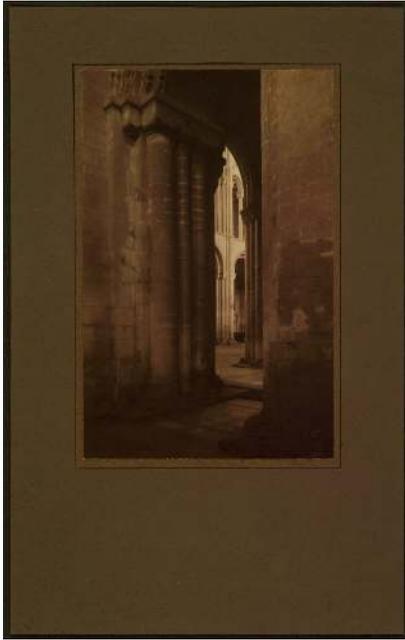


Figure 7

Frederick H. Evans, *Ely Cathedral: View into Nave*, 1900, sepia-toned platinum print, 20.4 × 13.2 cm. Library of Congress, Washington, DC. Digital image courtesy of Library of Congress, Washington.

There were also tremendous differences in the social aspects of viewing a photograph on glass versus one on paper that further supported Evans's aim to help his audience develop "the seeing eye".<sup>58</sup> This focus on religion as a social phenomenon of mystic participation was consonant with the period's great works in comparative religion, from James's *Varieties of Religious Experience* to Emile Durkheim's *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912). Magic lanterns inspired communal viewing in which substantial audiences all focused on one and the same image at a given time rather than picking and choosing from the densely packed salon-style hangings of photographic exhibitions. In place of the contingent meanings existing between different prints on the wall was a radical and deep concentration on a single subject. Evans's performance as lecturer, guiding the audience through each view, was (per Riis) not unlike a sermon on the cathedral, and indeed churches and mission halls were frequent venues for lantern shows in this period. The much larger scale of the photographic image in a lantern show as well as the experience of slides unfolding in time shaped a viewing environment that echoed Evans's own process of training eye and memory through close study. In other words, the phenomenology of Evans's slides worked to counteract the "unreality" of medieval houses of worship in modern life by creating a real-time, virtual experience. Unlike the "abnormal" and "over-actual" stereograph, the optical lantern provided "as perfect a translation as possible" of the original photographic negative, so that Evans could help "fulfill [the lantern's] manifest destiny as the great educational instrument of the future" in teaching his audience how to see a church in all its spiritual significance.<sup>59</sup>



Figure 8

Frederick H. Evans, *Retrochoir at Lincoln Cathedral*, 1895, lantern slide, 8.5 × 8.5 cm. University of Nottingham. Digital image courtesy of Manuscripts and Special Collections, The University of Nottingham.

Evans's pictures counterbalance a lost and regained religious feeling in a way that enacts the corollary between stained glass windows and photography on glass (fig. 8). Fragile Gothic windows had almost always been destroyed by hostile human action over intervening centuries, and this destruction became a ripe metaphor for comparing a glorious, coherent past with a degraded, fragmented present. For Evans in his 1902 lecture, this “makes one again sigh and long for the treasures of old glass that our Philistine forefathers so ruthlessly and stupidly destroyed”, lamenting the demolition of the originals by Puritan soldiers during the English Reformation.<sup>60</sup> As such, the stained glass window symbolized religious conflict and the fragility of one creed's dominion over another, an ugly sectarian history from which Swedenborgians stood apart. What is more, as liminal objects—the early fourteenth-century Dominican Gulielmus Durandus wrote on the dual role of windows to keep out the elements and to allow the light of God to filter in—both windows and lantern slides transmit light rather than merely reflect it, which protracts and redirects photography's genesis in light.<sup>61</sup> Halation in the arched windows gives a true sense of how light dematerializes space, overcoming the limestone's physical confines photographically much like Proust described the effect of the magic lantern as one of *transvertébration*, literally a moving across spinal columns.

The physical force of light in Evans's photographs of cathedrals was equally palpable as projected light in the dark space of the lecture hall. The art historian John Harvey has noted that the magic lantern is technically the opposite of a camera; where the camera takes in light to form the image, the magic lantern emits illumination, concretizing the agency of light.<sup>62</sup> Even in Evans's platinotypes, however, darkness is never truly dark, which connects his slides to the prints that came to dominate his later practice.<sup>63</sup> One critic remarked upon how Evans's treatment of light conveyed an impression of “unseen presence”, while another wrote that his

photographs produce the illogical impression “that there is more light inside a building than there is outside it”.<sup>64</sup> Evans used double-emulsion Sandell film to hold excellent detail in the shadows, which was registered by platinum’s long tonal range despite its low to moderate contrast. As George Bernard Shaw wrote of his friend’s work, “the obscurest detail in the corners seem as delicately penciled by the darkness as the flood of sunshine through window or open door is penciled by the light.”<sup>65</sup>

Marshalling Swedenborgian ideas of correspondence and the reality of the unseen, Evans’s materials emphasized how light forces continuity between spheres that appear physically separate, re-investing the vacant cathedral with spiritual life. This marks a subtle but important difference from the only imagery he credited as a source of inspiration, in J. M. W. Turner’s early watercolours of cathedrals. Though he admired these “tiny masterpieces” for their formal attributes, including their “superb sense of height, bigness, light, atmosphere, grandeur”, they could not embody the scale, duration, visceral three-dimensionality, and mystical potency of his projected photographs.<sup>66</sup>

