

Book Reviews

Why Does God Let It Happen? by Bruce Henderson. Chrysalis Books, an imprint of the Swedenborg Foundation, West Chester, Pennsylvania. ISBN: 978-0-87785-332-9. 95p. \$11.95. Available at www.swedenborg.com/book_store.asp, www.newchurch.org/materials/books-and-media.html, and www.amazon.com

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This book addresses questions about life that face humanity at all levels from the individual to the global, and perhaps most poignantly with those whose philosophy includes religious belief in a God of love.

In his Introduction, the author draws our attention not only to questions we all ask when faced with calamities small and large, but also to the thoughts of renown thinkers who, despite the wisdom they convey, still leave them and us with a disturbing sense of dissatisfaction with the answers they provide. It is then that he draws attention to the new revelation provided through the eighteenth-century scientist, philosopher, and theologian Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772), giving four fundamental concepts that serve as portals to his treatment of the subject that he frames within six chapters titled: “Why, God?”; “Where is God? In His Providence”; “Deliver Us from Evil”; “Suffering: The Crossroads of Faith”; “When Bad Things Happen: Disease, Disaster, Accidents, and War”; and “Trusting in Providence.”

The second and third guiding principles are those that concern (1) “permission”: “What God allows but does not will is called ‘permission’ by Swedenborg. Understanding this concept helps to answer the question ‘why?’” and (2) providence in bad things: “If the tragedy in our lives is the permission, then providence is what happens afterward. It is the way God’s love heals and it always leads to good.” Coupled with this idea later in the book, we learn that in fact, God permits only those events that *can* lead to good.

Another idea from Swedenborg to which the author draws our attention is a parallel in the realms of human and natural activity: in nature

God's laws are seen in the "laws of nature" brought to light by scientific means, while in human life His five laws of providence revealed in the book *Divine Providence* hold sway. In this way we are lead to see that in *all* of His created universe God operates within the confines of His own prescribed laws.

The book goes beyond mere theoretical considerations; it includes many, many illustrations from history and current life at several levels that help the reader grasp the concepts he expounds. It also provides a kind of enlightenment that the world sorely needs and is highly recommend for young and old.

Its translation into many tongues would benefit mankind. □