

TESTIMONIES ABOUT SWEDENBORG

By Don Rose

There are fine books by the thousands, and a given individual has just so much time to read a tiny fraction of them. Why should one read one book rather than another? Testimonies can help to answer that. Here are three testimonies about Swedenborg. First from Ralph Waldo Emerson: “The moral insight of Swedenborg, the correction of popular errors, the announcement of ethical laws, take him out of comparison with any other modern writer, and entitle him to a place, vacant for some ages, among the lawgivers of mankind.”

Next the poet, Edwin Markham. “His writings are today the prime influence beating down the wall of irrationality, making way for a faith that appeals at once to reason and to the heart.”

And finally Helen Keller: “I wish I might be able to radiate the spiritual illumination that came to me when I read with my own fingers Heaven and Hell. All the days of my life since have ‘proved the doctrine’ and found it true. If people would only begin to read Swedenborg’s books with at first a little patience, they would soon be reading them for pure joy.”

Those three witnesses command attention by virtue of their stature in history, but they may seem dated. It is refreshing to have the testimony provided by Dr. Mehmet Oz. He does not urge others to read, but simply makes an honest and modest statement of how the Writings have helped him. Here are some of his appealing lines.

“How could an all-loving God choose to extend that love to only a select few? Swedenborg taught that God loves us all, and the various religions allow us to approach him in the way best suited to our needs. He argued that we are all born for heaven, and that it is what we love that determines our fate, not what we profess to believe.”

“It was Swedenborg’s explanation of suffering that I found most useful. According to Swedenborg, God permits evil only to preserve our spiritual freedom. Since good which is not freely chosen is not good at all. He never wills the resulting suffering, but constantly turns it into opportunities for growth and transcendence. (I have seen patients transform their lives after a serious illness.)

“In my practice I have struggled to provide holistic healing. For example, helping a transplant recipient deal with the emotional crisis of a rejecting heart is often more of a challenge than the surgery itself. Nothing in science can address, or give us comfort when we face the possibility of our own death or the loss of a loved one. As a physician, I seek to connect with my patients on both the physical and spiritual levels, since true healing is never about curing just the body. Although I rarely mention him by name, Swedenborg has made this easier for me.”

Thousands know and respect Dr. Oz, and his testimony may well make an important difference in the reading choices that they make.

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