



JOHN DURBAN ODHNER

1924–2002

Translator's Corner

IN MEMORIAM

On November 9, 2002 Rev. Dr. John Durban Odhner entered the spiritual world after a lifetime of devotion to the New Church. The Swedenborg Scientific Association remembers him especially for his work as Editor of Translator's Corner in *The New Philosophy*. Dr. Odhner established this department under the editorship of the late Lennart O. Alfelt in 1980. The first issue to include Translator's Corner was for January–March 1980. Introducing it, Dr. Odhner wrote:

A need has been felt for some years in various quarters for a New Church linguistic periodical, in which a comprehensive archive of worthy literature could be built up for the use of the Church-at-large in its ongoing work of translation.

An initiative in this direction was undertaken last year by the executive board of the General Church Translation Committee, which appointed the undersigned to serve as editor for a “newsletter which would contain articles that have direct bearing on translation and would be of interest to New Church translators and others. The editor would seek to obtain articles which have or have not been previously published.”

Further attempts to implement this idea have resulted in *The New Philosophy* opening its covers to a special feature under the above title [Translator's Corner], which will be devoted to the publication of serious studies of specific subjects or problems relating to the work of New Church translation.

We will especially welcome material that reflects sincere effort to promote a spirit of cooperation and contribute to better mutual understanding among those engaged in the sacred task. (P. 36)

From then to the January–June 1997, Dr. Odhner edited contributions from translators in Sweden, England, Japan, and the United States, as well as contributing his own articles on various topics. Included also in this department were translations of two special works. The first, of

Swedenborg's *De Sale Communi*, cooperatively translated by Michael David and himself, thereby producing the first translation of it; and the second, of German scholar Gottfried Florschütz's treatise on Swedenborg and Kant titled in English *The Hidden Influence of Swedenborg on Kant*. This translation, too, was undertaken jointly—by Rev. Kurt Nemitz and Dr. Odhner.

The last Translator's Corner (January–June 1997) included the "1996 Report to the Board of the Academy of the New Church" by Rev. Dr. Jonathan S. Rose in which he described the circumstances leading up to Dr. Odhner's producing "an entirely new, careful reading" of Swedenborg's spiritual experiences which is now available in six volumes. This work, Dr. Rose pointed out, is now named as Dr. Odhner discovered Swedenborg himself named it—*Experientiae Spirituales* or *Spiritual Experiences*. He also noted that Dr. Odhner discovered "over four hundred paragraphs of spiritual experiences not before considered part of it. These were paragraphs in another work not published by Swedenborg . . . *The Word Explained*."

Included with this account by Dr. Rose are photographs that include Dr. Odhner at the time he presented volume 6, the final volume of *Experientiae Spirituales*, to Secretary Olaf Lindström of the Swedish Council for Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences which had provided substantial funding for the printing of the work.

After completing *Experientiae Spirituales*, Dr. Odhner embarked on the task of translating it anew. We can all imagine the depth of his appreciation of the text after working for years in preparing the new Latin edition which no doubt gave him important insights as he translated the Latin text. At his passing, he was working on volume 4.

Dr. Odhner will be dearly missed, not only by his family, but also by the community of New Church scholars working in the field of translation, and by the wider community of members of the New Church who respected him for his tireless devotion to all the uses he loved so much.

Erland J. Brock