### **The communication of divine experience at Lincoln Cathedral**

While his 1902 lecture on Lincoln Cathedral was putatively scholarly, it simultaneously exemplified Evans’s tacit ambition to cultivate Swedenborgian vision, a heightened faculty of sight attentive to how the symbolic language of the divine resides in the material world. Moving from the general to the particular, from the outside of the cathedral to the inside, Evans summons the process of influx of divine energy streaming in as he progressively narrows in on details with specific meaning to Swedenborgians. Craftsmanship and attendant issues of scale are a primary modality linking Evans’s lantern slides to a way of seeing inflected by the Christian Mystic. Evans contextualized his image of Lincoln’s intricate choir stalls carved by medieval builders with Augustus Pugin’s commendment of their craftsmanship as “the finest examples of woodwork in the kingdom, both for rarity and beauty of design and for accuracy of workmanship” (fig. 9).<sup>67</sup> Evans was a disciple of William Morris, who used photographic slides to enlarge and replicate medieval typographies for his Kelmscott Press and also designed celebrated stained glass windows for Morris & Co. Both artists recognized in the humble medieval craftsman a purposefulness and even anti-authoritarianism that appealed to their unconventional sensibilities.<sup>68</sup> Evans’s painstaking methods replicated the craftsmanship he pictured: his repeated use of the zoom-in, such as in the stone sculptures of the Judgment Porch, photographically simulates the medieval artisan’s crafting of details and the progressive revelation of information to a visitor to the site.



Figure 9

Frederick H. Evans, *Choir Stalls at Lincoln Cathedral*, 1895, lantern slide, 8.5 × 8.5 cm. University of Nottingham. Digital image courtesy of Manuscripts and Special Collections, The University of Nottingham.

Photo-historian Anne Hammond has argued that selecting from the innumerable planes of focus parallel to the ground glass in his architectural views owes a great deal to Evans's early work with a microscope, whose extremely shallow depth of field trained him to move zoom-lens-like through successive planes in the subject.<sup>69</sup> Making slides of cathedrals involved shifts in scale in *both* directions: rather than contact printing the glass negative, he used a reducing camera to shrink the image (the strong summer light necessary for this reduction work is what caused his eyesight to deteriorate) before enlarging it again through projection. He repeatedly mentions this fact of enlargement throughout his lecture. On this question of scale, Evans describes the oak choir stalls as a “forest of pinnacles”, emphasizing that they are a miniature version of the spires of the cathedral itself, whose prototype in nature was the tree.<sup>70</sup> For a Swedenborgian believing that every object in nature is a microcosm of the universe—in Emerson's words, that “*nature is always self-similar*”—the projected image and accompanying lecture made immediate for the viewer the sliding scales between small and large that the very production of photographs on glass enacted.<sup>71</sup>

Through the second half of the lecture from 1902, Evans looked at sculptural forms in Lincoln Cathedral that resonated closely with Swedenborgian thought on correspondence with invisible worlds, namely the worlds of angels and devils who communicate with humans. Indeed, Swedenborg's principal work, *Arcana Coelestia* (1756), interpreted the Bible through the lens of his own revelatory experiences and conversations with angels. Evans offers three successive views that show the sculptures of the Angel Choir at Lincoln in situ and close-up so that their gleeful expressions and musical instruments can be clearly seen (fig. 10). A quote from *Arcana Coelestia* that Evans pasted into the frontispiece of his personal copy of Wilkinson's *The Greater Origins and Issues of Life and Death* (1885) describes Swedenborg's mystical experience of a mob of spirits:

*But in the middle of them I apperceived a sound, soft, angelically sweet, with nothing but what was of order in it. The Angelic Choirs there were within, and the mob of spirits with*

*their disorder was without . . . And it was said that hereby was represented how the Lord rules the ugly and disorderly elements which are outside by a peacemaking in the middle.*<sup>72</sup> Comparing the actions of angels with the intercession of Christ, Swedenborg becomes conscious of their benevolent influence through music.



Figure 10

Frederick H. Evans, *Angels in Lincoln Cathedral*, 1895, lantern slide, 8.5 × 8.5 cm. University of Nottingham. Digital image courtesy of Manuscripts and Special Collections, The University of Nottingham.

Musical instruments were a consistent metaphor for the camera for Evans, who was an enthusiastic pianola player. He defended the self-playing piano as a mechanism that could become more than a “soulless machine” in the hands of an insightful operator, urging that “the full control of its perfect technique is formed by a musicianly spirit, which is equivalent to my photographic doctrine.”<sup>73</sup> Like the angels pictured playing string instruments, Evans viewed his role as photographer as one of deriving “soulful” expression from a machine. Moreover, Evans analogizes hearing the inaudible music of angels with seeing the invisible through the photograph: both measure faith in terms of an extrasensory perception.

Angel musicians such as those at Lincoln were first represented in the thirteenth century at exactly the moment when the actual use of musical instruments in church became problematic.<sup>74</sup> Evans’s slides sought to compensate for this past and present soundlessness, replacing music with the visual acuity of the photograph that enables a vision beyond that of the physical eye. His slides made these angels observable in a way that a visit to the site could not; the soaring scale of the cathedral and their position in the triforium made it difficult to see such marginal sculpture from below. In separate slides of the angels, Evans utilized photography’s capacity to enlarge its subject to bring to light the unseen but highly animate forms of the cathedral and to help his audience understand the vital religious sense of the Middle Ages. Paradoxically, the modern technology of the camera enabled a pre-modern vision, a deliberate attentiveness that Evans associates with the medieval in contrast to the incursions and distractions of modernity; the camera’s powers of magnification fostered an appreciation for hidden detail at odds with the “idly-busy life that crowds outside” the cathedral around 1900.<sup>75</sup> The angels and their heavenly music figure the kind of spiritual sight that Evans tries to obtain, an intuition of celestial forms

delivered through the senses, whether aural or visual. If angels incarnate the forces of good and the sculptures at Lincoln solidify their spiritual forms, his photographs on glass enhance these layers of embodiment by providing the viewer with a very physical perception of the cathedral's details through the projected, large-scale image.

