

Translator's Corner

J. Durban Odhner, Editor

It is a pleasure, and a privilege, to present the English version of Lars Bergquist's study, "The Heavenly Hermeneutic," to the readership of *The New Philosophy*, as translated from the Swedish by Rev. Kurt Nemitz.

There is a common insight that one does not grasp the real meanings of a text unless one "reads between the lines."

In his paper originally published in *Världarnas Möte*, Mr. Bergquist beautifully links the hermeneutic faculty with the spiritual rebirth, regeneration, and emphasizes the often neglected truth that the understanding of deeper meanings is not only a factor of Swedenborg's state of mind, but also of the reader's.

He also stresses that inner meanings come as revelations to a mind not straining its rational faculty to arrive at truth: as innocent belief, or as he quotes Swedenborg, "first becoming a child, and then being nursed into knowledge—which is happening with me now" (*Journal of Dreams* 278). For faith is not the consequence of a reasoning process, and its truths are "spiritual out of heavenly origin, not of rational origin" (*Arcana Coelestia* 2496-7).

THE HEAVENLY HERMENEUTIC[†]

Lars Bergquist

"Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" This question from an expert in Jewish law is presented in the 10th chapter of the Gospel of Luke. The Teacher then answered, "What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?"

[†] "Den himmelska hermeneutiken." Originally published in the Swedish journal *Världarnas Möte* (Olle Hjern ed.) 1-2 (1995). Translated by Kurt P. Nemitz. Published with permission of the author.

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The word “hermeneutic” comes from the Greek *hermeneuein*, to interpret. During the decades of the 1960s and 1970s theory regarding the interpretation of the written word became an increasingly topical subject. This was the case particularly in France, with Paul Ricoeur, Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida as leading protagonists. They criticized the simple romantic idea that searching for and discovering the author’s *meaning*, his purpose, should be every interpreter’s task. There are many meanings, they wrote. The naked text does not suffice for one who wants to understand—we also need knowledge of the “intertext.” More explicitly, when we read we must listen to the “sound from voices that are anonymous, yet in their own peculiar way familiar, in the space around the text.”¹ We should be conscious of the fact that texts of all kinds are engaged in dialogs with other literary works, and that the reader himself is a participant in this intertextual dialogue.

In the international discussion about interpretation and meaning, one that is more philosophical than philological, Emanuel Swedenborg’s name has been scarcely mentioned—with one significant exception. I allude to the so-called Eranos circle, a group of existentially oriented philosophers, theologians, psychologists, linguists and historians who meet regularly in Ancona, Switzerland. C. G. Jung, Henry Corbin, Mircea Eliade, Ernst Benz and Gershom Scholem belonged to this group. Here it was emphasized that Swedenborg’s hermeneutic, his method of interpretation, casts light over the reading process in general—in Swedenborg’s case a reading that at one and the same time contains elements of psychology, theology, theosophy and ontology.²

Swedenborg’s theology and theosophy are based, as is known, on his reading of the Biblical text. Through what he regarded as a special Divine gift he had acquired the ability to discern the inner and heavenly meaning of texts. During his long religious period the Bible, and particularly its prophetic books, were the given starting point. In its words and meanings he found previously hidden *arcana*, secrets. He associated himself with a classic Christian tradition. During the Middle Ages a distinction had been

¹ Kjell Espmark, *Resans formler*. (1983), 19 ff.

² José Antonio Antón Pacheco, *Aproximaciones a Eranos*. (Buenos Aires: Epiménelia, 1992), 1: 91 ff.

made in the Biblical text that went beyond its literal senses and a special moral, “tropological” meaning. This further distinction was between an allegorical and analogical signification—the former mirror-like and intellectual, the latter upward-striving, ascending toward “heaven’s highest and holiest secrets.”³

The special characteristic of Swedenborg’s reading, therefore, was what he took to be the unique nature of his insight. He uncovered, he revealed something that until the time of his own interpretation had been hidden. This reading, consequently, gave him a prophetic role. He looked upon his interpretative work as a decisive contribution to mankind’s future.

