

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir :

It has sometimes been suggested that it is impossible for a man properly to understand the Writings unless he is first well versed in the philosophical works. It seems to me that this is an overstatement which may actually discourage the study of the scientific and philosophical works in the church.

The Writings as Divine Revelation and the Word of God must surely stand on their own. To imply that the philosophical works are necessary to the Writings seems to suggest either that the Writings are not complete in themselves and so are not Divine Revelation or else to suggest that the philosophical works are themselves a part of the Word.

There are many, doubtless among the clergy as well as the laity, who feel that time does not allow a major study outside the Writings themselves, or that their particular form of mind is not suited to such a study. We should be careful not to leave the impression that such people have a narrow or incomplete understanding of the Writings.

There can be no doubt that a study of these preparatory works is necessary for us to understand fully how Swedenborg was Divinely prepared for his mission. It must also be clear that the New Church philosopher who is seeking to bring together the findings of science and the teachings of Revelation in a true philosophical understanding of the world about him must take into account the experiments in philosophy through which Swedenborg was led in his preparation. For these reasons it is vital to the scholarship of the church that there be those who make such studies, and the work of the NEW PHILOSOPHY in encouraging this is of great importance.

The danger is that these uses may be so emphasized by those who fear that they will be overlooked that the opposite result comes about. People resist the idea that the philosophical works are essential to an understanding of the Writings and then carry this resistance further to the point of denying their value in any field. Would we not do better to define clearly their limitations (and our own limitations in understanding them) and urge their proper use within these borders?

Yours faithfully,

MARTIN PRYKE

FROM A NEW MEMBER

I consider the work of the Scientific Association very important in the understanding of the Writings. There seems as yet so much to be done. I have found among my personal contacts some misunderstandings about the nature and scope of scientific "laws." Some consider these laws as universal and invariant, and hence misconstrue the relationship between science and theology.

One such problem I would like to hear discussed, namely, the place of miracles in nature. The Writings list two kinds: apparent (which result from the influence of the spiritual world without taking place in the natural world) and real (occurring also in the natural world). It is with the latter I am concerned. It appears to me that miracles in the natural world can be understood in two ways.

(1) That they represent a discontinuity in the laws of nature; that a different order of physics exist in a certain finite part of space and time.

(2) That they represent rare, but nevertheless consistent phenomena; unique or almost unique events in nature.

Neither approach appears to me to be entirely satisfactory. The former requires an interruption in the order of the universe (perhaps exception is a better word). The latter requires the extra-scientific concept of "unique events." This violates the faith that, in principle at least, all physical phenomena are amenable to scientific methods.

PAUL SIMONETTI