At the opposite end of the spectrum from angels lies the world of devils. In contrast to the uncritically optimistic relationship to invisible spheres shared by Spiritualists—their spirits are always *friendly* ghosts—Swedenborg stressed that inter-worldly communication could occur with devils as much as angels. Henry James, Sr., became a lifelong Swedenborgian and friend of Wilkinson's after one such visitation by a devil in 1844; in a further example of the relevance of the diabolical to the Mystic's belief, the fictional Swedenborgian Rev. Jennings in Sheridan Le Fanu's story "Green Tea" (1872) cuts his throat with a razor after he opens himself to influx and is terrorized by a demonic monkey.<sup>76</sup> In a final eulogy for the Gothic craftsman, Evans concludes his 1902 lecture on Lincoln Cathedral with what he calls "our specimens of comic relief" in devilish forms spewed from the medieval imagination.<sup>77</sup>

Grotesques and gargoyles were valuable to Evans and his contemporaries because, in Morris's words, they were "evidently the work of the ordinary workman", expressions of his individuality, fantasy, and even subversion of official aesthetic programmes and dogma.<sup>78</sup> The Lincoln Imp, a horned figure that seems to float mid-air in Evans's high-contrast, extreme close-up, is a pre-eminent example of the enchanting grotesque (fig. 11). According to popular legend, Satan sent this devil to Earth to cause mayhem and an angel retaliated by turning the imp into stone. Burrowed in the foot of a spandrel in the Angel Choir, the Lincoln Imp is practically invisible, even more so than the angels (fig. 12).



Figure 11

Frederick H. Evans, *Lincoln Imp*, 1895, lantern slide, 8 × 8 cm. Center for Creative Photography, Tucson, AZ. Digital image courtesy of Center for Creative Photography, Tucson.



Figure 12

Graphic describing the relationship of Figure 11 to Figure 8 (the imp is burrowed in).

Such grotesques held an important key to the medieval spirit as it was understood at the fin de siècle; as Swedenborg wrote that ancient men had a greater capacity for spiritual vision than their modern counterparts, so Evans discerned this acuity in medieval builders through their fascination with the monstrous. The exhibition catalogue for the Linked Ring salon of 1902 captioned one of Evans's photographs of a cathedral grotesque with the biblical verse, "They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion" (Psalm 22:13), where these terrifying figures simultaneously attract and repel within an Old Testament framework. According to Michael Camille in his study on the margins of medieval art, the intensifying emphasis upon sin and self-reflection in the wake of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) made these primordial beasts instruments of fear wielded by church authorities as much as reflections of the possible perversity of oneself.<sup>79</sup> Late nineteenth-century Decadents like Evans's protégé Aubrey Beardsley (1872–1898) seized upon this latter aspect, utilizing the gargoyle trope to embody a modern world seeing itself as grotesque while simultaneously aspiring to an earlier imaginative ingenuity.<sup>80</sup>

In a famous portrait, Evans pictures Beardsley like a gargoyle perched on the side of a medieval cathedral, his long spindly fingers recalling flying buttresses as they prop up his beaked face (ca. 1894; fig. 13). Beardsley protrudes from the support of his hands like the grotesque satyrs emerge from a swirling thicket of thorns in his bordering drawing. Years after Evans more or less gave up photography, he remained intrigued by the mystical potential of this ghastliness, publishing *Grotesques by Aubrey Beardsley* (using this portrait as a frontispiece) with twelve platinum facsimiles from drawings in his personal collection in 1919. Evans saw a lineage of "monstrous ideas and imaginings" extending from Blake, who took an early interest in Swedenborg's New Church, to Beardsley, whom Evans wrote "confirms Swedenborg to the core".<sup>81</sup> The same year that he wrote his treatise on Swedenborg in 1912, Evans published seventeen platinotype reproductions of *William Blake's Illustrations to Thornton's Pastorals of Virgil* (1821). These were not copies, but "enlarged fac-similes" that used photographic enlargement to make Blake's miniscule original woodcuts (2.54 x 5.71 cm) observable as never before. Evans quoted Wilkinson on Blake at this time:

*His imagination, self-divorced from a reason which might have elevated and chastened it, and necessarily spurning the scientific daylight and material reason of the nineteenth century, found a home in the ruins of ancient and consummated Churches; and imbued itself with the superficial obscurity and ghastliness, far more than the inward grandeur of primeval times . . . the artist yielded himself up more thoroughly than other men will do, to those fantastic impulses which are common to all mankind; and which saner people subjugate, but cannot exterminate.*<sup>82</sup>

Evans himself explicitly connected Blake and Beardsley's "dreadful pictures" to Swedenborg's doctrine of vastation, which literally means a laying waste or emptying out of evil qualities that animated his own practice in photography on glass.<sup>83</sup>