Although it does not make the same claim on absolutism, within Jewish mysticism too we meet with a similar, secret-filled reading, where the holy texts are generally regarded as containing hidden meanings, distinguishable only to the pious and learned interpreter. *Midrash*, the ancient Jewish commentary on the Old Testament reminds one of Swedenborg’s works.⁴

It should be emphasized that the secret-filled “inner” mode of interpretation is in no wise limited to the Christian sphere. There is a special parallel in Shiite Sufi mysticism and its esoteric interpretation of the text of the Koran. I quote the quite well known expert on Islamic mysticism Henry Corbin:

Here there is the conviction that all that is obvious, literal, outward exoteric...has something hidden, spiritual, esoteric that corresponds to it...It is precisely this primary approach to its writings that lies at the base of Shiism as a religious phenomenon. It is esoterism’s basic postulate and it is of fundamental significance to esoteric hermeneutics.⁵

³ Anders Piltz, *Medeltidens lärda värld* (Stockholm: Carmina, 1978), 31 ff..

⁴ Cf. José Antonio Antón Pacheco, *Un libro sobre Swedenborg* (Universidad de Sevilla: ISBN 84-7405-678-0), 53.

⁵ Henry Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn ‘Arabi*. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), 78; cf. also Mollá Sadrâ Shîrâzi. *Le Livre des pénétratio métaphysiques*, trans. from Arabic, annot. and introd. by Henry Corbin, Collection “Islam Spirituel” (Verdier, 1988 ISBN 2-86432-070-3), 20 ff.

For Swedenborg the Old Testament, the Gospels and the Book of Revelation were holy on all levels of interpretation—the letters, words and literal sense equally as much as its inner and highest heavenly meanings.

This loving anchoring in the Bible has a tie to Luther and the Reformation's stress on sola scriptura (Scripture alone). Swedenborg's father Jesper Swedberg had literally lived every waking hour with the Bible within reach, and knew a great part of it by heart. Swedberg incarnated the Lutheran fixation with the Bible. All of his written statements were laden with quotations from it, either as support for his own opinion or as weapons against those of a different view.⁶ The central place taken by the Bible included not least the Old Testament, which during the 1600s and 1700s had a historical significance for the Lutheran and Reformed priesthood as well as for the day's worldly powers. It gave an anchoring to evangelical Christianity and became a Divine substitute for the unacceptable and rejected Catholic tradition. In addition to this was the fact that the Old Testament contained an uncompromising and politically significant emphasis on law and order, human and Divine. It was thus a document well-pleasing to those in power.⁷

* * *

It was already during his religious crisis in 1744-45 that the Biblical text entered into Emanuel Swedenborg's new existence as a fundamental element. The crisis reached its culmination the night between Easter and Easter Monday the 6-7 April 1744. He is shaken by tremors, hears a thundering voice "as if many winds crashed together." A prayer is put in his mouth and his hands are pressed together by another hand.

I continued my prayer, and said, "Thou hast promised to be merciful to all sinners; Thou canst nothing else than keep Thy word." At that same moment, I sat in his bosom, and saw him face to face. It was a face of holy mien, and in all it was indescribable, and he smiled so that I believe that his face had indeed been like

⁶Cf. his *Leftvenes Beskrifning*, ed. Gunnar Wetterberg (Lund: Gleenzp, 1941).

⁷Carl-Gustaf Hildebrand, "Bibel ock politik frn 1500- till 1700 tal," in *Den svenska Bibeln, ett 450-års jubileum* (Stockholm: Proprius, 1991, ISBN 91-7118-720-0), 165ff..

this when he lived on earth. He spoke to me and asked if I had a clear health-certificate. I answered, "Lord, Thou knowest better than I." "Well then, so do," said He—that is, as I took it in mind to mean, "love me in reality," or, "do what thou hast promised." May God give me grace to do this.⁸

Swedenborg's theosophical mode of reading is found for the first time in notes in his *Drömbok* (Journal of Dreams) from October 26-27, 1744. He dreamed of beautiful porcelain vessels, pictures of his future work. During the theosophist Swedenborg's entire remaining life the vessel, the *receptaculum*, would be a picture of the individual turned to God, who from above received the Divine love and insight that streamed in as *influx*. He noted:

(I saw in these vessels) all the work that in God's name I am now taking in hand—in front the work on the worship of God, at the side the work on love. And I saw that I ought not to take of others' insignificant materials, but [use] only my own...May God lead me on the right path.⁹

His well-known vision of God at a London inn and the events following directly upon this happened a half-year later. According to Carl Robsahm's account Swedenborg himself considered this experience a turning point:

During the night the same mankind revealed himself to me again, but I was not frightened now. He then said that He was the Lord God; the Creator of the world, and the Redeemer, and that He had chosen me to explain the spiritual sense of the Scripture to mankind, and that He Himself would explain to me what I should write on this subject. That same night the worlds of spirits, heaven, and hell were also opened to me, so that I became thoroughly convinced of their reality, and I recognized there many acquaintances from every station. From that day I gave up the study of all

⁸Lars Bergquist, *Emanuel Swedenborgs Drömbok* (Stockholm: Norstedts, 1988 ISBN 91-1-871162-6) par. 53-54.

