

## THE PRETHEOLOGICAL WORKS IN A SET

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Jonathan S. Rose<sup>1</sup>

I have a picture in my mind of Emanuel Swedenborg's pretheological works in a set. A fair amount of work has already been done to publish Swedenborg's pretheological works, but it has been somewhat haphazard, you might say. There has never been an effort to create a complete set, a "one-stop shop," that you could find on a library shelf all laid out for you in a consistent way, according to consistent principles, with annotations, introductions, and diagrams to make this body of work accessible.

How could such a set be produced? As you may know, the Swedenborg Foundation's New Century Edition is in phase one right now. Phase one comprises twenty-six volumes of Swedenborg's published theological works. This is the only phase that has been approved by the Swedenborg Foundation so far, but the long-term dream is to do an *Opera Omnia*—all the works of Swedenborg in one complete set on the shelf. Such a set would honor Swedenborg in the way that great minds like Luther and Aquinas have been honored.

This is a very challenging dream. It is challenging to translate Swedenborg's *theological* works. You have to know the source language, Latin, extremely well. You have to know the target language, English, extremely well. And you have to know the corpus of what Swedenborg wrote extremely well.

With the *pretheological* works the difficulties are even greater. While many of the works are in Latin, some are in Swedish. And of course the translator would need an understanding of the great variety of topics that Swedenborg writes about: mathematics, chemistry, metallurgy, anatomy, and so on. In addition, each work would present special challenges. So we need translations that reflect significant knowledge of Latin, Swedish, history, science, and a host of specialties. You might say we need historico-

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<sup>1</sup>Dr. Rose is a member of, and a translator for, the General Church Translation Committee. He is also the series editor and a translator for the Swedenborg Foundation's New Century Edition of the Works of Emanuel Swedenborg. Address: 1800 Byberry Road, Bldg 9, Suite 900, Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006; jsrose@newchurch.edu.

scientifico-Swedo-Latinists; we need arithmetico-Suecico-metallurgico-politico-anatomists; and so on.

Now, I mean no insult to present company or myself but I do not see such beings already in existence among us. So there are three ways I can see to address this need:

1. You could take people who already have some of these skills and develop other skills in them. You could either take linguists and cultivate their scientific and historical abilities, or take scientists and historians of science and cultivate their linguistic skills. But these skills take a lifetime to master.
2. Another approach might be to use *tabulae rasae*. Take young minds and load them up with all of the above. The problem here would be that if you run out of funding and these people have spent fifteen years training, they might have trouble finding work elsewhere.
3. I think the most likely way to achieve success would be through teamwork—very close teamwork. Even closer teamwork than a translator and the translator's Latin consultant have in current practice would be needed between someone who knows the history of science and someone who knows the language that the original is written in. These two people would work very closely together, hopefully in the presence of a vast array of resources, such as libraries, the Internet, and so forth.

There are other challenges as well. I wish to talk briefly about the state of the texts of these pretheological works. Dr. Wendy Closterman is studying the state of these texts very carefully now. At some point she will give a report on their state.

For the time being, as a general statement let me say that although we may think of Swedenborg's pretheological works somewhat monolithically, they are in fact in quite a diverse state. Some texts are in Latin; some are in Swedish. Some were published by Swedenborg; some were not. Of those that Swedenborg published, some have had subsequent editions: some have had multiple editions; some have only had one. Some works only exist in the first edition. Some of those that he left in manuscript have now been published, or at least translated. Some have not been touched; they are still in their original state.

An interesting problem you may not be aware of is that Swedenborg's handwriting is completely different in Swedish than it is in Latin. I have no difficulty reading his handwriting in Latin. I cannot read a word of what he writes in Swedish. The late Durban Odhner was the only person I know who was facile in both; his passing was a great loss to us.

To date, there has been no systematic effort to prepare Latin and Swedish editions of these works, let alone an English set of translations. So who will do all this editing work and textual preparation? Again I say that we need some extraordinary people.

There are also of course issues of how to pay for all this. We need extraordinary funding, and therefore extraordinary fundraising expertise. I imagine that one could raise a fair amount of money from the organized church, but I picture the bulk of the money coming from secular organizations that back this sort of scholarly work.

So it seems daunting.

But let me give you a handout (see accompanying chart). It is a timeline of translators and translations of Emanuel Swedenborg's pretheological works. I came into this talk thinking that there had been about four people who had worked on Swedenborg's pretheological works. I was quite astounded to find, just in the little research I did (which I disclaim on the handout is neither exhaustive nor authoritative) that there are twenty-three people who certainly translated pretheological works. The gray squares indicate the decades in which they were working. It is striking to see that in the first decade of the 1900s there were seven translators at once working on the pretheological works—that is almost twice as many as are working on the New Century Edition right now. Also notice Alfred Acton I, who translated across a thirty-four-year period. As far as I know, his first pretheological translation was published when he was at the tender age of forty-nine, yet he continued for another thirty-four years after that.

So it is possible. The Lord has provided before. Many people have risen to these challenges before. We have some more challenges ahead. But I believe that the Lord's kingdom is a kingdom of uses; if there is a pressing need, the Lord will provide. □

**Timeline of Translators and Translations of Emanuel Swedenborg's "Pretheological" Works**

prepared April 2003 by Jonathan S. Rose using information from William Ross Woodfenden *Swedenborg Explorer's Guidebook: A Researchers' Manual* (West Chester, Pa.: Swedenborg Foundation, 2002)

*DISCLAIMER: This chart is not to be taken as exhaustive or even authoritative. It merely serves to give a general impression of the surprising number of pretheological translators and to highlight the period from 1875 to 1950 as a heyday.*

TRANSLATOR	ACTIVE	1840s	1850s	1860s	1870s	1880s	1890s	1900s	1910s	1920s	1930s	1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s
J.J.C. Wilkinson	1843–1852	■																
Augustus Clissold	1845–1846	■																
C. E. Strutt	1847	■																
R. L. Tafel	1875–1887			■														
P. Cabell	1880			■														
F. Sewall	1887–1914			■														
C. Th. Odhner	1899–1918			■														
R. W. Brown	1899–1908			■														
L. P. Ford	1899			■														
Disa May	1900			■														
Alfred H. Stroh	1904–1914			■														
C. Olds	1905–1908			■														
J. E. Rosenquist	1905–1908			■														
I. Tansley	1912–1913			■														
J. Rendell	1912			■														
Alfred Acton	1916–1950			■														
E. E. Iungench	1924–1928			■														
A. H. Searle	1938			■														
H. Lj. Odhner	1950			■														
Norbert Rogers	1950			■														
Michael David	1983–1992															■	■	
Hans Helander	1985–1995															■	■	
Stuart Shotwell	2003																	