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A MEMOIR

OF

SWEDENBORG.

BY O. P. HILLER.

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WHO WAS SWEDENBORG?

It has too generally happened, that those whom Divine Providence has, from time to time, raised up to be the great teachers of mankind have been abused or neglected by the age in which they lived. This was the case with the apostles of the Christian Dispensation, and even with its Divine Founder Himself. Of Him they said, "He hath a devil and is mad: why hear ye Him?" And, in like manner, of his apostle Paul it was affirmed, that "much learning had made him mad;" and he was obliged to defend himself against the charge: "I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak forth the words of truth and soberness."¹ In the course of years and of ages, it came at length to be clearly seen

¹ Acts xxvi. 26.

and fully settled, that the apostle indeed was not mad, as was thought, but spoke in reality the words of truth and soberness, and that truth, too, inspired from Heaven. And we, who have been brought up in this belief, and who live in an age when that faith has been long established, are apt to wonder at and censure the incredulity of those who made such charges, and who were unwilling to receive the glorious truth of the new Dispensation then presented to them.

But, indeed, it is to be feared that we are but little wiser in this respect than they were. The men of the present day are hardly more disposed to receive or listen to what is *new*, however true it may be, than were the men of a former age. Prejudice is still alive, and ever ready to do its wonted work of shutting up men's eyes and ears, — now as then. What men have been accustomed to believing and holding, they wish still to believe and hold, and naught else. What is old is good and true; what is new, they think, must be false: “no man having drunk old wine,” saith the Scripture, “straightway desireth new,

for he saith the old is better." Thus it is. Men, in the mass, are creatures of habit and custom; they do as they have done, and walk in the way of their fathers; or, if they chance to hear something new that strikes them as true and reasonable, they fear to receive it, till they first inquire whether "any of the rulers have believed on him." Few there are who have sufficient independence of mind to think and judge for themselves; and still fewer whose love of truth so far transcends selfish and wordly considerations as to render them willing to incur the risk of temporal loss, or of odium amongst friends and acquaintances in order to obtain it.

There has seldom been a more favorable opportunity of observing the truth of this view than exists in our own day and at this moment. There has appeared in the world, within a century past, a writer such as, for height, depth, and extent of intellect and learning combined, or for the importance and grandeur of the truths he has set forth, it may unhesitatingly be said, has not before appeared amongst men; one whose