⁹Ibid., par. 278.

worldly science and labored in spiritual things, according as the Lord commanded me to write. Afterwards the Lord opened my physical sight, quite often daily, so that, in the middle of the day I could see into the other world and converse with angels and spirits in a state of perfect wakefulness.¹⁰

Thus the crisis ended with a Divine call. During the period of the *Journal of Dreams* he as yet presumably had no clear understanding of what this call involved. What was meant by and involved in a book titled *De cultu et amore Dei* (The Worship and Love of God)? His sources, consequently, would be his own Divinely inspired mental ability, his own experiences. *Cultus* is faith and worship formed by *amor*, love. Swedenborg came close to Thomas Aquinas's and classical Catholic thinking regarding the faith that is formed by love, *fides caritate formata*. Through the infusion of love the soul raises itself toward God, to a higher plane of knowledge. *Agere sequitur esse*, "action and being are linked together," is one of Thomas's most famous aphorisms. The mind's disposition and its relation to God determine (thought and) action: the higher one is on the stairway to God, the clearer are one's insights.¹¹

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This turning to God presumes a spiritual rebirth. From a note of Oct. 12-13, 1744 it is evident that already during the period of the *Journal of Dreams* Swedenborg was thinking in the categories of rebirth and the knowledge consequent upon this. He seems to himself to see "beautiful bread on a plate":

which was a portent that the Lord Himself desired to instruct me because now for the first time I have come into the state [of realizing] that I know nothing...which is where learning commences—first becoming a child, and then being nursed into knowledge, which is happening with me now.¹²

¹⁰ Carl Robsahm, *Anteckningar om Swedenborg* (writings published by Föreningen Swedenborgs Minne. Stockholm: 1989. ISBN1100-4479, ISBN 91-87856-00-X), 37, 38.

¹¹ Etienne Gilson, *Le Thomisme* (Paris: Vrin, 1989 ISBN 2-7116-0297-4), 242-243, 322-323. See also Anders Nygren, *Den kristna kärlekstanken* (Stockholm: SKD, 1936), 2: 473 ff.

¹² *Drömbok*. par. 278.

Rebirth, the death of the old self, ever at the fore in that day's pietism and Wesleyan Christianity, thus became a fundamental concept in his own life. After the period covered by the *Journal of Dreams* he intensified his studies of the Bible, with the preparation of a massive index as a result. At the same time he also wrote and published a fragmentary book on the Creation story—with the title *de Cultu et Amore Dei* (The Worship and Love of God). There it is said in par. 122 that the approach made in worship is such as is the union that takes place in love.¹³ And, that “the rays from God's light are all truths,” such as came to Adam and Eve in their absolute innocence.¹⁴

In this way the interpretation process becomes related to and integrated in a process of the formation of personality. The meaning remains invisible if outer things keep the reader in their grip. The new birth is not something that is definitely done, once and for all; it must constantly be repeated, since a humankind easily falls back into self-love.

...in the internal sense there lie hidden arcana of heaven. These arcana cannot possibly be seen as long as the mind keeps its eye fixed on the historical details, nor are they disclosed until the mind removes itself from the sense of the letter. The Word of the Lord is like a body that has within it a living soul. The things that belong to the soul are not apparent as long as the mind is fixed on those of the body. So unapparent are they that it scarcely believes it possesses a soul, even less that it will be alive after death. But as soon as the mind departs from bodily things, those belonging to the soul and to life show themselves; and in this lies the reason not only why bodily things must die before a person can be born anew or be regenerated, but also why the body must die so that a person can enter heaven and behold heavenly things.¹⁵

¹³ *Om Guds dyrkan och kärleken till Gud*, trans. Jonsson (Stockholm: Natur och Kultur, 1961).

¹⁴ Emanuel Swedenborg, *Swedenborgs skapelsedrama De Cultu et Amore Dei* (Stockholm: Natur och Kultur, 1961), 186.

¹⁵ Emanuel Swedenborg, *Arcana Coelestia*, n. 1408.

The outer text, the story, is in actual fact a *metahistoria* [or account whose meaning goes beyond the literal sense]. It is in actual fact the human being's inner struggle against the evil, and drawing toward what is good, clothed in outer dress.