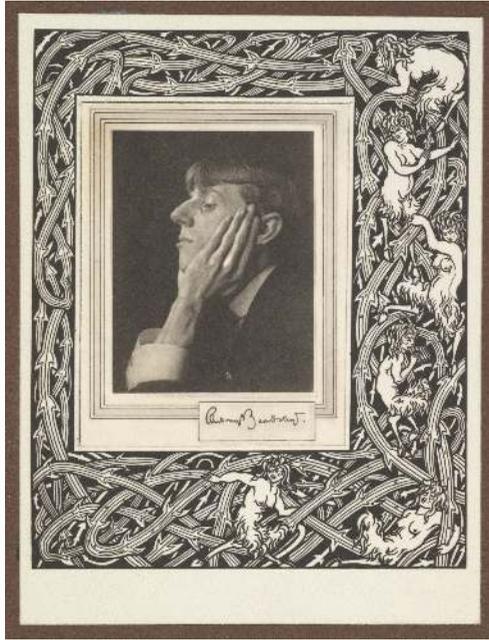


Figure 13

Frederick H. Evans, *Aubrey Beardsley*, circa 1894, photogravure mounted with Beardsley's designs from *Le Morte d'Arthur*, 24.3 × 19 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Digital image courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY. Gift of Gordon Conn, 1954

The theory of vastation gives a new gloss to Evans's storied preoccupation with purism, given that he approached the lantern slide as a medium that purged the photograph of potential duplicity. While on the one hand a marker of the Stieglitzian strain of Pictorialist practice, the purist character of his photographs also embodied his desire to unlearn the troubling mediations of modern vision and to exhume a primary spiritual sight as described by Swedenborg—a connection between “straight” photography and faith that would reach its pinnacle in Paul Strand's seminal essay, “Photography and the New God” (1922).<sup>84</sup> Wilkinson called this Swedenborg's “ocular honesty” and posited that it allowed him to perceive “communicated Divine Experiences”.<sup>85</sup> At Lincoln Cathedral, Evans mapped this purism onto the architecture itself.<sup>86</sup> In an early slide of the West Front View, he calls attention to how the building is a palimpsest of various styles that are “without structural unity”.<sup>87</sup> The restoration of its jambs in 1860 was “a sheer imitation, a lie”.<sup>88</sup> Just as he condemned manipulated and retouched photographs, he abhorred architectural restorations that passed themselves off as genuine. The sacred location made the work of the “restoration fiend” even more “criminal”: “certainly one would look for the keenest and purest evidence of truth in a building devoted to the worship of God!”<sup>89</sup> Evans similarly points out the restoration of the pillars of the North Aisle, arguing that before-and-after views can be correctives to such inauthenticity—photographs can actually purify the falsifications of the buildings. What Evans reads as fraudulence in the cathedral, shadowed as the potential misrepresentation of a doctored photograph, is precluded in his mind by the lantern slide format. Due to the nature of its enlargement of the photographic image, the lantern slide discriminated against the darkroom tricks that Evans called “heresies” by magnifying what might be imperceptible on paper.<sup>90</sup> In one of his many articles on photography

on glass, Evans warned would-be manipulators: “Be sure your sin will find you out.”<sup>91</sup> His lantern slides helped eliminate the barriers to an “honest” vision, and the sacred building thus became a way of figuring purity in photography.

Evans’s preoccupation with the grotesque was a way for him to conceptualize vastation, where forms that were by turn comic and terrifying stimulate the regeneration of perception as described by Swedenborg. As such, his photographs of grotesques catalyze the kind of incisive vision he compels his audience to learn throughout his lecture on Lincoln Cathedral.

Understanding salvation as a progressive regeneration, Evans ended his talk with these images as a way of preparing viewers to leave the lecture hall with both a finer appreciation of the medieval building and renewed perceptual faculties.

The defining aspects of Evans’s practice—purism, craftsmanship, attention to the metaphysical qualities of light, as well as the angelic and diabolical undercurrents of existence—reclaim “the feeling of past greatness” that Evans perceived in his jointly spiritual and aesthetic study of places of worship. At the same time as photography on glass offered the promise of transcending the natural world to discern its latent spiritual plane, Evans understood that such an attempt must necessarily be rooted in the material. In his biography of Wilkinson, Evans quoted him challenging the Swedenborgian notion that outer or “ultimate” forms are “less living” than interior forms: “It is wrong, therefore, to attempt to transcend the fact of embodiment; the hope is mistaken that would lead us to endeavor thus after pure spirituality.”<sup>92</sup> Evans used his lantern slides of cathedrals as the materials to embody Swedenborgian mystical experience, and his lectures put into practice the tenet of modelling a viewer more open to influx. Evans’s photographs of English cathedrals, this article has argued, are most fully comprehended when his preference for glass over paper as a support for images is acknowledged and interpreted through his affiliation to Swedenborgianism.

Towards the end of Evans’s extended essay on Swedenborg, he praises H. G. Wells’s “magically fine story”, “The Door in the Wall”.<sup>93</sup> In this widely read story from 1911, a mysterious door leading to an enchanted garden periodically tempts the protagonist Wallace, who defers from opening it until dissatisfaction with worldly success as a politician finally drives him to do so and he tumbles to his death. In a similar fashion, Evans’s photographs implicitly question what would happen were it possible to chase down their fugitive light or to gain the immediacy of vision they endorse. Evans’s admiration for what he called the “aching glimpses” of this story suggests that for him as for many of his contemporaries, “pure spirituality” was a moving target. Doubt about what lay behind the closed door was an integral component of the longing to open it, illuminating how faith was ultimately based on fragmentary spiritual insights rather than sure and certain proof. His photographs were aching glimpses of a sacred energy felt to have dissipated in the early twentieth century. Displayed as lantern slides, they were both necessarily partial views of a bygone magic and paradigms of its continuity in Edwardian culture.

