

REVIEW

THE DIVINE ALLEGORY. By Hugo Ljungberg Odhner, D.Th. Swedenborg Foundation, Inc., New York, 1953. Cloth, pp. 150. Price \$2.50.

In the volume before us the author presents the fruits of mature scholarship with the skill of one who is an accomplished master of the English language. Within the brief space of a hundred and fifty pages he gives a remarkable resumé of Bible history and geography, illuminated throughout by the spiritual truth revealed in the Theological Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg, and correlated with the most recent findings in the field of archeology.

The central purpose of the book is to demonstrate that the entire Word is a parable. As the author notes in his introduction, "If God is the real Author of the Bible, His infinite wisdom must be present in the whole and in every part, even where the subject matter ostensibly is confined to wars between nations or the frank outpourings of human emotions of fear or revenge" (p. 1). It is pointed out that ancient peoples had little or no scientific knowledge, and their idea as to the nature of the world was so different from our own that their writings cannot be interpreted in terms of our modern day thought.

The earliest writings, a remnant of which is preserved to us in the first few chapters of Genesis, were not intended to record actual events, but rather to convey spiritual ideas by means of symbolic imagery. Moses, and the Old Testament prophets who followed him, did indeed chronicle the historic incidents connected with the origin, the growth and the fall of the Jewish nation. But their chief purpose was to portray the miraculous power of Jehovah and His protection of the sons of Israel as His chosen people. While this was their avowed intent, they were secretly led to cast their writings into a form that would reflect Divine truths entirely beyond their knowledge or comprehension. If it had not been so the Bible could not have been, in fact, the Word of God.

To establish this point, Dr. Odhner describes the concept of the world which was current in Biblical times. He cites the discoveries of archeologists to prove that the origins of human life on this planet date back many millions of years, and in consequence, that Bishop Usher's long accepted reckoning as to the time of creation

cannot be regarded as accurate. It follows that the "years" ascribed to successive generations in the story of Genesis may not be literally interpreted. He also points to the evidence that "pre-Adamites" existed long before the rise of the Most Ancient Church, showing that "Adam" could not have been the first man created.

No one really knows when or where the human race began. But archeologists are agreed that there were branches of the race that in very early times became extinct, and are not to be regarded as the progenitors of modern man who represents a distinct type and genius called "homo sapiens." It would appear that the Most Ancient Church must have arisen among some section of these latter peoples, while from other portions of their race came the "Gentiles" among whom the Ancient Church was spread. This being the case we cannot accept the popular idea that Noah was an historic individual whose three sons survived a universal flood, and whose descendants are represented in the Semitic, Hamitic and Aryan peoples of today. Here again, if the story of the Word is true it must be seen to contain a symbolic meaning.

Dr. Odhner gathers together such evidence as exists concerning the nations that constituted the "Ancient Church," and traces the origin of the Hebrew nation from which descended Abram, with whom the actual history of the Jews begins. He analyzes the current theories that seek to relate the Biblical chronology with the dates ascribed to contemporary rulers of Egypt. He points out that many problems in regard to this chronology still remain unsolved. But the findings of the scholars have established the general authenticity of the Bible account which had previously been regarded as completely unreliable, and the result is a far more accurate picture of the times, incidents and personalities described in the Old Testament.

The remainder of the book is designed to show how the Writings, by means of a logical system of correspondences, unlock the hidden meaning contained in the Biblical narrative, showing it to be a rational and harmonious description of man's spiritual life and regeneration, and inmosty of the Lord's life on earth and the glorification of His Human. He demonstrates how the Land of Canaan, as to all its parts, depicts the human mind, and how the incidents of the story unfold in sequence the successive stages in

the development of that mind through the process of regeneration. And finally, he describes the situation that existed at the time of the Lord's advent into the world, and ascribes a spiritual meaning to the various divisions of the land under Roman rule. He gives an impressive picture that could not possibly be the product of any human imagination, but clearly points to the Divine source and origin of the Heavenly Doctrine.

The work is a valuable contribution to the collateral literature of the church. It is addressed to the general reader, but it can be fully appreciated only by those who are equipped with a knowledge of the Writings and whose minds are disposed to acknowledge in them a revelation of Divine truth. To all such we commend it as a book that introduces the reader to a rational understanding of how the Bible is the Word of God, a repository of Divine wisdom for the spiritual guidance and instruction of mankind in all that has to do with the life of religion.

GEORGE DE CHARMS

WILL AND ACTION

"THE THOUGHTS OF THE MIND ARE CONCENTRATED IN A CERTAIN WILL WHICH EMBRACES THE IDEAS OF THAT MIND, AND TO WHICH THE ACTIONS OF THE BODY CORRESPOND. The series of our rational mind and its operations is such, that we first perceive the images of the senses; then we turn them over on all sides and revolve them, that is, we think; then also from the stores of the memory we draw out many like ideas; after this we combine these scattered ideas of the thoughts and reduce them to a certain form, this operation being called judgment; we then conclude that the ideas of the mind concentrated in the judgment must be determined into act, or be represented by means of actions; this is called the conclusion, and to this conclusion a certain force is added, that it may issue forth into act; this conclusion is called the will. Within the will therefore are concentrated as it were all those things that were within the thought and judgment, and, in addition, a force which acts continuously in order that the will may be determined into act" (*Action*, XXX).