* * *

The new birth, that was decisive in Swedenborg's own life, should naturally be given a Biblical anchoring. He came to relate his own experiences and the insight that followed to the Scripture's account of Creation and the triadic theme of both testaments: innocence, fall, and redemption. It was already in 1745 that he began the lengthy work of interpreting Genesis and Exodus, which was later expanded and published in 1749-56 as *Arcana Coelestia*. With the Creation story as a starting point, in thorough detail he uses a human being's purification and regeneration, rebirth, as the key to the Biblical course of events. Only outwardly, in their *sensus literalis*, do the books of the Bible describe the doings of the ancient characters. The inner meaning hidden behind the concrete episodes thus treats instead of human life's final destiny in a heavenly perspective.

In this way everything incomprehensible and contradictory was transferred to a higher, rational plateau. The myths and their heroes became symbols for events and their circumstances outside the quantitative and measurable world. They deal with another qualitative reality.

* * *

Swedenborg's turning point was a theoretical one dealing with knowing—his insight and understanding became more interior. Through dreams and visions, dictation from above, conversation with angels and demons, exploratory journeys of discovery in paradise and in hell he was instructed in what he understood to be the real, inner meaning in the Sacred Scriptures. God is always *absconditus*, hidden, and comes forth visibly only through vessels of His love, "*I fedeli d'amore*," angels and human beings who are close to them. Angelology becomes an insight into the Divine, where God, using the Biblical texts as a base, reveals the unknown through angels who correspondingly represent His questions and state of mind.

For Swedenborg his interpretation of the Biblical texts is possible thanks to a Divine privilege given him.

It has pleased Lord to manifest Himself to me and to send me to teach the doctrines that will be the doctrines of the new church, the church meant by the New Jerusalem in the Apocalypse. To this end He has opened the inner faculties of my mind and spirit. By so doing He has made it possible for me to be in the spiritual world with angels and at the same time with people in the natural world, and this now for twenty-five years.¹⁶

The interpretations given him are essentially explanations of the Bible passages he is studying. The angels' speech is inexpressible, he writes. He can understand what they are saying if he is in the "same state of mind," on the same spiritual plane as his interlocutors.¹⁷ When he too is in the spiritual world his personal state of mind is decisive for his ability to understand. All of Emanuel's movements, his journeys in the spiritual world, come to pass through changes in his mental state.¹⁸ These heavenly, mental changes of state relate correspondingly to the mental shifts that take place with wise individuals in this world. Here too, we read, Divine wisdom is related to one's state of mind.

The state of mind is decisive not merely for the angels who gift mankind with understanding and wisdom. The same relationship applies to every individual's guardian angels. They dwell in our good love, he writes— "near at hand to the extent that a person is involved in what is good that has sprung from what is true, and at a distance to the extent that one's life is remote from this."¹⁹ The difference is that an ordinary person, in contrast to Swedenborg, does not see them; he sees them just as little as he is perceptively aware of the demons who encourage his evil affections.

It is to be noted that the angels' knowledge too is determined by their state of mind. Swedenborg describes their inner changes in *Heaven and Hell*:

¹⁶ Emanuel Swedenborg, *Conjugal Love*, n.1.

¹⁷ Emanuel Swedenborg, *Apocalypse Revealed*, n. 961.

¹⁸ *Arcana Coelestia*, n.10733.

¹⁹ Emanuel Swedenborg, *Heaven and Hell*, n. 391.

Angels have a selfhood just as people on earth do. It consists in loving themselves; and everyone in heaven is kept away from his selfhood. To the extent that they are kept away from it by the Lord, they experience love and wisdom; but to the extent that they are not kept away, they are immersed in self-love. Since everyone loves his own selfhood, and since it influences him, the angels also have mood changes or fluctuations.²⁰

When their wisdom wanes, we read, they become melancholy. "I have talked with them while they were in this state, and I have seen their depression" Swedenborg writes. "However, they said that they felt hope for a prompt return to their original state...since for them heaven is being kept away from their selfhood."²¹

* * *

All the angels' wisdom comes to them through the Scriptures, Swedenborg writes in the *True Christian Religion*. "The light and wisdom they enjoy is in proportion to the depth of their understanding of the Word."²² And the depth of their insight is in proportion to their love's quality and intensity. The Heavenly²³ angels' wisdom is more penetrating than that of the Spiritual angels, almost as much as these latter angels' wisdom surpasses that of earthly humans. Consequently the angels' interpretive ability varies with their state of mind; and it also simultaneously varies, automatically, with the *status animi* (mind-set) of the privileged interpreter that Swedenborg is. From a hermeneutic viewpoint this involves two levels of meaning, the *heavenly* and the *spiritual*. And within these two categories of understanding the interpretation can be more or less satisfying, depending on the interpreter and his audience. The under-

²⁰ Emanuel Swedenborg, *Heaven and Hell*, n. 158.

