

SPIRITUAL CHRISTIANITY.

COLLECTED FROM
THE THEOLOGICAL WORKS
OF
EMANUEL SWEDENBORG;
WITH AN
ILLUSTRATIVE COMMENTARY,
BY
CHARLES AUGUSTUS TULK.

“ Quæso, ne confundas ideas tuas cum Tempore et cum Spatio, quantum enim temporis et spatii est in ideis cum sequentia legis, tantum non intelligis illa.”

Eman. Swedenborgii Sapientia Angelica de Divino Amore, n. 51.

LONDON :
WILLIAM NEWBERY, 6, KING STREET, HOLBORN ;
OTIS CLAPP, BOSTON, U. S.

1846.

LONDON.

WALTON AND MITCHELL, PRINTERS, 24, WARDOUR STREET.

PREFACE.

THOUGH the following work has been drawn up principally for the use of those who are in some measure acquainted with the theological writings of Emanuel Swedenborg, it may not be unacceptable to others, who desire to see the leading features of the system brought together in a compendious form. To him who has heard only of the name of Swedenborg, or who knows nothing more of his views than what has been supplied in no very correct way by report, I would address a few words of caution, which may save him some trouble, and possibly much disappointment. This work will not be suited for him, nor perhaps will he be able to comprehend it, certainly not to appreciate its intrinsic worth, unless he come to the perusal with a mind somewhat prepared by moral and intellectual discipline. In the first place, he should not be wholly unaccustomed to the investigation of subjects of the highest order; I mean the truths of religion, and those which relate to the powers and constitution of the human mind. In the next place, his opinions should be uncontaminated with the materialism, so prevalent at the present day, which would dethrone God and his providence to make chance the ruler over a universe of lifeless atoms; and last, and chief of all, he should love the truth for its own sake, and be heartily disposed to frame both his motives and his actions by that divine law, which teaches him that he should love the Lord his God above all things, and his neighbour as himself. If he can bring these or most of these requisites to the study of this work, then may he confidently look forward to be both gratified and improved. For here he will not find, what he might expect to find from the epithets usually bestowed upon the name of SWEDENBORG, the ravings of a diseased imagination, or a portraiture of that kind of madness, which, in the opinion of some persons, may be the result of "too much learning," but religion in her purest, holiest form, dispersing by the brightness of her presence those mists or mysteries that oppress the human mind, when reason is not allowed to spread its light on all things in man's intellectual dwelling. He will also find, intimately blended with the purest doctrines of Christianity, the clearest and most convincing system of metaphysical philosophy ever given to the world, in which, by a profound insight into the origin and constitution of the mind, the laws of creation are unfolded in relation to the two worlds of spirit and

of nature. Of the former he will learn, that so far from being a world of shadows,—the baseless fabric of a dream, as it is usually considered,—it is in fact a world in which every object is pre-eminently real and distinct; and that when the good man is removed from this his preparatory state of life, so far from losing by the change, as every one must suppose who thinks of the human spirit as of a phantom floating indistinctly in the air, he is actually a gainer in everything which in this world passes under the name of *real* and *substantial*. And not only are the actuality and the objective distinctness of the spiritual world clearly and philosophically shewn him, but the laws are given according to which this natural world also, with its space, its time, and its various objects of the senses, is created and preserved. He will learn, that, in the harmony and union which reign throughout the works of the Infinite Wisdom, there is an intimate connection between the two worlds of spirit and of nature, and that the whole natural universe is dependent upon the world of spirit for its production. And not only are *the means* discovered to him, by which this universal frame of nature is created, but *the mode* also in which even the simplest and minutest atom is produced, and the general law, which, when applied to natural phenomena, will give *the reason* for their production. To him then, who may be inclined to pursue this universal science, nature will no longer be a sealed book, nor will he be condemned to pass his life in vainly striving to penetrate beneath its surface; but along with the knowledge of effects, which can never be too curiously or carefully examined, he will possess the far more useful and important knowledge of their causes, and of that “kingdom,” which “is not of this world,” in which the causes of all natural phenomena are to be sought for and found.

Nor is this all. The same master-key will enable him to open another book besides that of nature, which possibly he has been accustomed to call *the Word of God*, and which when unfolded by the same universal science, he will discover really to be so. For this book, as well as the book of nature, has its interior sense, revealing the series of spiritual causes for all those natural truths and events which are recorded in its literal sense. The truths of its spiritual sense he will find to be of an exalted and momentous kind; so much so indeed, that if, after reading this work, he be disposed to agree with me that no one can be justly entitled to the name of a philosopher, however skilful he may be in nature-craft as an experimentalist, unless he know how a natural effect is to be connected with its spiritual cause, he will readily admit that no one can be said to know the true doctrines of Christianity, unless “the veil” of the literal sense “be rent in twain” for him, that he may enter “the holy

of holies'' of its spiritual contents. Nor will his reverence for the sacred volume be lessened, but increased rather, upon finding that a pure and consistent doctrine of religion is not to be found in the natural sense, which is very far indeed from being a perfect revelation of divine truth; for in its very imperfection he will see a striking proof of the wisdom that inspired its composition,—a wisdom that permits a cloud to be thrown over the glory of its presence, that so it may be adapted to the intellectual sight of those who are unable to raise their minds above the shadows of effects; and who, being in the current of their thoughts and desires *natural* men, must have a *natural* and imperfect religious doctrine suitable to their state, and adequate to their comprehension. But though it is not possible for a pure and perfect system of religion to be collected from the literal sense of the Holy Scriptures, any more than the ultimate causes of things could be discerned among the phenomena of nature, or a sound and rational system of philosophy framed from them; and though in both instances we must ascend to their interior or spiritual sense to find the true doctrines of religion, and a true system of philosophy, yet equally in both instances will the natural sense be found indispensable as a basis or fulcrum from which to rise, and as a beacon by which to direct our course.

But how can we be assured, it may be urged, that this supposed interior sense of Scripture is anything more than the invention of an ingenious fancy? Can any satisfactory proof be given that it is not some curious mode of eliciting a sense from the Holy Scripture, which sense has no other connection with the literal history than that which the author has chosen to give it? Or has it really a foundation in the nature of things? Questions such as these will suggest themselves, and ought to suggest themselves, to every thinking mind, and it is not enough for me to assert that it is something more than a curious invention, unless I am at the same time able to shew the foundation on which the whole superstructure rests. To be thoroughly satisfied, which is the same thing as to be rationally convinced, I must be prepared to shew the grounds on which the author has proceeded. For however high his authority may be deemed by me, I may be sure that, in so momentous a concern as religion, they, who really reflect, will not be disposed blindly to bow down before it; nor can I, with any consistency, require it of such persons as are not in the habit of thinking for themselves, considering how frequently and in what strong terms the author himself deprecates that blind belief, which is founded upon authority, and appeals to the rational perception of truth as the highest kind of mental illumination. This he never would have done, had he not been prepared to satisfy these