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## About the author

Kara Fiedorek is a PhD candidate in the history of art at New York University's Institute of Fine Arts; she received her BA in the history of art from Yale. Her research focuses on nineteenth- and twentieth-century art with an emphasis on the history of photography. Her dissertation, "Priests of the Sun: Photography and Faith, 1860–1910", investigates how religious beliefs motivated English and American photographers at a time of rising secularism. Research and writing have been supported in part by a Connoisseurs Circle Fellowship at IFA, a Junior Fellowship at the Paul Mellon Centre, and a Graduate Research Initiative Summer Fellowship at NYU in Berlin. Her Master's thesis on Walker Evans explored his act of espionage in his subway photographs (1938–41), resituating a series that was exhibited and published in the 1960s within the wartime conditions and social consciousness of its production in the 1930s. She has worked as an exhibition research assistant in the Photography Collection at the New York Public Library and as a lecturer in the Department of Photography & Imaging at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts. Currently, she is the graduate curatorial assistant at NYU's Grey Art Gallery.

## Footnotes

1. Frederick H. Evans, "Lincoln Cathedral Lecture Notes" (1902), Frederick H. Evans Collection, Center for Creative Photography, Univ. of Arizona, Tucson, AZ, 5, 2. Hereafter Evans, "Lincoln Cathedral". These forty-one pages of notes, addressed simply to "Gentlemen", include a general introduction to the site and numbered commentary on the corresponding slides. The main portions of the Cathedral Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Lincoln were built between 1185 and 1311.
2. Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams: An Autobiography* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1918), chapter 26 (1901).
3. Kodak introduced the Brownie camera in 1900. This name had folkloric connotations, referring to good-natured, invisible brown goblins that helped with housework in rural Scotland and England. This was a way of mythologizing a new technology to play up its marvellous nature.
4. Alvin Langdon Coburn, "Frederick H. Evans", *Image 2*, no. 9 (Dec. 1953): 59. Coburn turned his own lens on religious architecture when he photographed Franciscan missions in California in 1902 and Liverpool Cathedral during its construction in the 1910s.
5. Evans's usual pseudonym within the Linked Ring was the Idler, but at least once he was known as the Hangman, and he referred to himself as the Hanger-Idler in the Linked Ring Papers dated 15 Aug. 1904.
6. Scholarship has focused almost exclusively on Evans's platinum prints, beginning with the first monograph dedicated to the photographer by Beaumont Newhall in 1964 and extending to more recent studies. When mentioned at all, the lantern slides most often reproduced are his early scientific photomicrographs. For the most current critical discussion of Evans's career, see Anne Lyden, *The Photographs of Frederick H. Evans* (Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2010). One notable exception is the groundbreaking work of Anne Hammond, who has made significant strides in shedding new light on other, "commercial" formats pursued by Evans, particularly in his photographs of English country church interiors

commissioned to illustrate articles in the magazine *Country Life* in 1905. Though this was a commercial engagement, Hammond stresses that Evans had complete control of his subject matter. See Anne Hammond, "Frederick H. Evans and *Country Life*: The Parish Churches", *History of Photography* 16, no. 1 (Spring 1992): 9–17.

7. Evans's articles on photography on glass include "Photo-Micrography", *Photographic Journal* 11 (31 Dec. 1886): 25–28; "Ely Cathedral", *Journal of the Camera Club* 2 (March 1897): 46–47; "Lincoln Cathedral", *Photographic Journal* 24 (23 Dec. 1899): 101–6; "Artistic Photography in Lantern Slides", *Amateur Photographer* 37 (19 Feb. 1903): 148–49; "The Exhibiting of Lantern Slides", *Amateur Photographer* 37 (3 March 1903): 192–94; "Glass Versus Paper", *Camera Work* 10 (April 1905): 36–41; "Summing up the Recent Lantern Slide Competition. By the Judge", *Photography* 21 (13 Feb. 1906): 133–34; "Lantern Slides and their Optical Projection", *Photography* 21 (20 Feb. 1906): 145–47, (27 Feb. 1906): 166–67, and (6 March 1906): 191–92.
8. This was based on the understanding that "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). A theological reading of the illumination in Evans's photographs was common in his time, as now. See, for example, William H. Draper, "Shadows of Eternity", *Country Life* 18 (7 Oct. 1905): 473–77, and Brian H. Peterson, "Frederick Evans and the Theology of Light", *American Arts Quarterly* 23, no. 4 (Fall 2006): 20–27.
9. To date the most substantial account of Evans's photography, with respect to his religious beliefs, can be found in Anne Hammond's comprehensive study, *Frederick H. Evans: Selected Texts and Bibliography* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1992), as well as in several earlier essays and articles by the same author, notably "Frederick H. Evans, 1853–1943: The Interior Vision", *Creative Camera* 243 (March 1985): 12–26, and "Frederick Evans: The Spiritual Harmonies of Architecture", in *British Photography in the Nineteenth Century: The Fine Art Tradition*, ed. Mike Weaver (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1989), 243–59. More recently, Alexander Nemerov has argued that Evans's most famous print of Wells Cathedral takes religion not just as a subject but also as a model of conversion to an aesthetic appreciation of life. See Nemerov, "The Religion of Art and Nothing of Life: Frederick H. Evans's 'A Sea of Steps'", in *Edwardian Opulence: British Art at the Dawn of the Twentieth Century*, ed. Angus Trumble and Andrea Wolk Rager (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 2013), 125–52. For a brief but illuminating note on the relationship to the church shared by two friends and collaborators, see Kristin Potter, "Frederick H. Evans and G. Bernard Shaw", *History of Photography* 19, no. 2 (1995): 178–79.
10. In its attention to the materiality of the photograph, this essay follows scholars who have looked with renewed attention to the original physical contexts of nineteenth-century photographs to understand how their complex visual narratives spoke to cultural change. For outstanding examples of this approach, see Rosalind Krauss, "Photography's Discursive Spaces: Landscape/View", *Art Journal* 42 (Winter 1982): 311–19; Elizabeth Hutchinson, "They Might Be Giants: Carleton Watkins, Galen Clark, and the Big Tree", *October* 109 (Summer 2004): 46–63; and Martha Sandweiss, *Print the Legend: Photography and the American West* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 2004).
11. Like an increasing number of his contemporaries, Evans saw no incompatibility between his mystical leanings and identifying as a proper Protestant who accepted the authority of Christ. Böhme was central in introducing a mystical vocabulary from the Continent into England when John Sparrow and John Ellistone translated his works into English in the 1640s. Though his hero William Blake was equally interested in Böhme and Swedenborg, Evans wrote much