²¹ *Heaven and Hell*, n. 160.

²² *True Christian Religion*, n. 242.

²³ Swedenborg's designation is *coelestes*—a derivative of *coelum*=heaven. The English translation tradition has been to render *coelestis* as "celestial" when it describes the highest category of angels, using the rendering "heavenly" in more general applications; but since Swedish makes no such distinction, but in both circumstances for *coelestis* uses *himmelsk*—from *himmel*=heaven—, we have chosen to do the same.—Trans.

standing of the text is a function, a result of the love and wisdom of the reader.

Is the interpreter an angel or Swedenborg himself? Does the angel personate Swedenborg's own state of mind in order in this way to create an identity between the text, the reader, and the hearer of the heavenly message? Sebastian Castellio, creator of a renowned Latin translation of the Bible that Swedenborg studied daily, wrote in his forward that only a person who is enlightened in himself by the same spirit that itself was once responsible for the Biblical revelation can see through the veil of the literal sense and glimpse the eternal message, the Eternal Word.²⁴

There is no simple answer. We can note that the Swedenborgian interpretation is seldom conveying abstract concepts. They are concrete and express the angel's or Swedenborg's own personal experience. Everything is subjective, existentially significant for Emanuel—there is a personal link between meaning and interpreter. To repeat what we have said before: the text is interiorized and gives an indication of the reader-interpreter's spiritual maturity.

In this way Swedenborg's hermeneutic becomes part of his anthropology. A human being's Divine task is to become totally enlightened, and complete insight is related to the presence of what is good and what is true with him or her. Or to put it another way, it is related to the intensity of will and love, and to the readiness of those who will and love to put insight into act. Our task is to become angels ourselves when our short time on earth is indeed over.

* * *

Swedenborg always had a tendency to think in trines: the heavenly paradise consists of a heavenly (*coelestis*)²⁵ and a spiritual (*spiritualis*) part where the angels are, and of a third where the angel-like spirits dwell. There are earthly-, spiritually- and heavenly-minded people.

Trines are met with also, as noted, in texts from the Bible. Here there is a literal sense, and also an inner and an outer meaning. These three senses

²⁴ *Biblia Sacra. ex interpr Sebast Castellionis*, (London, 1726).

²⁵ See footnote 24.—Trans.

can be analyzed horizontally and vertically. For both he uses the same paradigm: all statements have an ultimate end, a cause, and an effect. He explains his thinking in a passage in *The True Christian Religion*:

The Word in its literal sense is in its fullness, holiness and power. This is because the spiritual and heavenly senses are both united in the literal sense. The relation of these meanings to each other can be explained in the following way:

In the case of successive, vertical order one comes after and follows the other from highest to lowest; in simultaneous, horizontal order, however, one is alongside the other from inmost to outermost. Successive order is like a column that spreads out in steps from top to bottom; but simultaneous order is like an object made up of cohering rings from center to outermost surface.

It must now be explained how at the lowest level successive order becomes simultaneous...The highest levels of a successive order become the inmost parts of a simultaneous order, and the lowest levels of a successive order become the outermost part of a simultaneous order. This can be illustrated by a stepped column subsiding to become a coherent object in a single plane. So the simultaneous is formed from the successive, and this operates in every single thing in the natural world, and in every single thing in the spiritual world. For everywhere there is a first, middle and last, and the first reaches out through the middle and advances towards its last.

