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EDITORIAL REMARKS

In This Issue

Two recent issues included articles from Dr. Jane Williams-Hogan that she regarded as the historical context for the monograph included in this issue: “The Philosophical Context of Swedenborg—Reason and Faith, Faith and Reason—A Human Project” Part I, (July–December, 2012, pp. 325–369) and Part II, (January–June, 2013, pp. 379–411). This issue is devoted to “Swedenborg’s Philosophic Project—Reconciling Reason and Faith” that will serve as the basis for the chapter on Swedenborg’s philosophy in the biography “Emanuel Swedenborg, Eyewitness to the Apocalypse: The Making of a Modern Visionary.”

From 1734 when Swedenborg published his philosophic treatise *The Infinite, the Final Cause of Creation* to 1745—the year of his revelatory call to turn to theology—he devoted himself to the study of anatomy to find answers to his questions about the soul and its operation in the body. *The Dynamics of the Soul’s Kingdom* and *The Soul’s Domain*, as well as his extensive unpublished studies of the brain, are expressions of this quest.

Swedenborg was well aware of the naturalism of his day and its challenge to ideas that gave credence to the existence of the soul and indeed of anything of a transcendental nature. And so he declares in *Heaven and Hell*:

To prevent this negative attitude—especially prevalent among people who have acquired a great deal of worldly wisdom—from infecting and corrupting people of simple heart and simple faith, it has been granted me to be with angels and to talk with them person to person . . . Now I am being allowed therefore to describe what I have heard and seen, in the hopes of shedding light where there is ignorance, and of dispelling skepticism. (NCE HH 1)

However, naturalism finds continuing expression in the atheism of the present day to which our attention was drawn in Dr. Dan Synnestvedt’s recent colloquium at Bryn Athyn College on May 8 titled “Responses to the New Atheism.”

In Jane Williams-Hogan’s treatise she lays out for us details of Swedenborg’s own efforts to meet these challenges through examination of the thoughts of eighteenth-century philosophers who provided the philosophic context of his own work.