- more extensively on the latter mystic. See Robert Rix, *William Blake and the Cultures of Radical Christianity* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).
12. It is unknown where Evans delivered this particular lecture, for which full lecture notes are extant. However, he gave other lectures on Lincoln Cathedral to the London Camera Club in 1896 and the Royal Photographic Society in 1899, as well as a slide lecture on Ely Cathedral to the Camera Club in 1897. Conceivably, this was given to an audience of photographers as well.
  13. Thomas Carlyle, *Past & Present*, Book III, in *Thomas Carlyle's Collected Works*, vol. 13 (London: Chapman & Hall, 1870–87), i.
  14. Matthew Arnold, *Literature and Dogma: An Essay Towards a Better Apprehension of the Bible* (New York: macmillan & Co., 1873), ix.
  15. *In Religious Experience and the Modernist Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2010), Pericles Lewis has provided a literary corollary to some of the dynamics explored here. He studies the trope of lone male visitors wondering over the power of predominantly Catholic churches in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century novels (as well as Philip Larkin's poem "Church Going" from 1954).
  16. Evans may even have been sympathetic to his atheist friend George Bernard Shaw's ideas about the free, non-denominational use of cathedrals for their spiritual respite, where Catholic structures could become truly catholic. See Shaw, "On Going to Church", in *Shaw on Religion*, ed. Warren Sylvester Smith (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1967), 19–25.
  17. Clive D. Field, "The Faith Society? Quantifying Religious Belonging in Edwardian Britain, 1901–1914", *Journal of Religious History* 37 (March 2013): 61.
  18. Frederick H. Evans, *James John Garth Wilkinson: An Introduction* (London: Turnbull & Spears, 1912), 26.
  19. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (London: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1902), 47.
  20. Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Swedenborg; Or, the Mystic", in *Representative Men: Seven Lectures* (Boston, MA: Phillips, Sampson, 1850), 122.
  21. Evans, *James John Garth Wilkinson*, 12. The eight volumes of Swedenborg's *Arcana Coelestia* were published anonymously in neo-Latin in London during the years 1749–56. The first English translation was made by Rev. John Clowes in 1813.
  22. Alan D. Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England: Church, Chapel and Social Change, 1740–1914* (London: Longman, 1976), 69. Swedenborg himself never initiated the formation of a new denomination based on his theories, but late eighteenth-century English radicals established the Church of the New Jerusalem in 1789, which counted Blake as an early member. Many if not most committed Swedenborgians, including Wilkinson and Evans, were never officially baptized into this Church.
  23. Frederick H. Evans, "James John Garth Wilkinson: A Memoir. Reviewed by F. H. Evans", *The Homeopathic World* 46 (1 Sept. 1911): 420.
  24. Evans to J.J.G.W. (unpublished letter dated 3 Feb. 1886), Swedenborg Society, London (Archive no. K/125 (49)). Subsequent quotations are from here.
  25. Evans, *James John Garth Wilkinson*, 27.
  26. George Eliot's translation of David Friedrich Strauss's *Das Leben Jesu, kritisch bearbeitet* (1835–36) in 1846 exposed an English audience to arguments by the German scholar and other proponents of the Higher Criticism centred in Tübingen that the Bible had multiple authors and that divine miracles were in fact supernatural myths.

