

A TRIBUTE TO DR. HUGO LJ. ODHNER

OPENING REMARKS BY THE PROGRAM CHAIRMAN

The Swedenborg Scientific Association wishes to dedicate the program this evening as a token of appreciation for the work that Dr. Odhner is doing now and has done for many years in the past toward carrying forth the purposes of the Association. Yet as I read those "purposes," as they are called, it appears that Dr. Odhner's work goes far beyond them. For those purposes are literally dedicated and thus limited to the scientific and philosophical works of Emanuel Swedenborg.

We might ask this question: Why was it that Swedenborg was not only revelator, but scientist and philosopher? After all, those others before him who were the Lord's instruments in giving revelation also had their natural occupations. But in what sense is it necessary to know of these occupations or those of Swedenborg in order to understand the revelation given by each? In the case of Swedenborg many of the thoughtful students of his works have placed special emphasis upon the *relation* that exists between spiritual truth and natural truth. The need for understanding this relation is taught in the Writings themselves. Therefore these students have stressed the importance of understanding Swedenborg's natural works and also the science of his day in order that the relation between spiritual truths and natural truths may be known.

The Rev. N. D. Pendleton, writing in the early days of the Swedenborg Scientific Association, before he was Bishop of the General Church and President of the Academy, in an article called "The Scientific and Philosophical Writings" stressed in an explicit way the importance of the relation between spiritual and natural truths. It is clear from N. D. Pendleton's remarks that his interpretation went far beyond knowledges from the letter of the Word and spiritual truth only. Clearly he was talking of the scientific and philosophical works of Swedenborg, and also of the science of our day, that is of the day in which the man of the Church is living. He said:

A few such [natural] ideas, held in simplicity and sincerity of heart, will open the way. But the need of the growing rational mind is for many such in order that the communication between the internal and the external may be adequate. (N.C.L., 1911, pp. 510-11)

For more than forty years after these remarks were written, several scholars of Swedenborg, but to an outstanding degree Bishop Alfred Acton, carried forth the work of the Swedenborg Scientific Association according to the literal statements of its purposes. The scientific and philosophical works had to be made available first before relationships such as N. D. Pendleton had suggested could be adequately developed.

Now through these efforts these works are available. Also, during the first half of the twentieth century that coincides with that early period of the Swedenborg Scientific Association, tremendous revolutions in scientific thought occurred. What is the challenge before those of us who support the work of the Swedenborg Scientific Association today? The challenge to relate spiritual and natural truth has been of growing concern to us.

I believe that among the most important of the wide spectrum of uses that Dr. Odhner has performed for the New Church is his answer to this challenge through his personal efforts to relate spiritual and natural truths. And much of that effort has been channelled into the work of our Association.

In one short program we cannot cover all of the efforts of his. Nor can we even discuss one or two of them in any detail. Yet we can briefly give testimony to the importance of a few of the topics with which Dr. Odhner has concerned himself.

He believes that there *is* a philosophy of creation, and as one of its scholars he has taught us of the uses of the study of creation. Associated with this is his interest in how the mind operates, not only as a mind that studies or a mind that philosophizes, but also as a mind that grows, that becomes new as to its will and understanding—in brief, a mind that regenerates. These are the topics that will be discussed this evening:

1. "The Philosophy of Creation" by Bishop George de Charms
2. "The Use of the Study of Creation" by Dean W. Cairns Henderson
3. "The Use of the Study of the Mind" by Professor Erik Sandström

EDWARD F. ALLEN