

## EDITORIAL REMARKS

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### In This Issue

This issue is devoted to the concluding chapters of Ernst Benz' *Spiritual Vision and Revelation*. The three chapters here presented are, however, quite different in terms of content. What is common is the extraordinary detail of Benz research and scholarship, coupled with commentary that brings a real sense of the 18th century milieu in which Swedenborg lived and worked.

Chapter VI titled "The Mystery of a Date—Fresh Light of Kant's Criticism of Swedenborg" is an analysis of questions surrounding the date of writing of Kant's letter to Fräulein Charlotte von Knobloch regarding Swedenborg's visionary experiences. This letter which includes respectful remarks on Swedenborg is in marked contrast to the scathing sarcasm that characterizes Kant's *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer*. Was the letter written before or after *Dreams*? This question is crucial in regard to the continuing dialog concerning Kant and Swedenborg. So it is that Benz opens his treatment with "Kant's criticism of Swedenborg is the storm-center of a vehement dispute which has still not reached its conclusion, but which it is the intention of the present investigation to bring to a close once and for all."

This chapter complements articles on the Swedenborg-Kant issue published in this journal: Gottlieb Florschütz, "The Hidden Influence of Swedenborg on Kant," begun vol. XCVI 1 & 2, 1993, ended XCIX 1 & 2, 1996; G.R. Johnson, "The Kinship of Kant and Swedenborg," vol. XCIX, 3 & 4, July–Dec 1996, and "Did Kant Dissemble His Interest in Swedenborg," vol. CII, 3 & 4, Jul–Dec 1999, 539–560; and Dan A. Synnestvedt "Emanuel, Immanuel: Magic, Miracles, and Morals in Enlightenment Religion," vol. CI, 3 & 4, July–Dec. 1998.

The short chapter VII titled "Commentary on *The true Christian Religion*" illustrates how it is that the outward form of revelation takes on a character that reflects both the cultural circumstances in which it was given, as well as the preparation of the vehicle of its presentation. At the same time, Benz points up respects in which the crowning work of Swedenborg's revelatory period is distinctly different from the modes of

theological expression of his day. Hence he says: “The original Latin text of *The True Christian Religion* occupies . . . a special position within the contemporary literature towards the end of the eighteenth century. This work is written in a Latin which can be called classical, and is markedly distinguished from the notional language, both of Protestant Orthodoxy and of contemporary philosophy, customary at the time . . . Just as little did he make use of the complicated scholastic language of university philosophy, which we find for instance in the Latin writings of the youthful Immanuel Kant.”

The 18th century Protestant theologian Johann Kaspar Lavater (1741–1801) was a much respected Swiss pastor, and prolific writer. He is perhaps most widely known for his physiognomic theory. The connection with Swedenborg comes through the fact that the theory of correspondences is at the heart of his ideas.

In *Spiritual Vision* chapter VIII, here titled “Swedenborg and Lavater: The Religious Foundation of Physiognomy,” we are treated to an in-depth study of this science which takes us back to pre-history and the forms of communication among the Most Ancient people, to modes of communication in the spiritual world, and to a view of nature that urges us to think beyond the physical to the inner realm of transcendental causes.

### **Revised edition of *Rational Psychology***

A revised edition of *Rational Psychology* is now available. See Publications for Sale at the back of this issue for price and ordering information.

### **The Swedenborg Scientific Association Website**

The final touches are being put on the association’s website; the URL is “[thenewphilosophyonline.org](http://thenewphilosophyonline.org).” Its focus is defined in terms of the association’s mission: the preservation, translation, publication, and distribution of the scientific and philosophical works of Swedenborg, and the promotion of the ideas taught in them, having in view also their relation to the science and philosophy of the present day.

The site will include a variety of informative pieces on Swedenborg’s life and philosophy, articles from the journal, regular updates on the

association's activities, a book catalog and ordering information, and other elements.

### **Note to Authors**

Included in this issue is a style guide for authors. We encourage prospective writers to consult this in preparation of manuscripts for submission to *The New Philosophy*. Complementing this is the Notice to Authors on the inside front cover.