27. Henry James, Sr., *The Secret of Swedenborg: Being an Elucidation of His Doctrine of the Divine Natural Humanity* (Boston, MA: Fields, Osgood, & Co., 1869), vii.
28. Early subjects for lantern slides also included landscape views of the English countryside, close-ups of objects like a Japanese sword-guard, and studies of William Morris's house, Kelmscott Manor. These seem to have been less celebrated than his scientific images.
29. James Coates, *Photographing the Invisible: Practical Studies in Spirit Photography, Spirit Portraiture, and other Rare but Allied Phenomena* (London: L. N. Fowler & Co., 1911), 1–2. Others took photosensitivity as a model of receptivity to immaterial forces at the turn of the century. See Henry Wood, *Ideal Suggestion through Mental Photography: A Restorative System for Home and Private Use Preceded by a Study of the Laws of Mental Healing* (Boston, MA: Lothrop, Lee, and Shepard, 1893), where he advocates “photographing” Christian ideals upon the mind.
30. See, for example, Emanuel Swedenborg, *Arcana Coelestia* (London: The Swedenborg Society, 1863), 6724: “what is interior, in consequence of being purer, acts upon each and every individual particular of the exterior, and thus disposes the external to its will. But in this case there must be good and truth in the external, wherein the influx from the internal can be fixed; and in this way good can be among evils and falsities, and yet be in safety.”
31. In Swedenborg's theory of correspondences, matter, rather than condemned as secondary or derivative of the divine, serves as the means by which the divine can be expressed. See, for example, Swedenborg, *Arcana Coelestia*, 5711: “Nothing can exist anywhere in the material world that does not have a correspondence with the spiritual world—because if it did, it would have no cause that would make it come into being and then allow it to continue in existence. Everything in the material world is an effect. The causes of all effects lie in the spiritual world, and the causes of those causes in turn (which are the purposes those causes serve) lie in a still deeper heaven.”
32. Evans, “Glass Versus Paper”, 40; Evans, *James John Garth Wilkinson*, 36.
33. “Spirit Photographs”, *Photographic Notes* (9 Jan. 1863): 19–20. Spirit photographers William H. Mumler in the United States and Jean Buguet in France were prosecuted for fraud in 1869 and 1875, respectively, in highly publicized trials. The similarly eminent spirit photographer Frederick Hudson of London faced no legal action during his career. This helps substantiate Rolf H. Krauss's claim that mediumistic photography began in America but henceforth belonged almost entirely to the Anglo-Saxon world, especially England. See Krauss, *Beyond Light and Shadow: The Role of Photography in Certain Paranormal Phenomena: An Historical Survey* (Tucson, AZ: Nazraeli Press, 1995), 144.
34. Frederick H. Evans, “An Art Critic on Photography”, *Amateur Photographer* 47 (23 June 1908): 625.
35. Evans, *James John Garth Wilkinson*, 34.
36. John Harvey, *Photography and Spirit* (London: Reaktion, 2007), 27.
37. The term “photism”, which only appeared as the German “Photisma” in 1881, was used by James to describe the blinding luminous phenomena of conversions experienced by prophets like St Paul in *Varieties of Religious Experience*, 251. In footnote 21, page 253, James addresses how reports of sensorial (that is, physical) photism can shade off into metaphorical accounts of a new sense of spiritual illumination. Moreover, he acknowledges his debt to psychologists for this word, and indeed it appears several times in his review of Théodore Flournoy's *Des phénomènes de synopsie* (1894), reprinted in William James, *Essays, Comments, and Reviews* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1987), 463–67.

38. Evans quoted in Ward Muir, "A Chat with the Designer of the Salon", *Amateur Photographer* 36 (2 Oct. 1902): 274.
39. Swedenborg, *Arcana Coelestia*, 607.
40. For an excellent overview of broader visual cultures surrounding magic lantern displays, see Lynda Nead, *The Haunted Gallery: Painting, Photography, Film c. 1900* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 2007).
41. Marcel Proust, *Swann's Way*, trans. C. K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin, revised by D. J. Enright (London: Chatto & Windus, 1992), 8–9.
42. Proust seems to have held onto the formative idea from his childhood that photographs are characterized by their "commercial banality": they lack the "thicknesses" of other media so that they need to be filtered through other mediations (e.g. his mother prefers that he look at a photograph of Corot's painting of Chartres to a photograph of Chartres in *Swann's Way*, 45–46). Later in the first volume, Proust describes a scene of iconoclasm where Mlle Vinteuil dares her lover to spit on a photograph of her father, which by profaning the photograph reveals its latent power. For the growing body of work on Proust and photography, see Áine Larkin, *Proust Writing Photography: Fixing the Fugitive in À la recherche du temps perdu* (Leeds: Maney, 2011); Dora Zhang, "A Lens for an Eye: Proust and Photography", *Representations* 118 (2012): 103–25; Mary Bergstein, *In Looking Back One Learns to See: Marcel Proust and Photography* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2014); and Mieke Bal, *The Mottled Screen: Reading Proust Visually*, trans. Anna-Louise Milne (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1997), Part Three, "The Flatness of Photography", 183–239.
43. The Langenheim brothers of Philadelphia first made photographic lantern slides ("hyalotypes", from the Greek for glass) in 1848. By the turn of the century, magic lantern shows using photographs drew huge crowds as a form of education and spectacular entertainment.
44. For an in-depth treatment of this subject, see Rachael Ziady DeLue, *George Inness and the Science of Landscape* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2007). See also Sally Promey, "The Ribband of Faith: George Inness, Color Theory, and the Swedenborgian Church", *American Art Journal* 26 (1994): 44–65.
45. Quoted in George W. Sheldon, "George Inness", *Harper's Weekly* 26 (22 April 1882): 244.
46. Editor, "Mr. Inness on Art-Matters", *Art Journal* 5 (1879): 377.
47. James, Sr., *Secret of Swedenborg*, vii.
48. Evans, "Lincoln Cathedral", 26.
49. Evans, "Exhibiting of Lantern Slides", 193. To be precise, he refers to his own "obstinacy".
50. Evans, "Lantern Slides and their Optical Projection", 167; Evans, "Opening Address", *Photographic Journal* 24 (30 April 1900): 238.
51. Douglas R. Nickel discusses an early French daguerreotype whose verso labels it "the work of God" in "Talbot's Natural Magic", *History of Photography* 26, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 136; other examples include Dion Boucicault's play, *The Octoroon; or, Life in Louisiana* (1859), where a character's conviction rests on the unimpeachable witness of a photograph made by the "eye of the Eternal", and widely reprinted articles by Rev. H. J. Morton for the *Philadelphia Photographer* in the mid-1860s, among others.
52. Jacob Riis, "Reform by Humane Touch", *Atlantic Monthly* 84 (Dec. 1899): 745–47.
53. Steve Humphries, *Victorian Britain through the Magic Lantern* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1989), 143.
54. Evans, "Glass Versus Paper", 39.