As regards the Word: heavenly, spiritual and natural elements proceed from the Lord in successive, vertical order; in the lowest, outmost level inmost things meet in a simultaneous order. In this way the celestial and spiritual senses of the Word are simultaneously present in its natural sense. Once this has been grasped, it can be seen how the natural sense of the Word is the foundation containing and holding together its inner spiritual and heavenly senses, as well as how Divine good and Divine truth meet in the literal sense of the Word in their fullness, holiness and power. The heavenly and spiritual senses without the natural

sense are not the Word, for that would be like spirit and life without a body...a palace without a foundation.²⁶

First, therefore, it is a matter of the literal meaning being tied inseparably to the inner meaning. Through this the literal sense is given its significance and holiness. Second, through one's egoism a person can totally lose the ability to understand or divine the idea within the literal sense, such as it is presented by Swedenborg.²⁷

Thereby a person distances oneself from the Divine, from the hidden knowledge of the angels:

Therefore, if a person is not in possession of Divine truths, or only a few truths accompanied by false notions, one can use these to falsify the truths...So to prevent anyone from coming into possession of the spiritual sense and perverting genuine truth, the Lord has established guards, which are meant by the cherubim in the Word.²⁸

Thus the inner meaning lies hidden like the pearl in the oyster. This special view of the text distinguishes Swedenborg's approach to the Word from a more or less scientific, allegorical interpretation. It is a matter of revelations, always rational, but never brought into being through operations of the rational faculty.

It should be pointed out that it is not simply the language of the Bible that bears an inner meaning. Everything in creation has a higher and inner signification—what Swedenborg called correspondences, *correspondentia*. There is, he thought, a Divine parallel between the natural and the spiritual world: "All natural things representatively picture those that exist among the spiritual things to which they correspond, and these in turn picture those that exist among the heavenly things in which they have their origin."²⁹ He develops this thought in a subsequent paragraph:

²⁶ *True Christian Religion*, n. 214.

²⁷ Cf. Henry Corbin, *Face de Dieu, face de l'homme*, (Paris: Flammarion, 1983 IS&N 2-08-210716-7), 70 ff.

²⁸ *The True Christian Religion*, n. 208. On the guarding cherubs see Genesis 3:24.

²⁹ *Arcana Coelestia*, n. 2991.

It is similar with things in the vegetable kingdom. Not even the smallest thing exists there that does not representatively picture something in the spiritual world and correspond to it, as I have been given to know many times through a ... contact with angels. They have also told me the reasons for this, namely, that all natural phenomena are caused by what is spiritual, and originate from what is heavenly. Or, in other words, all things in the natural world derive their cause from truth, which is spiritual, and their origin from good, which is heavenly...³⁰

* * *

The doctrine of the linkage of the universal with the particular is met with not only in Swedenborg's interpretation of Biblical texts and his doctrine of correspondences, it appears also in his own style, in his way of expressing himself in his theological writings. Just as the core essence is present as both inner meaning and ultimate purpose, Swedenborg's statements are structured in triads of effect, means, and originating cause. In fact, to be understood everything presupposes precisely this three-fold division. For Swedenborg God's presence in everything and everyone is a fundamental reality. From this reality results a tendency to a mode of expression that is distributive and comparative: "A relates to B as B to C."³¹ The argumentation runs in chains, the links are united with each other through their common core content, the Divine intention and insight.³²

The triad in progressive development of thought and in the resultant mode of expression is complemented by a complementary relationship that is fundamental to Swedenborg's hermeneutic and recurs constantly, the relationship between mind-set and insight, *modus essendi* and *modus intelligendi*. This existential line of thought, that has a relation with Thomism, is, as said, characteristic of the whole Swedenborgian way of reading and interpreting.

³⁰ *Arcana Coelestia*, n. 2993.

³¹ Inge Jonsson, *I symbolens hus* (Stockholm: Norstedts, 1983. ISBN 91-1-823431-3), 88 ff.

³² Cf. José Antonio Antón Pacheco, *Un libro sobre Swedenborg*, 5.

Swedenborg's Latin and style changed as a result of his Divine call. His earlier mode of expression, which had often been light and personal, became otherwise. The mankind usually disappears behind the message, the communication of which had become a life-work. He saw his interpretation as God's covenant with mankind that succeeded the New and Old Testaments; and the language he used to articulate it aimed at clarity and completeness. In a 1769 letter to his friend and supporter Professor Gabriel Beyer, Swedenborg complained of his contemporaries' meager understanding and of the lack of interest in the Bible's real, meaningful content.³³ Perhaps the linguistic dress he gave his interpretations contributed to this lack of understanding. But more important was certainly his method of reading, which was foreign to Lutheranism. Luther, and along with him presumably the greater part of the Protestant priesthood and its church body, was of the opinion that no special interpretation of the Sacred Scripture is necessary. It was its own interpreter, wrote the Reformer, it was *interpretes sui ipsius*. Like Emanuel Swedenborg. □

³³ *Letters and Memorials of Swedenborg*, trans. and ed. by Alfred Acton (Bryn Athyn: Swedenborg Scientific Association, 1955), II: 693.



