

## EDITORIAL REMARKS

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### Editorial Board

Mr. E. Boyd Asplundh has stepped down from the editorial board after serving for 25 years. During my term as editor I have valued his counsel as well as his work in attending to the routines of journal publication. We extend our thanks and appreciation for his contributions over these many years.

We are delighted to welcome two new members to the board, Dr. Kristin King and Mr. Daniel A. Synnestvedt. Dr. King teaches literature and Mr. Synnestvedt philosophy at the Academy of the New Church College. We are grateful for their willingness to serve, knowing that their special interests and talents will enrich the journal.

At our first full editorial board meeting in July we reviewed most aspects of the publication of the journal. If one thing stood out it was the expression of a desire to bring to our readers a lively biennial addressing a full range of topics. The present departments—articles, Translator’s Corner, Notes and Comments, Book Reviews, and Letters to the Editor—were affirmed, and we hope to engage our readers more fully in Notes and Comments and Letters to the Editor.

### In This Issue

In addition to the usual Annual Number reports, we open with the Annual Address—a very timely one as the association approaches its centenary—in which Mr. Synnestvedt gives an account of its founding father and first president, Rev. Frank Sewall.

Dr. Leon James’s reflections on the fallacies of the senses presented in *Arcana Coelestia* 5084 have special relevance in this modern scientific age. By way of emphasis of this, I draw attention to the following.

In his *A History of Western Philosophy*, W.T. Jones points out that one’s theory of knowledge guides one’s theory of being. Hence the belief that reliable knowledge can only come through the physical senses leads to a belief that the physical realm is all that exists, and supposed realities of a transcendental nature are nothing but figments of the imagination. For

example, in the May 17, 1996 issue of *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, David L. Wheeler in "Darwin's Scholarly Heirs" quotes Richard Dawkins (a fellow of New College at Oxford University and author of many popular books on evolutionary biology) from his *River Out of Eden: A Darwinian View of Life* (Basic Books, 1995): "The universe we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil and no good, nothing but blind, pitiless indifference...DNA neither knows or cares. DNA just is. And we dance to its music." This kind of reductionist view of human life is widespread, particularly in learned circles, and needs to be challenged. It represents the consequences of thought that is derived from the fallacies of the senses to which Dr. James draws our attention.

"The Kinship of Kant and Swedenborg" by Mr. Gregory L. Johnson was originally presented at a colloquium at the ANC College early in 1996. This contribution to examination of the Kant-Swedenborg connection is an appropriate sequel to "The Hidden Influence of Swedenborg on Kant" serialized in this journal.

As a cautionary note, Swedenborgians may be offended by ideas presented in the opening few pages of Mr. Johnson's article. But the challenges that continue to arise regarding both Swedenborg's claim to continuous experience of the spiritual world and his sanity must be faced, and philosophic journals such as this are very appropriate places for such challenges to be aired and countered. More specifically, the two most widely-known streams of attacks on Swedenborg arise from Kant's *Träume eines Geistersehers* (Dreams of a Spirit-Seer), and related comments from philosophic circles and psychiatric professionals. The most recent of the latter is reported on in *The Swedenborg Society Magazine* (Issue No. 7 1996) by its editor Rev. Fred Elphick.<sup>7</sup> Mr. Johnson's article in this issue touches on both these sources of denigration of Swedenborg, and we are most appreciative of the insights that the article provides.

In his article titled "The Centrality of the idea of God in Religion: A Comparison of Manichaeism and the Bahá'í Faith," Mr. Drake Kaiser

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<sup>7</sup>Interested readers can contact Mr. Elphick via e-mail at [f.elphick@bbcnc.org.uk](mailto:f.elphick@bbcnc.org.uk)

illustrates the importance of the idea of God as the center of religious thought. Beyond that, he provides insights into the nature of two religions through which one can gain more appreciation of the spiritual history of mankind.

The continuation of "Swedenborg in France" includes chapters 10-11—"Edmond Chevrier, the French New Church Historian," and "The New Church in Paris."

In Translator's Corner, editor Rev. Dr. Durban Odhner gives us Rev. Kurt P. Nemitz's translation of Mr. Lars Bergquist's article "Den Himmelska Hermanuetiken" (The Heavenly Hermeneutic) that was originally published in *Världarnes Möte* (1-2/95). More than half of Swedenborg's theological works are devoted to exposition of the inner senses of the Biblical Word, and Mr. Lars Bergquist analyses the manner in which this task was undertaken.

In Book Reviews Dr. Gregory Baker reviews *Tunnel to Eternity* by Leon S. Rhodes, published in 1996.