55. Evans, "Glass Versus Paper", 40, emphasis mine.
56. Evans, "Glass Versus Paper", 38.
57. Evans, "Glass Versus Paper", 40.
58. Evans, "Lincoln Cathedral", 41.
59. Evans, "Exhibiting of Lantern Slides", 194; Evans, "Artistic Photography in Lantern Slides", 149; George Smith, "On the Production of Transparencies for the Optical Lantern by the Woodbury Process", *Journal and Transactions of the Photographic Society of Great Britain* 11 (31 Dec. 1886): 22.
60. Evans, "Lincoln Cathedral", 38.
61. Gulielmus Durandus, *The Symbolism of Churches and Church Ornaments: A Translation of the First Book of the Rationale Divinorum Officiorum*, ed. J. M. Neale and B. Webb (London: Gibbings, 1893), 23.
62. Harvey, *Photography and Spirit*, 20.
63. For more on platinum printing, see the Rochester Institute of Technology's very informative website, Graphics Atlas: [http://www.graphicsatlas.org/identification/?process\\_id=8](http://www.graphicsatlas.org/identification/?process_id=8).
64. A. Horsley Hinton, "Frederick H. Evans: A 'Romanticist' in Photography", reprinted in *Frederick H. Evans*, ed. Hammond, 84; Rev. F. C. Lambert, "The Pictorial Work of Frederick H. Evans", *The Practical Photographer*, Library series 5 (1904): 3.
65. George Bernard Shaw, "Evans—An , UT" (1903), in *Bernard Shaw on Photography*, ed. Bill Jay and Margaret Moore (Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith Books, 1989), 100.
66. Frederick H. Evans, "Camera-Work in Cathedral Architecture", *Camera Work* 4 (Oct. 1903): 17.
67. Evans, "Lincoln Cathedral", 28. The choir was a contested space for Anglicans, who per the advice of the Cambridge Camden Society had built chancels for the choir since the 1840s, altering Protestant worship by separating laity and clergy.
68. Morris was agnostic, which was not so unconventional by the time of his death in 1898, but his reasoning (essentially, that if God existed, he would not leave it a mystery) was idiosyncratic. His lifelong project to resuscitate medieval aesthetics suggests that he believed in the value of religious ritual though not doctrine. See John Hollow, "William Morris and the Judgment of God", *PMLA* 86 (May 1971): 446–51.
69. A sheet of ground glass inserted into the back of the camera was used for manual focusing and composing the image. A dark cloth was customarily used to block out light and see the upside-down image on the ground glass better. Hammond, "The Interior Vision", 21.
70. Evans, "Lincoln Cathedral", 27.
71. Emerson, "Swedenborg", 108. Hammond has explored how Evans's "pendulum curves" from 1899 to 1910, drawings made by a device he built called a "harmonograph" that suspended a pen from a pendulum, also demonstrated the universal harmony he found in the physical world. See Hammond, "Interior Vision", 21.
72. Swedenborg, *Arcana Coelestia*, 5396.
73. Frederick H. Evans, "Personality. Technique v. Individuality. A Reply by Frederick H. Evans", *Amateur Photographer* 43 (13 Oct. 1908): 350. Evans wrote about this connection between camera and pianola elsewhere, including "A Pianola for a Musician, and a Camera for an Artist", *Amateur Photographer* 43 (23 Jan. 1906): 75–76, and "The Value of the Piano-Player: Correspondence", *Musical Standard* 35 (4 March 1911): 199–200, (1 April 1911): 199–200, and (15 April 1911): 231.

74. Paul Binski, "The Angel Choir at Lincoln and the Poetics of the Gothic Smile", *Art History* 20, no. 3 (Sept. 1997): 361.
75. Frederick H. Evans, "And What Went Ye Out for to See?", reprinted in *Frederick H. Evans*, ed. Hammond, 54.
76. Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, "Green Tea", in *In a Glass Darkly*, ed. Robert Tracy (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1993), 5–40.
77. Evans, "Lincoln Cathedral", 38–39.
78. Morris quoted in Evans, "Lincoln Cathedral", 39.
79. Michael Camille, *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art* (London: Reaktion, 1992), 81.
80. After meeting in 1889, Evans helped Beardsley secure his first commission when he recommended the young artist to the publisher John M. Dent for illustrations to a new edition of Thomas Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur* (1485).
81. Evans, *James John Garth Wilkinson*, 8.
82. Evans, *James John Garth Wilkinson*, 7.
83. Evans, *James John Garth Wilkinson*, 7.
84. Paul Strand, "Photography and the New God", in *Classic Essays on Photography*, ed. Alan Trachtenberg (New Haven: Leete's Island Books, 1980), 144–51.
85. Wilkinson, *The Greater Origins and Issues of Life and Death* (London: James Speirs, 1885), 277. Evans's annotated copy of this volume resides at the Swedenborg Society (Archive no. L/357).
86. Evans's attention to baptismal fonts at other cathedrals betrays his preoccupation with purity as a religious value.
87. Evans, "Lincoln Cathedral", 7.
88. Evans, "Lincoln Cathedral", 10. In his quest for the "untampered", Evans inserted slides taken by George Washington Wilson in cases where they document details before mid-Victorian restorations.
89. Evans, "Lincoln Cathedral", 10–11.
90. Evans, "Summing up the Recent Lantern Slide Competition", 133.
91. Evans, "Lantern Slides and their Optical Projection", 146.
92. Evans, "James John Garth Wilkinson", 424.
93. Evans, *James John Garth Wilkinson*, 42. The story was originally published as *The Door in the Wall, and Other Stories* (London: Grant Richards, 1911) and was illustrated with photogravures by Evans's colleague, Alvin Langdon Coburn.

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